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How Can I Effectively Teach and Support Reading at  
First Class Level Through Differentiated Station Teaching?

**Name**

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*Declaration*



**Declaration of Authenticity**

I certify that this research, submitted for the degree of Master of Education, Maynooth University, is entirely my own work, has not been taken from the work of others and has not been submitted in any other university. The work of others, to an extent, has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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*Abstract*

This self-study action research project arose from the question of how to improve and support the teaching of reading at First Class level. A differentiated station teaching approach was adopted, and differentiation represents the unique feature of this living-theory research. The origins of my values are presented both in terms of Froebelian and Montessori practices, and the interconnectedness of these practices with action research is outlined. Equality of education with compassion, care, empathy, dialogue, and an emerging value of hope are explored throughout.

Relevant Literacy literature is scrutinised both in terms of a ‘balanced approach to literacy’ and a ‘science of reading’ approach. Literacy within the Irish context is discussed within the former approach, and the evolving international research in how we learn to read, is discussed in the latter. A pragmatic, interpretivist paradigm forms the basis of this study. This seeks to answer questions about my practices recognising that, human interaction and dialogue is at the heart of any meaningful educational change. A mixed methods research approach is utilised throughout, incorporating a range of both quantitative and qualitative tools. This provides for the triangulation of data and adds validity and rigour to the study.

Three main findings are discussed within this paper. Firstly, differentiated station teaching results in improvements in children’s Literacy levels, with children demonstrating increases in sound knowledge and how they apply these sounds in independent writing. Sight words recognition and application in writing is also noted within these Literacy improvements. Secondly, there is an improvement in children’s

attitude to Literacy and this results in corresponding improvements in their confidence levels. Finally, essential collaboration required among adults during differentiated station teaching both enhances the delivery of the stations, while also resulting in continuous professional development for all teachers involved. A community of practice is formed through this process.

My changing practices at the heart of this research are explored, recognising my continued commitment to critically reflect on my practices, value children's voice, while incorporating play as a key tenet of my Froebelian identity. The limitations of this project are discussed in terms of the significant reliance on capable and motivated teachers. The challenge of preparing reliable qualitative tools is explored and the lack of research in the area of differentiated station teaching is highlighted. The impact of Covid absences in the class during the study is also considered.

Finally, the complexity of changing practices within an educational environment is considered as the journey of change involves relationships that evolve during the process. The emerging value of hope in providing an intervention for children of all abilities is the final message.

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*List of Abbreviations*

AR	Action Research
BATL	Balanced Approach to Literacy
CRA	Critical Reflective Assignment March 2022
CRJ	Critical Reflective Journal
DES	Department of Education and Science / Skills
DST	Differentiated Station Teaching
ILA	International Literacy Association
LECPE	Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education 3-8 years
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
PIRLS	Progress in International Literacy Study
PISA	Performance on International Assessments
PLC	Primary Language Curriculum 2019
PSCETG	Primary School Curriculum: English Teacher Guidelines 1999
RC1 / RC2 / RC3	Research Cycle 1 / 2/ 3 (Power Hours)
RIDE	Rhode Island Department of Education
SOR	Science of Reading
SSAR	Self-study action research
ST	Station Teaching

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Focus and Aims of the Study**

It is from the viewpoint of ‘Literacy is not a luxury; it is a right and a responsibility’ (Department of Education and Science, 2009) (DES) that this Research in Practice originates. It is through the lens of ‘Literacy’ and the personally held values of ‘equality of education’ with ‘compassion, care and empathy’, that I embarked on this self-study action research (SSAR). It has been recognised internationally that the right to read is ‘fundamental and inalienable’ (International Literacy Association, 2019: 3) (ILA). A world of possibilities opens up for children when they are taught to read through building a range of higher order skills, creative thinking, and the ability to respond with compassion and empathy. (ILA, 2019: 3).

The Primary Language Curriculum 2019 in Ireland (PLC) ‘sets out a vision of children as communicators, readers, writers and thinkers [...] where children are enabled to progress at their own pace in environments and through relationships that are supportive, engaging and inclusive’ (PLC, 2019: 12). It is through language that children begin to comprehend the world around them and communicate with others. (PLC, 2019: 6). The wonder of a child absorbing and comprehending language as an infant, to later being able to decipher and make sense of written code (words) has inspired and motivated me to make a difference in this area. As ‘reading skills follow a lifelong trajectory’ (Seidenberg, 2017: 104), I sought to identify how to support every child in my care, in the development of this essential skill. I married my professional role as a teacher ‘to educate’ (Teaching Council, 2016: 8), with Brookfield’s view that ‘every good teacher wants to change the world for the better’ (Brookfield, 2017: 1).

The aims of this study are twofold. Firstly, I will reflect on my practices to improve the delivery of literacy skills to First Class children, from my role as Special Education Teacher. Secondly, I will support the First Class teachers by sharing this knowledge through dialogue and collaboration, thereby enhancing and embedding these practices within the school. Through the ‘sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the validity’ (Brookfield, 2017: 3) of my teaching assumptions, critical reflection will be achieved. However, while these reflections will relate to past events it must be identified that ‘the purpose of reflection is related to the future’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 11). It is through this process of reflective practices that I will create new knowledge for myself and others in the process (Sullivan et al., 2016: 10).

## **1.2 Research Background and Values, Context and Intervention**

Action Research (AR) is a term used to describe how I reflected on and examined my own practices during this process. As a desire to improve my practice is at the heart of this project, it is essential to identify the ‘values that inform action research’ (McNiff, 2010: 4). Values can be defined as being ‘kernel to action research approaches, as they underpin the framing of one’s research’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 3). The overarching value I hold is ‘equality of education’ meaning that ‘there should be the same curriculum in the same school’ (Chand & Karre, 2019: 2). I view compassion, care, empathy and dialogue as inextricably connected to this value and ‘define the environment I strive to live by each day and I look to foster around me’ (Rock, 2021: Draft Values Statement).

My passion for 'equality of education' originated in my background attending a DEIS, single-sex school, where it was presented to me that securing personal and financial success in life, was dependent on education. This inspired me to perform and achieve in education where the positivist 'dominant ideology' (Brookfield, 2017: 11) inferred that 'the world and its constituent elements can be measured, assessed and graded in quantifiable ways' (Brookfield, 2017: 12). 'Success was merit based and happiness depended on career success' (Rock, 2022: Critical Reflective Assignment (CRA)). However, this 'equality of education' was not always available to every child consistently, depending on the status of their family as perceived by educators.

At this young age I aligned with the view that 'knowledge is power' (Foucault, 1980). A lifelong value of 'equality of education' emerged. I now acknowledge that I was questioning how my classmates could achieve success when education was strengthening forms 'of social control and deepening student's apathy and conformism' (Brookfield, 2017: 1). Unlike the childhood experience presented to me, I aspired to present knowledge and education in an environment which 'creates the conditions for learning to happen' (Brookfield, 2017: 1). In this environment 'students increase their knowledge, deepen their understanding, build new skills, broaden their perspectives and enhance their self-confidence' (Brookfield, 2017: 1). I sought to enable knowledge to be 'co-created in a reciprocal relationship' (Buber, 1958). As outlined above compassion, care, empathy and dialogue with collaboration emerged as other core values within my overarching value of 'equality of education'. An evolving value of 'hope' has arisen throughout this process.

While training as a teacher using the Montessori Method these values were strengthened and my pre-existing identities were utilised to ‘interpret, learn from, evaluate and appropriate the new conditions of work’ (Buchanan, 2015: 701). Thus, my professional agency was ‘carved out’ (Buchanan, 2015: 701). The holistic needs and the stage of development of the child were catered for through observation and one to one teaching. Within this Montessori environment I worked with children at their own pace, meeting their own individual Literacy needs. A multisensory approach was adopted as ‘the hands are the instruments of man’s intelligence’ (Montessori, 1949: 25).

While working subsequently as a Class Teacher, having trained within the Post Graduate Programme in Primary Education, I became aware of differences in Literacy teaching skills by teachers, and resulting outcomes for children, depending on teachers’ initial and continued training in Literacy. This challenged my value of ‘equality of education’ as I questioned how different children within the school had equal access to the necessary literacy skills required to reach their full potential. The development of consistent, evidence-based strategies where the sharing of literacy teaching skills, and clear literacy objectives became my focus. How could we provide for the delivery of excellent literacy skills to children? I acknowledged that ‘learning to read is a complex problem because multiple overlapping subskills develop’ simultaneously (Seidenberg, 2017: 104). How could we harness, develop, share and formalise our delivery of Literacy in a whole school approach? How could I enhance my practices to facilitate this process as ‘there is a need for both quality pre-service and on-going in-service for teachers’ (NEPS, 2015: 106). I was therefore inspired to commence on this project to live out my values and ensure I was not a ‘living contradiction’ (Whitehead, 2009: 87)

This research took place at First Class level in a North County Dublin primary school with an 'Educate Together' ethos. Within the school year 2021/22, I was the Special Education Teacher for First Class. This research class presented with a mixture of identified needs, and other undiagnosed needs which were being met through the 'Continuum of Support' model. I received Board of Management approval from my school in December 2021 and assent and consent from 26 children and their parents during January 2022. Two First Class teachers, two Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), and two other teachers within the school also provided consent. The latter two teachers operated as 'Critical Friends' later within this process. One First Class Teacher and one SNA formed a 'Validation Group'.

This intervention sought to improve and support my delivery of Literacy lessons at First Class level, through Differentiated Station Teaching (DST). The differentiated element of this station teaching intervention is unique, as while research has been completed on station teaching, differentiated station teaching groups have not been studied. Differentiated Station Teaching is a concentrated focus on elements of Literacy through different stations of work (Daly, 2015: 6). It contained three 'Research Cycles' which took place from January to May/June 2022. Each research cycle was called a 'Power Hour' and were numbered 1, 2, or 3. I assessed children's individual literacy skills across key baseline literacy indicators and analysed the results using excel spreadsheets. Qualitative data was gathered through observations, questionnaires and surveys from all child and adult participants. I compared, analysed and reflected on both sets of data providing a more holistic approach to forming differentiated groups for children. Collaboration with all adult participants was key in agreeing these differentiated groups.

Differentiated stations of work were designed, to which each child rotated every 15 minutes during one-hour literacy sessions for a three to four week period. At each station the differentiated needs of each group were catered for, through appropriate materials and objectives agreed with the teacher manning the station. Three of the four stations were manned, with 'free-writing' representing the independent nature of the station and children worked individually. These stations replaced children's daily Literacy lessons for the duration of the intervention. Stations were designed by me and collaboration and dialogue on the contents of this intervention with the teaching team took place prior to, during and after each cycle. This resulted in an agreed plan of action with clear objectives set and the sharing of information between me and the adults involved, to achieve our shared goals. Live observations for each child were collated using feedback sheets completed by each teacher, as groups moved from station to station. Between each cycle, children were re-assessed, and all participants were surveyed again. This allowed for children to be re-grouped between each research cycle.

The stations involved in Research Cycles 1 and 2 (RC1 and RC2) were 'Phonemic and Phonological awareness', 'Reading New Books', 'Free-writing' and 'Dolch words recognition and application'. To live out my value of 'equality of education' differentiation was a crucial factor as it 'is adjusting your instruction to meet the unique needs of your diverse learners' (Perez, 2020: 7). During Research Cycle 3 (RC3) I employed a 'Readers Theatre' approach which connected and consolidated all concepts and topics covered during RC1 and RC2. I designed these differentiated stations after gathering key quantitative and qualitative data which I will describe more in Chapter 3 'Methodologies'.



I employed a mixed methods research (MMR) approach as ‘different data converge to complement or extend each other, allowing the analyst to develop a richer, more analytically dense, more complete, and confidently argued response to their research question’ (Bazeley, 2018: 7). Critical reflection through my ‘Critical Reflective Journal’ (CRJ) was fundamental to this study allowing me to adopt a meta-reflective approach to this process. A detailed analysis of assessments and methodologies will be further explored in Chapter 3.

### **1.3 Potential Contribution of this Study**

It is my hope that this model will be utilised by teachers, in the knowledge that DST can positively impact on the literacy skills of children in their class. Ultimately ‘being literate represents the difference between inclusion in and exclusion from society’ (ILA, 2019: 3). Another ambition of this study is to enable ‘teachers to bring different knowledge and perspectives’ (Brookfield, 2017: 3) to Literacy lessons through team-teaching and dialogue. One’s ‘own reflections then, combined with dialogue with others, have the potential to be very powerful’ (Sullivan et. al., 2016: 10).

As DST is an unresearched area of Literacy, I hope this study provides the basis for other researcher teachers to examine the benefits to children in improving their literacy skills. While teachers co-teach during station teaching (ST) Schwartz (2005), refers to the stages of ‘enthusiasm, establishment and enrichment’ teachers will experience during the process. Walther-Thomas (1997) describes this enrichment as ‘increases in trust, efficiency and a sense of value, creativity and humor’. I suggest these are invaluable traits in the continuing professional development of teachers.

## **1.4 Chapter Outline**

This thesis contains four chapters. In Chapter 2 ‘Literature Review’, I will examine and discuss best practices with regards to effective Literacy instruction both locally and globally. Evidence-based literature supporting the use of ST will also be presented. The case for differentiation will be explored and I will examine the debate surrounding a ‘Balanced Approach to Literacy’ (BATL) as compared to a ‘Science of Reading’ (SOR) approach. Chapter 3 ‘Methodologies’ explores my values, research paradigm and data collection tools utilised within this study. Ethical considerations are scrutinised, and the ‘Intervention’ is outlined in detail. Validity of this research in practice is considered and how a rigorous approach to claiming new knowledge is examined. Chapter 4 ‘Data Findings and Conclusion’ identifies the three findings within this study and the validation process is once again explored. It concludes with a review of the origins of this study, considering the implications for educational improvements while also identifying limiting factors. The complexity of change is discussed. I will now examine relevant Literacy literature in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review analyses and critiques research available to date which explores the key components of effective teaching of reading, and how to differentiate effectively for each child. As outlined in Chapter 1, this SSAR project aims to answer the research question ‘How can I effectively teach and support reading at First Class level through DST?’

Firstly, I will recall why I am interested in Literacy, in particular reading, and expand on the reasons why my values are central to this process. I will define the term ‘Literacy’ and examine the key components of effective literacy teaching both from an Irish context, and an international perspective. Next, I will discuss the significance of differentiation and its impact in the modern-day classroom. Methods to differentiate effectively will be explored and I will examine current research in this area including the benefits and challenges of station teaching. I will also discuss the use of a ‘Readers Theatre’ intervention and its application within this process. Finally, I will explore the current debate emerging globally between a ‘Balanced Approach to Literacy’ and ‘Science of Reading’ and critique the merits and challenges of both approaches.

‘The Sahlberg International Review Report on Initial Teacher Education (2012) noted that Ireland was very fortunate in the calibre of people who were seeking to enter the profession’. (Teaching Council, 2016: 2). My overarching value of ‘equality of education’ is rooted in the knowledge that, ‘effective schools and educational interventions can improve learning outcomes substantially for all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds’ (DES, 2011: 10).

Within this research project my practices and identity as a teacher are explored, as a teacher's professional identity 'is formed and re-formed constantly over the course of a career' (Mockler, 2011: 518). As my values developed over the course of my life, I align with Kelchtermans (2018: 229) who noted that 'the personal and professional intertwine in practice'. A Froebelian ethos was engrained in each process of this SSAR with freedom to explore activities by children being evident. From my experiences in training in both Montessori and Froebelian environments, I concur with Bruce (2021: 133) who cites Lilley (1967: 43), that 'true education must originate in activity and must similarly be both instructive and creative and must provide for climax and consolidation in the creative process'.

This year of study has allowed me to identify myself as a Froebelian Practitioner where I value self-directed, child-led activity, resulting in intrinsic motivation within the child (Bruce, 2021: 142). These concepts are evident across all research cycles in differentiated child-centred activities, material content, and the ST approach. Through the playful nature of DST, I am reminded that 'play is at the heart of childhood and has the power to satisfy the child and determine the kind of person the child will be' (Hoskins & Smedley, 2019: 77). A democratic approach is incorporated through the children's voice within this self-study and 'a respectful approach to discipline' (Tovey, 2018: 8) through positive reinforcement and praise is utilised throughout.

Within this research, stations are 'active, meaningful and engaging' (Liebschner, 1992). A key feature of this project incorporates the parents' voice as 'the importance of parents and the community in children's learning and the concept of unity as an underpinning tenet of pedagogy' (Werth et al., 2018: 23). Furthermore, I acknowledge the significance

of quality teaching methods for children in their early years as these are ‘the most powerful and influential and they are the foundation on which all later learning is built’ (Tovey, 2018: 8).

The Primary School Curriculum: English Language (1999: 2) recognised that ‘language learning is an integrated process’. Many definitions have been put forward for the term ‘Literacy’ as it is important to identify ‘a broad vision of literacy, which encompasses the cognitive, affective, socio-cultural, cultural-historical, creative, and aesthetic dimension of literacy across the lifespan of the individual’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 316) or ‘from womb to tomb’ (Alexander, 1997: 415). The DES (2011) expanded the definition of Literacy as incorporating ‘reading, writing, communication, and oral language, in print, multi-modal and digital formats’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 316). Within these all-encompassing definitions of Literacy, it is important to identify the central element of reading in this project. Winch et al., (2010) cites Harris et al., (2018) in defining reading as ‘a complex process of “literate thinking” where the meaning derived by individual readers is dependent on the contexts in which they read, the features and purpose of specific texts selected for reading, and the skills and knowledge required to interpret, analyse, and evaluate their meanings’.

## **2.2 The Significance of Differentiation and Station Teaching**

In line with my values of equality of education with compassion, care, empathy and dialogue, differentiation is at the core of my Froebelian practices. Perez (2020: 7) defines differentiation as ‘adjusting your instruction to meet the unique needs of your diverse learners’. She elaborates that differentiation is an approach to instruction which includes a range of strategies rather than a single strategy (Perez, 2020: 7). Tomlinson (2014: 3)

extends differentiation further as a ‘shaking up’ of classroom activities to facilitate the learning. With regards to children with special educational needs, recommendations describe differentiation as ‘providing more intensive focused literacy teaching’ and ‘a continua of teaching approaches’ with repetition to master the skills and phonological and phonemic awareness being present in a ‘structured approach’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 325). These principles are embedded within this SSAR.

Schwartz (2005) defines station teaching as at least three learning centres or workstations through which students rotate in and out of in small groups. Schwartz (2005) highlights the value of pedagogical possibilities through station teaching but also notes that challenges are presented, and substantial planning required in advance, warrant careful consideration. Friend and Cook (2000), describe station teaching as a co-teaching model. Co-teaching has been defined as a number of professionals who deliver ‘substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students within a single space’ (Cook & Friend, 1995). They suggest that two to three of the stations are manned while the ‘remaining stations include independent learning activities’ (Friend & Cook, 2000). Within this SSAR, three of the four stations are manned with the remaining station incorporating free-writing. Suprabha and Subramonian (2014: 22) note that while station-teaching provides all the benefits of small group instruction, it also provides teachers with the opportunity to complement each other’s instruction. This simultaneously enhances their own practices and results in ‘deeper learning via lesson related discussions’ (Suprabha & Subramonian, 2014: 22).

Three stages of emotional and behavioural reactions that co-teachers will encounter in station teaching are identified by Schwartz (2005). These are called the ‘E’s of co-teaching’ and include ‘enthusiasm’, ‘establishment’ and ‘enrichment’ (Schwartz, 2005). The benefits for students in their language learning as a result of ST will be discussed in Chapter 4. Daly (2015: 214) identifies that while using ST during Literacy lessons, teachers ‘have learned the important aspects of Literacy – word work, decoding, phonics, comprehension strategies, differentiation’. This results in teachers providing for the needs of each child’. She examines the benefits to new teachers, and these will be discussed further in Chapter 4. DST will be further examined within Chapter 3 as I employed a system of differentiated literacy stations to improve my practices in Literacy.

### **2.3 Literacy Development in the Irish Context**

‘Ireland has experienced more than a decade of constant and intense change in its education beginning with the introduction of the revised national Primary School Curriculum’ (Kennedy, 2013: 511). While Irish children have a history of performing well in PISA (Performance on International Assessments), Ireland dropped in ranking from 5<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> place among participating countries between 2000 and 2009 (Kennedy, 2013: 513). These results sparked extensive examination of performance, and Ireland subsequently participated in PIRLS (Progress in International Literacy Study) during 2011 and 2016. During this period, findings revealed that ‘Ireland’s mean achievement score improved by 15 points, a statistically significant increase’ (DES, 2019: 3). Other findings included that Irish 4<sup>th</sup> Class students displayed strengths in Literary texts and 21% achieved the ‘Advanced Benchmark’ as compared with an international median of 10% (DES, 2019: 3).

PIRLS and PISA results are both significant in terms of this research as, the impact of this DST intervention on children's reading ability at First Class level, should serve to avoid 'the fourth-grade slump' (Brozo, 2005: 3).

### **2.3.1 A Balanced Literacy Framework**

Kennedy and Shiel (2010: 372) refer to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development 2000 and Pressley 2001 in noting that 'much is now known about the essential elements of effective literacy programs (i.e., alphabets, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and writing)'. They also highlight that 'simply including these elements in instructional frameworks is not enough' (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010: 372). Effective literacy instruction depends on 'how these essential skills are mediated in the classroom [...] and the extent to which programs respond to the learning needs of the students while also motivating and engaging them in literacy' (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010: 372). DeGraaf (2021: 18) notes that balanced literacy is not based on whether it is whole language or phonics. She argues that a BATL 'builds the capacity of teachers to implement high-quality instructional practices focused on engaged learning opportunities' (DeGraaf, 2021: 20). Allington (2002) identifies the five key skills which are all required within an instructional framework. These include vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension. I will now discuss each skill here in terms of an Irish perspective and in the context of DST.

### **2.3.2 Vocabulary – Oral Language**

The English curriculum formed part of a review of the overall Primary School Curriculum 1999 reflecting the central role of literacy in all curricular areas (Kennedy, 2013: 515). This curriculum recognised 'the centrality of language' in teaching and learning. (Primary



School Curriculum: English Teacher Guidelines (PSCETG), 1999: 2). While it recognised how reading, writing and oral language integrate as a single language process, it also distinguished the importance of the ‘dual function of language learning and learning through language’ (PSCETG, 1999: 2). It anticipated that the reciprocal relationship between the child’s early language experiences and early stages of reading development would be closely linked within the curriculum.

In response to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2011, a good practice guide was developed for teachers working with Junior Infants to First Class to provide evidence-based research and ‘a balanced approach to literacy’ (NEPS, 2016: 2). A ‘Literacy Tree’ (NEPS, 2016: 10) represented the reciprocal relationship between the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening (NEPS, 2016: 11). See Appendix 1 below. This ‘Literacy Tree’ (NEPS, 2016: 10) identified key elements of skilled reading, identifying language as core to reading as ‘the starting point for reading is speech’ (Seidenberg, 2017: 15). All other components of this infographic represented another key literacy skill, reflecting the five pillars or essential elements of reading instruction. These pillars ‘lead to the highest chance of reading success – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension’ (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2015: 548). They also suggest a 6<sup>th</sup> pillar of reading instruction - knowledge development. Within the Literacy in Early Childhood and Primary Education 3-8 years report 2012 (LECPE), Snow et al. (1998) reported weaknesses in oral language, phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge as key areas of intervention to target in order to prevent reading problems.

It is important to remember that ‘literacy learning is developmental, constructivist and incremental in nature (Gillen & Hall, 2003: 16) and this tenet is central to the delivery of literacy stations within this project. Kennedy et al. (2012: 331) highlight the constructivist nature of literacy learning and advocate for stage models of development where possible. A ‘research based cognitively-challenging balanced literacy framework’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 331) should be employed incorporating systematic and explicit teaching of literacy skills from phonological awareness, identifying words reading fluency and comprehension and writing.

### **2.3.3 Phonemic and Phonological Awareness**

Phonological and phonemic awareness can be defined simply ‘If an activity can be conducted with the lights off, it is phonological awareness because it is auditory only; if an activity requires the light to be on, then it is phonics, as phonics involves seeing letters’ (Beck & Beck, 2013). However, as the benefits of early years oral language development on children’s reading comprehension may not be identified until late in primary school, Storch and Whitehurst (2002) suggest that it is essential to facilitate relationship through ‘code-related skills, such as phonological processing and print-concepts’ (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002: 943). These code-related skills specifically include spelling and phonics instruction.

A multi-sensory and systematic approach to phonics should be employed while emphasising the need for it to be in line with the child’s stage of development. ‘It is advised that teachers who do not use systematic phonics in their teaching should add it to their routine practices’ (Torgerson et al., 2006). Rose (2006: 18) defines systematic phonics instruction as ‘a method of instruction that teaches students correspondences

between graphemes in written language and phonemes in spoken language and how to use these correspondences to read and spell. Phonics instruction is systematic when all the major grapheme–phoneme correspondences are taught, and they are covered in a clearly defined sequence’ (Rose, 2006: 18).

The importance of the knowledge of the relationship between letter and sound was highlighted within the 1999 curriculum in conjunction with understanding cues that are semantic, grapho/phonic and syntactic. It noted that ‘grapho/phonic skills assume the predominant role in the process of word identification’ (PSCETG, 1999: 60). Within word identification, strategies based on sound to letter relationships are developed through phonological and phonemic awareness. A multisensory approach using clapping and dancing to syllabic rhythms was recommended in the PSCETG (1999), along with segmenting words into chunks or syllables.

The ‘Literacy Tree’ (NEPS, 2016: 10) further addressed phonological and phonemic awareness, and phonological awareness skills were expanded. Phonological skills included word discrimination, rhyming skills, syllable and phonemic awareness, phonemic segmenting and blending and phonemic manipulation. This strategy noted that without phonemic awareness skills, children’s spelling and decoding skills were at risk of failing to develop. It also described a five-step teaching approach to phonemic awareness.

Phonics should be assessed on a regular basis using checklists of sounds taught (NEPS, 2016: 8). The importance of decoding nonsense words was highlighted in the

development of phonemic awareness. The debate on the use of analytic or synthetic phonics was discussed and it was noted that ‘it makes sense therefore for beginning reading instruction to encourage both approaches to teaching reading; analysing and blending individual sounds, while also using word parts during decoding’ (Pressley, 2006). Guidance indicated that the length of time for children to spend on each element of the Tree depended on the needs of the children and recommended distributed practice throughout the day (NEPS, 2016: 8).

The role of phonological and phonemic awareness was also identified by Kennedy et al. (2012). The skills to build phonological and phonemic awareness through oral language activities were identified as nursery rhymes, word play and riddles. The critical role of differentiation within the formal phonemic awareness instructions was emphasised and the significance of small-group or individual instruction was highlighted. The development of phonological and phonemic awareness skills along with small-group instruction all play a crucial role in the delivery of literacy instruction within this process of differentiated stations.

### **2.3.4 Fluency**

Kennedy et al. (2012) note that reading texts for children should be in line with their stage of development and a reader’s phrasing, accuracy, expression and pace considered in supporting their reading fluency. It is essential to develop reading comprehension skills in parallel with decoding skills as it was identified that ‘good readers adopt a repertoire of strategies when constructing meaning from text’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 320). RC3 within this AR incorporated a ‘Readers Theatre’ approach. A Readers Theatre is a strategy where children rehearse a script through repeated reading prior to performing

(Young et al., 2021: 495). Readers Theatre can ‘improve reading fluency, comprehension, attitude toward reading, motivation to read, and overall reading achievement’ (Corcoran & Davis, 2005; Garrett & O’Connor, 2010, Vasinda & Mc Leod, 2011; Worthy & Prater, 2002).

### **2.3.5 Comprehension**

Kennedy et al. (2012: 329) highlighted the critical importance of teaching reading comprehension strategies from a child’s early years. Within the ‘Reading Station’ of this research project a number of these strategies were employed including a ‘Reciprocal Teaching’ (Pilonieta & Medina, 2009: 120) approach to reading comprehension including predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarising. ‘Collaborative reasoning’ (Reznitskaya et al., 2001: 155-175, 2008: 196–213) was also employed and is based on Vygotsky’s (1978) claim that critical thinking skills are developed through argument and discussion. ‘Questioning the author’, (Beck & McKeown, 2006) with children working together to establish their own meaning was another technique implicit in the reading station.

The benefit of an inquiry-based learning approach is identified as a technique to develop and enhance literacy instruction. Such an approach includes ‘making predictions, activating prior knowledge, making connections and drawing inferences’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 313). The 1999 curriculum highlighted that reading experiences should be varied and as rich as possible and it noted that ‘the child’s language competence, attention span, concentration and perceptual abilities should be well developed before being introduced to a formal reading scheme’ (PSCETG, 1999: 50).

Within the LECPE, stage models of development with regards to reading and spelling (constrained skills) are recommended in literacy research. Paris (2005) outlined a framework for how the role of oral language can be assessed in terms of reading acquisition. This LECPE framework referred to ‘constrained’ and ‘unconstrained’ skills with the former referring to skills such as ‘early print concepts, letter name knowledge, phonemic awareness and oral reading fluency’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 274). These skills are ‘constrained to small sets of knowledge that are mastered in relatively brief periods of development’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 274). Unconstrained skills ‘such as knowledge of vocabulary and syntax are unconstrained by the knowledge to be acquired or by the duration of learning. Developmental trajectories are more uneven than for constrained skills’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 274).

### **2.3.6 Assessment**

Reading assessment should incorporate both the process ‘children’s understanding and use of strategies’, and product ‘their understanding of the text at different levels of sophistications’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 328). Different forms of assessment (both formative and summative) should be adopted to allow for differentiation in the development of children’s literacy skills, ‘the knowledgeable teacher who has strong pedagogical content knowledge is critical to ensuring all children reach their potential in literacy’ (Kennedy et al., 2012: 333). Continuous individual assessment is a central feature in this SSAR project.

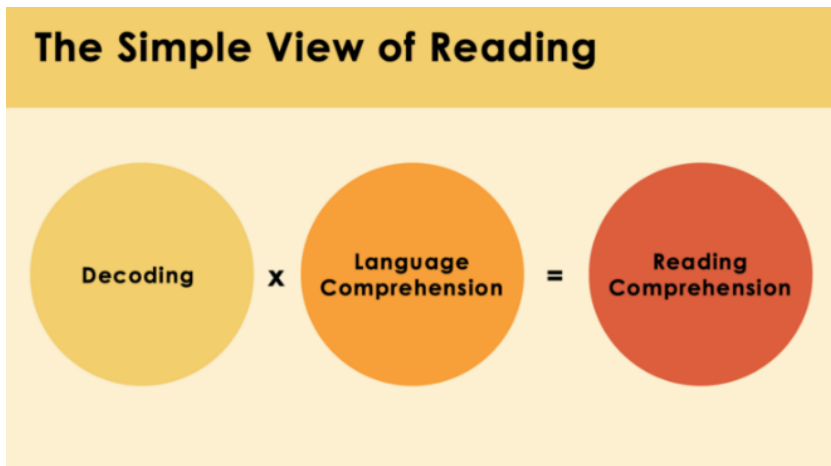
## **2.4 The Global Context: Science of Reading**

A new movement in the development of literacy skills is evolving internationally and is taking momentum within this field. Called the ‘Science of Reading’ (SOR) it is defined

by the International Literacy Association as ‘a corpus of objective investigation and accumulation of reliable evidence about how humans learn to read and how reading should be taught’. (Cervetti et al., 2020: 3). Definitions vary between different researchers who see the SOR ‘as an approach that prioritizes basic science and experimental work’ (Cervetti et al., 2020: 3). SOR ‘is a phrase representing the accumulated knowledge about reading, reading development and best practices for reading instruction obtained by the use of scientific method’ (Petscher et al., 2020: 2) Another perspective on the SOR can be considered with Rhode Island’s Department of Education (RIDE). It defines the SOR as ‘empirically based instruction that is grounded in the study of the relationship between cognitive science and educational outcomes’ (RIDE, 2021). It goes on further to link a ‘Structured Literacy’ approach to this science. Structured literacy is explained ‘as an approach to teaching that integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing by providing explicit, systematic, diagnostic-prescriptive instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol correspondence (phonics), syllables, morphology, semantics, and syntax’. (RIDE, 2021) See Appendices 2 and 3 for the elements of a structured literacy approach and how it should be taught from the International Dyslexia Association.

#### **2.4.1 Simple View of Reading**

‘Advocates of the science of reading have invoked the simple view of reading [...] which describes comprehension as the product of decoding and listening comprehension’ (Cervetti et al., 2020: S161). See Image 2.1 below by Geiger and Spence (2022)

**Image 2.1**

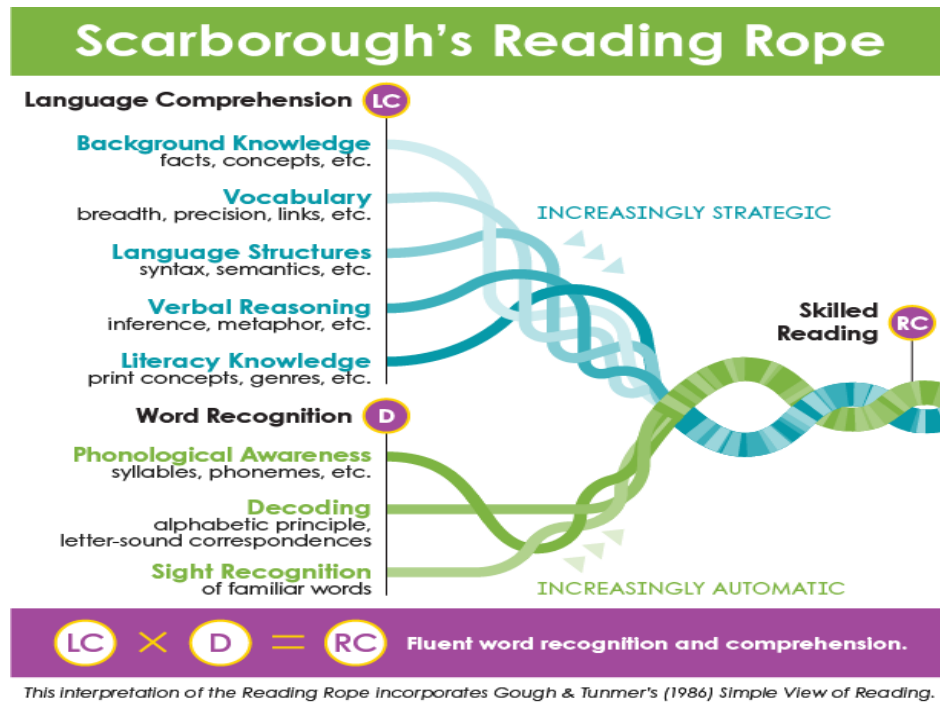
Originating from Gough and Tunmer (1986), the simple view of reading highlights that ‘if either of these skills is limited or missing altogether, the whole system – reading comprehension or sense-making – breaks down’ (Burkins & Yates, 2021:18). Reading comprehension is the resulting product of decoding and language comprehension, not the sum of the constituent parts. The significance of this is that, if a child does not possess the ability to understand text read aloud to them (listening/language comprehension), ‘then reading comprehension for that text is out of reach. (Burkins & Yates, 2021: 19). Work completed on word recognition skills (decoding) will not ‘compensate for the limitations a child’s listening comprehension puts on reading comprehension’ (Cervetti et al., 2020. Seidenberg explains that a child’s ability to read is determined by their ‘acquisition of spoken language’ and their ability to learn to read depends ‘on their knowledge of speech’ (Seidenberg, 2017: 106).

#### **2.4.2 Scarborough’s Reading Rope**

Scarborough’s Rope 2001 (Image 2.2) utilised the simple view of reading to convey the complexities of learning to read. This model demonstrates reading comprehension as the product of the elements of language comprehension and word recognition.



Image 2.2



### 2.4.3 Explicit Phonics Instruction

Research within this field has highlighted the focus of phonics instruction as central to the SOR. Petscher et al. (2020) identify that the teaching of phonics should be both systematic and explicit. Ehri (2020: S45) offers a deeper understanding of how phonics instruction should be taught and its benefits. Developing automaticity with words read phonetically allows the child to read by sight. 'Evidence shows that words are read from memory when graphemes are connected to phonemes' (Ehri, 2020: S45). This links pronunciation, to the individual spelling of words and their meaning into the memory of the child (Ehri 2020: S45). This has been seen to contribute directly to their reading comprehension.

Goodwin & Jiménez (2020) outline how the SOR cannot 'be characterized by support for or opposition to phonics instruction'. 'The reality is that reading does not begin or end

with phonics or whole-word instruction’ (Seidenberg et al., 2020). It is far broader and more complex than it suggests. ‘Reading, broadly conceived, is any interaction between a person—be it a child, adolescent, or adult—and written language’ (Cervetti & Pearson, 2020). ‘That interaction can involve written language at many levels, from words and sentences, to paragraphs, to entire volumes’ (Shanahan, 2019).

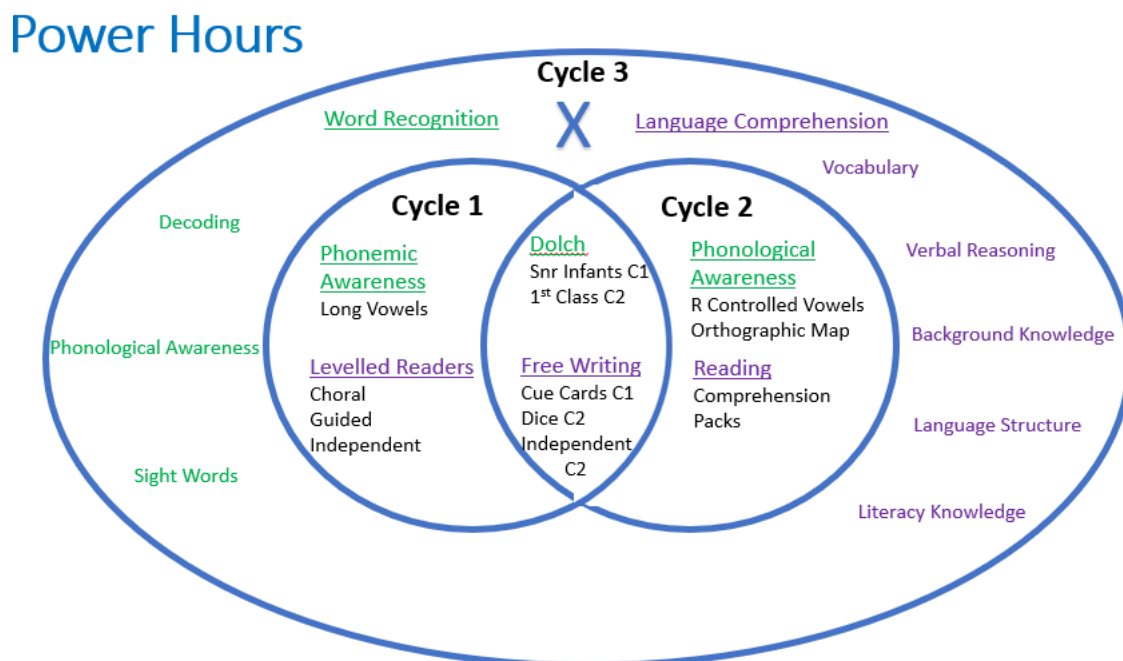
While considering ‘Explicit Instruction’, Archer (2022) suggests a three-step approach using ‘demonstration, guided practice and checking for understanding’ (Archer, 2022). She recommends practicing the skills taught in a deliberate manner, spaced for repetition and allowing children to retrieve the information regularly. This explicit instruction should be interactive with feedback for maximum benefit (Archer, 2022). Kearns (2020) investigates whether the orthography of English allows for the application of explicit teaching in syllabication rules. Such (2021: 40) argues that fluent reading only occurs when a child decodes repeatedly, and it is only through this process that spellings are connected or ‘glued’ to the pronunciations in a child’s memory. This is a process called ‘orthographic mapping’ (Such, 2021: 40). Orthographic mapping, repeated reading, explicit phonics instruction and building a knowledge of sight words are key components of this SSAR project through DST.

Cervetti et al. (2020) view SOR as ‘a complicated constellation of skills and knowledge that impact reading comprehension’. Four development stages of reading are identified by Ehri (2020) as children progress through the alphabetic writing systems and apply this knowledge. She notes ‘grapheme-phoneme knowledge and phonemic segmentation are key foundational skills that launch development followed subsequently by knowledge of syllabic and morphemic spelling-sound units’ (Ehri 2020: S45). Seidenberg (2017: 133) agrees that ‘skilled readers are aware of the morphological relations among words and

use this knowledge in reading and writing’. Morphological Awareness is the study of morphemes, or the smallest parts of words that carry meaning and is identified as an important skill within the SOR. When students develop morphological awareness, explicit instruction will support the understanding of particular spelling rules. This benefits a range of skills including grammar, vocabulary and comprehension.

While I am incorporating the elements of a balanced literacy approach within this research it must be noted that evidenced-based SOR concepts have been incorporated as this SSAR developed. The Scarborough’s Reading Rope’ (2001) model was particularly identified, and concepts were addressed in a progressive manner from RC1 to RC3 of this research. As mentioned previously, these stations were also called ‘Power Hours’. See Image 2.3 for the relationship between SOR and each research cycle or Power Hour.

**Image 2.3 (Created by Rock, 2022)**



## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter identified the origins of this living-theory action research as reflecting my current overarching value of equality of education. The connection between my values as a teacher and Froebelian Practitioner were also examined. Definitions of Literacy were explored within current national and international perspectives. The development of models used in the teaching of reading were explored and I discussed the simple view of reading and the SOR. The characteristics and benefits of differentiation and ST were introduced. Current educational reports and policies were examined and critiqued to established best practice. To conclude, literature based on methods to support children as they engaged in reading was reviewed. Research ‘Methodologies’ will be discussed in Chapter 3.

## **Chapter 3: Methodologies**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the processes undertaken throughout this SSAR project. The purpose of this study is to reflect on and improve my practices in the area of Literacy teaching at First Class level. An overview of the research methodology applied will be set out in this chapter. This overview will include the origins and purpose of action research, the research paradigm that is applicable and it will also incorporate the research setting and participants. Data collection methods will be discussed, and the data collection approaches are selected based on best fit. Data analysis will be explored along with any ethical challenges arising. Finally, the validity of the data and how the findings were assimilated will be explored.

### **3.2 What is Self-Study Action Research?**

AR has been defined as ‘a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out’ (Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 162). Coined by Kurt Lewin (1946), this approach is spiral in nature involving a number of steps each of which is composed of a ‘circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action’. AR begins with the practitioner asking the question ‘how do I improve what I am doing’ (Whitehead, 2009: 86). Reflection, which was originally credited to Dewey (1933: 9), was described by him as ‘assessing the grounds of one’s beliefs’. Schon, (1983: 68) posited that when a professional reflects-in-action, they become ‘a researcher in the practice context...and constructs a new theory’.

Thomas (2009: 3) noted that AR is about ‘people thinking for themselves and making their own choices, asking themselves what they should do and accepting the consequences of their own actions’. (Thomas, 2017: 154) concurred that ‘change is central to action research and the emphasis is on problem-solving in whatever way is appropriate’. Through AR practitioners can be in control of their own contexts and lives (McNiff, 2010: 1). ‘This has significant implication in many professional contexts, particularly in teacher professional education’ (McNiff, 2010: 1).

### **3.3 Why I Chose a Self-Study Action Research Approach?**

This AR is based on Froebelian principles of discovery and inquiry being central to the learning process. Learning is not coercive in nature but emerges from engagement and creativity, and the freedom of the child to learn is apparent (Bruce, 2021: 142). The principles inherent in Froebelian practices are also present within AR. Within the latter, students are viewed as creators of knowledge rather than recipients who are passive receptors. Collaboration, discussion and co-operation are encouraged, and positive social relationships emerge from the interaction. Individuals can learn in their own learning style and at their own pace within this democratic system. There is an inquiry-based approach to research (Bruce, 2021: 143). McNiff (2010) highlights key principles upon which AR is founded. These include the necessity for democracy and justice and individuals’ rights to have a voice and be heard. In addition, AR is also based on the right of the individual to demonstrate the focus they have applied to their learning in order to enhance their work practices and the desire to experience truth, both in their personal and professional lives (McNiff, 2010: 1). She elaborates further that AR is open-ended and begins with an idea which is developed by the researcher which ultimately culminates in a form of self-evaluation (McNiff, 2010: 2).

Embarking on this AR process I asked myself key questions for example ‘what are my values?’ and ‘what values do I live out in my practice?’ In addition, I questioned if there were areas of my practice in which I was a ‘living contradiction’? (Whitehead, 2009: 87). If so, how could I overcome this experience and live more closely to my values?’ Through the exploration of these questions, I established the area of concern in my practice that I wanted to explore and why?’ As expressed by Dewey (1966), Freire (1972) and Sullivan (2004) I strived to become a knowledge-creator and a developer of new theories. However, I will also be mindful to the possibility that there may be others who will interpret my results differently and that my ‘findings are always tentative, rather than conclusive’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 135). ‘As teacher researchers, we can display our findings and argue for their value, but always with one hesitation, a stutter, a tentativeness – never as the truth’ (Kincheloe, 2003: 150).

In addition, this form of research provided me with the opportunity as a teacher-researcher to develop my learning and consequently expand both professionally and personally (McNiff, 2013). The development and improvement of one’s practice in SSAR comes about by the systematic and intentional reflection on one’s own practice (Loughran, 2007) and this aligns with my professional and personal values. Whitehead (1989) posits that through this critical reflection process in AR, teachers can claim new knowledge through their findings.

### **Research Paradigms**

The framework within which this research is situated is significant, as it provides ‘beliefs and dictates, which, for scholars in a particular discipline, influence what should be studied, how it should be studied and how the results of the study should be interpreted’

(Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Cohen et al. (2018) cite Kuhn's (1962) view of a paradigm as 'a way of looking at or researching phenomena; a world view'.

### **Choice of Research Paradigm: Interpretive & Pragmatic**

The research paradigm (Kuhn 1962) on which this research is based, is interpretive in approach which, 'in contrast to its normative counterpart, is characterized by a concern for the individual and sets out to understand their interpretations of the world around them'. (Cohen et. al., 2007: 21) 'Being future oriented, the interpretive approach focuses on actions, it is thought of as 'behaviour with meaning; it is intentional behaviour'. (Cohen et al., 2018: 19). Through 'the interpretivist lens I will examine situations 'through the eyes of participants rather than the researcher' (Cohen et al., 2018: 19).

A pragmatic approach was adopted by me as 'no conclusion of scientific research can be converted into an immediate rule of educational art' (Dewey, 1929b: 9). A pragmatic view 'deals with the questions of knowledge and acquisition of knowledge within the framework of a philosophy of action' (Biesta & Burbules, 2003: 16). Moreover, 'education is a thoroughly human practice in which questions about 'how' are inseparable from questions about 'why' and 'what for' (Biesta & Burbules, 2003: 26). This philosophy resonated strongly within my SSAR while considering the criticism of a pragmatic approach. Biesta and Burbules (2003: 82) cite Russell's (1930) contention that 'Dewey's pragmatism identifies truth with, and hence reduces truth to, individual satisfaction'.



These sentiments were essential to enhance my practices in the teaching of Literacy. Through collaboration with all research participants knowledge was co-created through this dialogue and communication process.

### **3.3.1 Values: Educational, Ontological and Epistemological**

‘Values are kernel to action research approaches, as they underpin the framing of one’s research question’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 3). As my values evolved from my epistemological, ontological and educational values, my choice of living-theory SSAR finds its roots in these sources. ‘Ontological values stem from one’s way of being in the world and can permeate our relationships with our fellow human beings’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 3). These values can be expressed this ‘in terms of flows of life-affirming energy with the embodied values that give meaning and purpose to the life of the individual’ (Whitehead, 2009: 88).

#### **Epistemological Values**

‘Epistemological values are to do with how we view knowledge; ontological values are to do with being and how we see ourselves in relation with others’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 31). I concur with Foucault (1980) who identified the powerful nature of knowledge, but recognise that information sharing should be created with dialogue (Buber, 1958). Collaboration with dialogue, was a core value within this research project. Educational values can be described as ‘the things you value around education, such as inclusion, social justice and democracy’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 3). I concur with Sullivan et al. (2016: 3) who consider these three categories of values as interconnected.

### **Educational Values**

My overarching value is based on ‘equality of education’, and I agree with Dewey’s view that ‘education is not a preparation for life, education is life itself’ (Dewey, 1966) These values are founded in my training as a Montessori Teacher and are in line with my belief in the significance of early education and intervention. My value of equality of education is reflected in the Montessori philosophy that the child must be seen as a unique being, who is to be looked at in its entirety and not within the constraints of individual parts. An ‘education for life’ (Montessori, 1949: 9) is advocated and the teacher must ensure this is provided. Maria Montessori recommended a teaching technique which regarded ‘the child’s intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination’ (Montessori, 1948: 11). As hand activity allows for each child to learn through the senses the ‘hands are the instruments of man’s intelligence’ (Montessori, 1949: 25).

A multisensory approach is fundamental to this child-led technique. De Luca and Hughes (2014), cite Edwards (2002) in noting commonalities between the Montessori and Froebelian methods ‘including commitments to creating aesthetic learning environments, child-centred programming, developmentally informed pedagogy, spiritual dimensions of learning, and a balanced sense of teaching to the whole child’ (Edwards, 2002). Brosterman (1997) and Follari (2007) compare and contrast these two pedagogies and philosophies in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**

TABLE 1  
Pedagogical and Philosophical Distinctions of Froebel, Montessori, and Waldorf Education

	<i>Guiding Philosophy</i>	<i>View of Children</i>	<i>Role of the Teacher</i>
Froebel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three guiding principles: (a) unity of natural, spiritual, and human dimensions; (b) centrality of family; and (c) play as a fundamental mode of learning</li> <li>• Use of specialized learning materials and activities called gifts and occupations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood as a protected phase of life</li> <li>• Children have a natural inclination to care for plants, animals, and their environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher as “cultivator” and protector of childhood</li> <li>• To observe and draw out the child’s learning</li> <li>• To know how to use the gifts and occupations</li> </ul>
Montessori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is a natural process stemming from the intrinsic interests of the child</li> <li>• Children learn by being purposefully engaged in self-selected activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood as a protected phase of life</li> <li>• Children are naturally spiritual, inquisitive, and capable</li> <li>• With time and space, children will choose tasks appropriate to their development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers as “guide” (i.e., Directrice) and protector of childhood</li> <li>• To carefully prepare the learning environment</li> <li>• To know the use of didactic materials</li> <li>• To observe and document children’s learning</li> </ul>
Waldorf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursery and kindergarten is a time of harmony, beauty, nurturing</li> <li>• Aim of education is to develop the whole child as a free and creative thinker</li> <li>• Rhythm of in- and out-breath activities infuse each day, week, term, and school year</li> <li>• Hands-on, arts- and outdoors-based integrated curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childhood as a protected phase of life</li> <li>• Children grow through three seven-year developmental cycles</li> <li>• In early childhood (i.e., ages 0–7) children learn through imitation, embodied experiences, and their imaginations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher as “loving authority” and protector of childhood</li> <li>• To create an environment of natural materials</li> <li>• To be an exemplary model</li> <li>• To foster the child’s imagination through oral storytelling and play</li> </ul>

Sources: Brosterman (1997) and Follari (2007).

My foundation in the Montessori technique, strengthened by my values within primary school and current Froebelian training, have been a driving force in my research of Literacy through SSAR.

### **Ontological Values**

Within my overarching theme of equality of education, compassion, care and empathy are intertwined and indivisible from my practice. Whitehead and McNiff (2006: 86) argue that the ontological values held by a researcher can ‘transform into an educational commitment’. Bullough and Pinnegar (2004: 319) also claim that ontology ‘should be a central feature of any discussion on the value of self-study research’ as it relates to ‘one’s being in and towards the world (Sullivan et al., 2016: 31). In line with a pragmatic paradigm, this ontological concept is a ‘pragmatic scholarly assertion that holds the power to change the way we research and perceive both ourselves and the world around us’ (Kincheloe & Berry, 2004).

An additional ontological value of 'hope' has emerged through the 'narration' (Kelchtermans, 2018: 237) process of my self-understanding. I understand hope as a 'sense of glad anticipation for the future, one of purpose and of fulfilment and is an essential element of any process which claims to be educational' (Laidlaw, 2018: 31). While I adopted a meta-reflective approach through this SSAR, I discovered that values are dynamic and evolve and grow both within ourselves and in relation to others (Rock, 2022: CRA). As stated by Laidlaw (2018: 32), 'these changes occur over time'. I align with Zembylas who views that teacher identity, founded in values is 'a dynamic, career long process of negotiating the teacher-self' (Zembylas, (2018: 78).

### **Epistemological Values**

Hughes and Hitchcock (1995: 21) assert that epistemological assumptions arise from our ontological values. They also posit that both of these values direct the methodologies used which, as a result determine data instruments collected. Cohen et al. (2018: 3) argue that 'this view moves us beyond regarding research methods as simply a technical exercise, to being concerned with understanding the world'. A MMR design falls naturally within a pragmatic approach to this research project. Cohen et al, (2018: 31) suggest that the MMR approach 'recognises and works with the fact that the world is not exclusively quantitative or qualitative'. McNiff (2013: 29) defines epistemology as 'the name given to the study of what we know and how we come to know it'. She argues that knowledge 'becomes separated from the people who create it' (McNiff, 2013: 29), as researchers in different scientific fields view knowledge as an independent unit.

Dialogue with collaboration is an essential element in my self-reflective practices and is core to the SSAR process. McNiff (2010) describes these self-reflective practices as a ‘form of self-evaluation which creates contexts for critical conversations in which all participants can learn as equals’. McNiff (2013: 45) included an additional category to Habermas’ (1976) three categories of personal-social interests. ‘Dialogical interests (a new category) enable all members in a conversation to find ways of keeping the conversational space open’ and ‘dialogue is more an attitude than a way of speaking: ‘It goes into the process of thought behind the assumptions, not just the assumptions themselves’ (McNiff, 2013: 45). She also proposes that if the result of the research has an educational basis, self-criticism is particularly important especially if ‘dialogue becomes a key criterion and organising framework’ (McNiff, 2013: 17). She concludes that the ‘underlying logic of critical dialogue’ must be made clear (McNiff, 2013: 17).

### **3.4 Preparation /Reconnaissance: Research Plan**

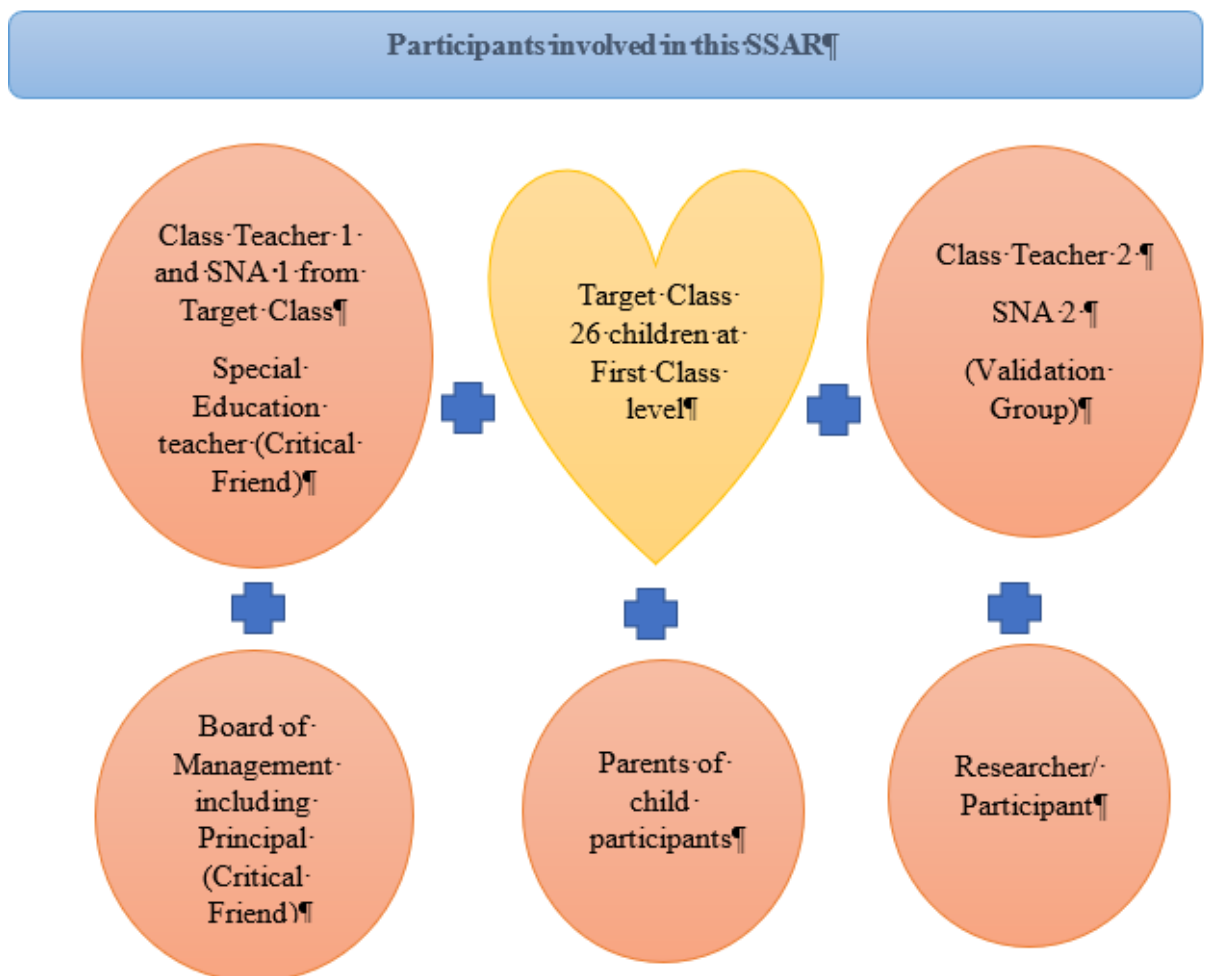
#### **Research Site**

This project was conducted in a middle-class school with an ‘Educate Together’ ethos, in north county Dublin. Two streams are present at each class level, in addition to two classes for children with Autism. With 480 children enrolled in the school, the Senior Management team includes a principal, a non-teaching deputy principal and an assistant principal 1. Other staff include 18 class teachers, 13 support teachers, 12 SNA’s and 8 ancillary staff. The school lives out the principles of ‘Educate Together’ in that it is multid denominational, democratically run, child-centred and promotes the value of equality of education.

### Research Participants

Research participants in this project included 26 First Class children, with me in the role as their Special Education Support Teacher during this school year. Team-teaching practices (including ST) are valued within the school as it supports collaboration among teachers. The First Class children participating in this research project, were under the care of a newly qualified teacher, and this provided me with the opportunity to share Literacy teaching skills through ST strategies. 28 pupils and their parents were invited without bias, to participate on a voluntary basis in this research project with 26 families providing consent/assent. All categories of participants and their roles can be seen in Image 3A

**Image: 3A**



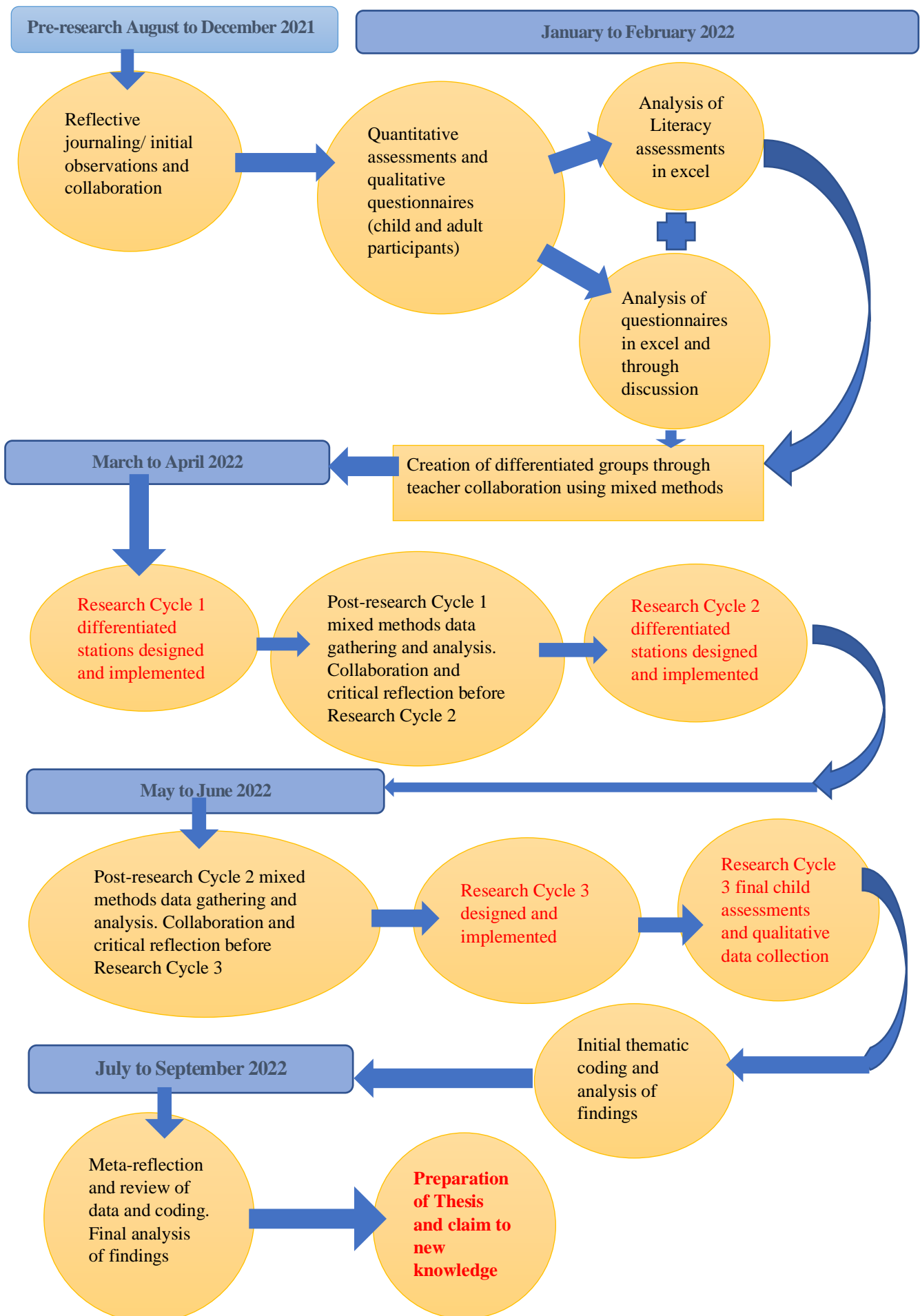
The pupils' role was to participate in the research project, specifically through engaging in Literacy stations, with data gathered throughout this process. The First Class (1) team and one critical friend participated in this SSAR project through the delivery of agreed stations and completion of research tools (questionnaires, feedback sheets, interviews) throughout the process.

One additional critical friend remained outside the ST process because I sought to validate the AR process as 'autonomy, independent thinking and accountability' (McNiff, 2013: 24) are underpinning values. The First Class (2) teacher and SNA (2) were involved in dialogue and collaboration and formed a 'Validation Group'. Parents participated through surveys and questionnaires on how they perceived their children's progress, and there was a communication process in place through teacher / parent emails

### **Research Timeframe**

This research project spanned the course of the academic school year 2021/22. See Image 3.4A which outlines the timeline of events throughout this project.

Image 3.4A





### **3.5 Ethical Considerations: Consent, Assent, Confidentiality and Data Storage**

#### **Informed Consent**

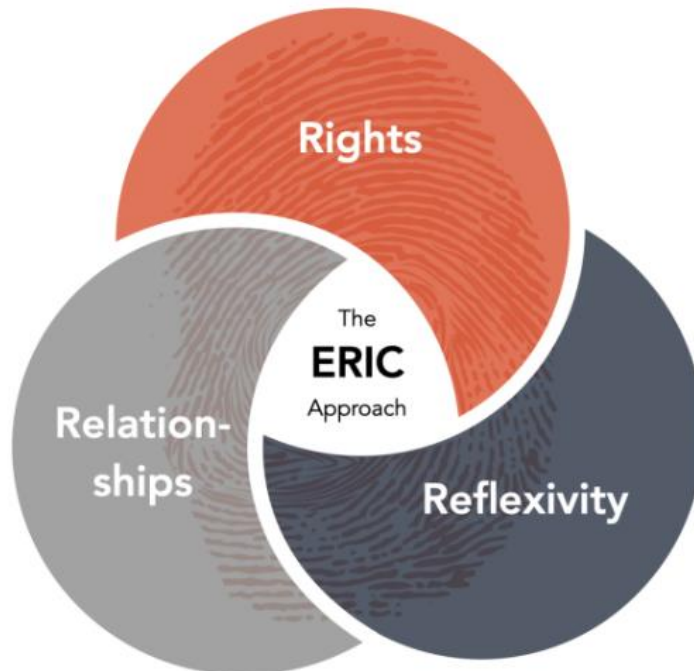
Sullivan et al. (2016: 94) argue that an ethical statement in AR is necessary to ‘protect the rights of the participants, to ensure accuracy and to protect individual and intellectual property rights’. The frameworks on which professional ethics are based include ‘duty, rights, harm and benefit’ to the participants (Alderson & Morrow, 2011: 11). They cite Bruntal et al. (2003), who reviewed research involving children and noted that ‘children's own views are rarely heard so that basic data are missing’. Bruntal et al. (2003) explained that research involving children should ‘engage children in a way that honours them as research participants [and] in a dialogue that is meaningful to them’ (Bruntal et al., 2003: 102). With each co-participant it was essential for me to respect the ‘dignity of the persons’ within this study (Sullivan et al., 2016: 95) These are the guidelines to which I hold myself accountable.

Twenty-six children in First Class participated in this SSAR project. No incentives were offered for participation and all participation was voluntary with the option of withdrawal without consequence. After receiving ethical approval from Maynooth University for my research proposal, a request for permission to conduct my action research was sent to my Principal and Board of Management. Other ‘gate keepers’ (Cohen et al., 2011) including Parents of the children in First Class, Critical Friends, work colleagues and First Class children were also included in the consent and assent process See Appendix 20 for all Ethical Consent forms. To protect the participants’ ‘right to freedom and self-determination’ (Cohen et al., 2018: 52), informed consent was essential to the process. Informed consent is achieved when participants are made aware in clear and appropriate language of the purpose and process of the research. (Mockler, 2014).

Compliance with ethical requirements included consideration of all Maynooth University and Froebel Department Ethics Policies, Integrity Policy, and Child Welfare Policy. Other national ethical guidelines were also adhered to including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Children First guidance and Guidance for Developing Ethical Research Projects involving Children (DCYA). Due consideration was also given to the ethical consideration outlined by the Teaching Council of Ireland. Finally, ethical considerations within my school context were complied with, including the School Safeguarding Statement, and School Data Protection Policy.

### **Child Assent**

Letters of assent using child-appropriate language were provided to children to explain the research process clearly (Appendix 20). This is in accordance with the Maynooth University Ethics Policy. An information letter (Appendix 20) was sent to parents which was read with their child. This detailed the role of the child in this study. It was highlighted within these consent and assent forms that any participant has the option to withdraw from this study without implication. I have valued the 'Ethical Research Involving Children' model (ERIC) which 'reflects a commitment to children's rights, the role of relationships and the need for researcher reflexivity in advancing ethical research' (Powell et al., 2016). See Image 3B

**Image 3B**

Prior to obtaining consent, I also spoke to all children within the class about the purpose of this research, their role and what the intervention would involve using age-appropriate language. It was explained that their names would not be used, and they would be allocated a number. Ethical consent forms for completion under the guidance of their parents were provided. Child assent forms were completed in class when consent was received from home with both parents and child signatures.

### **Confidentiality and Data Storage**

All participants in this research were treated with strict confidentiality and were anonymised using a unique number thereby protecting their identity. All data collected was confidential and stored in encrypted files with a password. Audio recordings were transcribed, and recordings were destroyed. Any data collected in paper form was held in a locked filing cabinet. This data will be stored by me for ten years in line with university regulations, prior to being destroyed.

### **3.6 Data Collection**

#### **Introduction**

The data collected for this research study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. This represents a MMR approach. Cohen et al. (2018) highlight how a mixed methods approach reaches into all aspects and stages of action research, impacting on the choice of philosophical theories applied and choice of paradigm. A range of decisions evolve from this approach and relate to the ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, data collection methods and how data is analysed and interpreted (Cohen et al., 2018: 445). Yin (2006: 42) argues that the stronger the mix of methods and their integration at all stages, the stronger the benefit of MMR approaches. The research methodologies utilised in this research project include reflective journal, observations, assessments, rubrics, checklists, and questionnaires/surveys.

#### **3.6.1 Data Collection Tools: Mixed Methods Research**

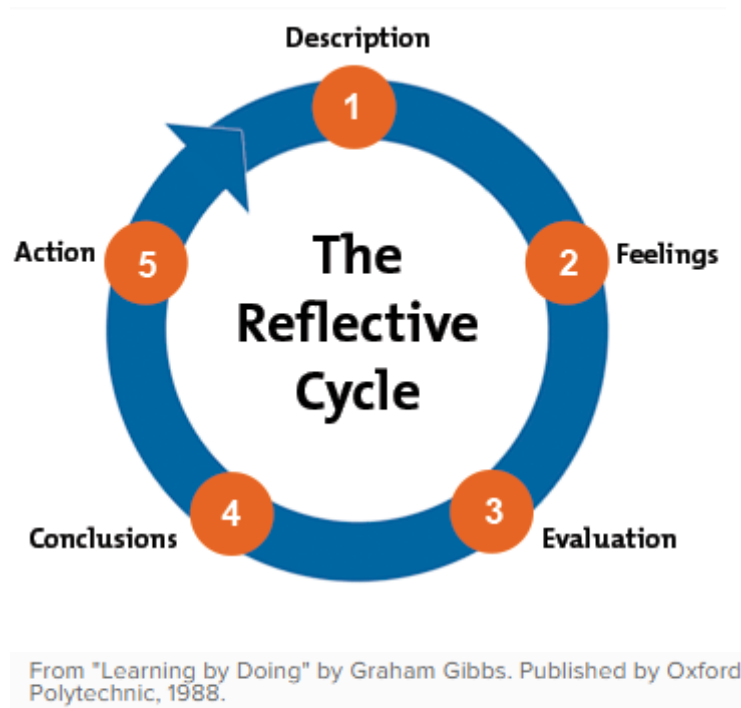
As outlined above, a MMR approach was employed in the process of data collection. Qualitative data collection methods included my reflective journal, teacher observations, children's work samples, two critical friends, a validation group, questionnaires, interviews with the children and their parents and interviews with teachers. A highlights chair through audio recordings from the children and conferencing also provided valuable insights into this SSAR. Teacher observations feedback forms and ST plans further enhanced the analysis of findings to determine the validity of my claim to new knowledge. Collaboration meetings with class teachers were also utilised. Quantitative data collection tools incorporated baseline assessments of the children's progress prior to, and following, all cycles of interventions during this project. Through this MMR approach triangulation of data is supported.

## Qualitative Data Collection

### Reflective journal

A reflective journal is an essential component of the data collection process (Moon, 2004; Brookfield, 2012). Kemmis et al. (2014) argue that the aim of AR is to ‘change from practice to praxis’. Cohen et al. (2018: 445) refer to this as ‘committed, informed, self-realizing action’ and refer to McNiff’s (2010) view of the reflective process as ‘diagnosis, action and reflection’ (Cohen et al., 2018: 442). Gibbs’ Reflective Model (1998) mirrored my personal approach to reflective practices describing six stages illustrated in Image 3C and this was adopted throughout this SSAR.

Image 3C



Throughout the critical analysis of this ST intervention ‘reflections-in-action and reflections-on-action’ (Schon, 1987) provided validity and rigour to my new approach. Umutlu & Kim (2020), cite Dewey (1933), in describing reflection as an iterative process from past experiences resulting in more informed future decision making. Umutlu and Kim (2020), refer to reflection-in-action as a dynamic process and reflection-on-action as a review of past experiences. They highlight that Schon (1987) distinguishes between ‘reflection-in-action’, (which he refers to as ‘professional artistry’) from ‘knowing-in-action’.

I also completed a daily reflective journal recording feelings, observations, thought processes and events. This daily reflection supported the evaluation, planning, implementation, feedback and the review processes of how I collaborated on and enhanced my practices. Through linking in with Gibbs’ (1998) model I moved my reflective processes from ‘practice to praxis’ (Kemmis et al., 2014). This illustrated to me whether I was living to my values or existing as a ‘living contradiction’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009: 94).

### **Observation**

Sullivan et al. (2018: 81) note that ‘when you are examining your teaching, your pupils are part of the process’. Observations of children throughout the DST intervention occurred daily, using group feedback sheets on a clipboard accompanying each group from station to station (See Appendix 4). Teachers at each station completed observations for each child under the appropriate heading representing their station e.g., ‘Phonics’. This provided valuable live data to support the reflection and planning process.

### **Children's work samples/ Audio recording of Highlights Chair**

Samples of children's work were collected during each cycle of this DST intervention. At each station, which will be outlined below in 'Interventions', children had colour-coded folders which housed any paper materials they required for that station. These folders were colour coded Yellow (high ability), Red (high average), Green (average) and Blue (low average). Information was also gathered through interviews and recordings from a 'Highlights Chair', where children discussed their highlights and commented on their experiences throughout the research project. The 'Highlights Chair' recordings were transcribed, and recordings were destroyed in line with ethical approval.

### **Critical Friends and Validation Group**

As highlighted by Sullivan et al. (2018: 29) 'researching one's own actions is not the difficult part: researching one's rationale for that practice and for those actions is difficult; researching one's ideas, thoughts, assumptions and values is difficult too'. Through two critical friends and a validation group of two work colleagues, I collated data at each pre and post-cycle positions to allow for feedback and collaboration. This data collection process took the form of meetings through which I took notes and they signed to confirm they were representative of our discussions.

### **Questionnaires and Interviews with Children, Parents, and Teachers**

Sullivan et al. (2016: 82) describe triangulation as gaining the perspective of others to cross-check your work demonstrating the accuracy and validity of the data findings. Cohen et al. (2011: 265) concur that triangulation is a way to throw light on the complex nature of human behaviour from studying it from varying perspectives, noting that it 'is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity'.

Pre-Cycle 1 questionnaires were completed by child and adult participants to establish initial viewpoints in advance of the DST intervention or RC1. At the end of RC1, all child participants were re-surveyed to gain their perspective on how to improve or change process for RC2. Feedback from the First Class team participants (both Class Teachers, both SNA's and another Support teacher) was obtained through the daily feedback sheets along with a post-Cycle 1 meeting. This provided valuable information to feed into RC2. See Appendix 5 for post-RC1 meeting notes with Teacher A. After RC2 all child participants were once again surveyed, and a post-RC2 meeting was repeated to ensure collaboration. I communicated with parents through email between Cycles 1 and 2 and then again between Cycles 2 and 3. See Appendix 6 for Child 22's post-RC2 questionnaire.

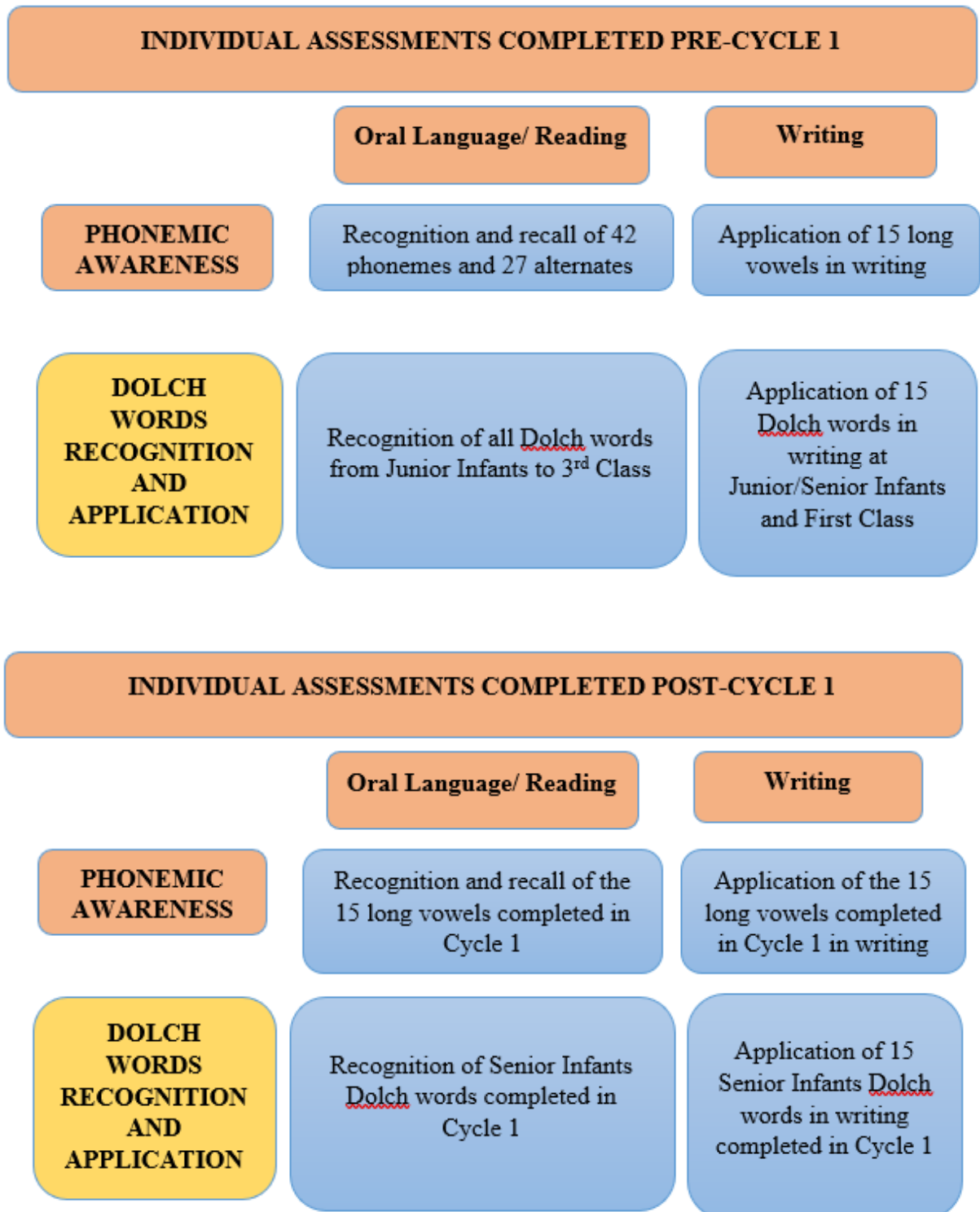
Parents and all adult participant completed these questionnaires at the end of RC3. Children also participated in the 'Highlights Chair' audio recordings as outlined above. These data collection tools provided triangulation and rigour to the validation of the findings.

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

I collected key baseline literacy markers at critical points within this SSAR project. These instruments are described in full detail within the 'Interventions' to provide a detailed explanation of how and why they were used. See Image 3D for each pre and post-Cycle assessments.



Image 3D



**INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED PRE-CYCLE 2**

	<b>Oral Language/ Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>PHONEMIC AWARENESS</b>	Recognition and recall 'R' controlled vowels (called 'Bossy R')	Application of 15 examples of 'R' controlled vowels in
<b>DOLCH WORDS RECOGNITION AND APPLICATION</b>	No additional assessment required. The starting position for First Class <u>Dolch</u> words was established at pre-cycle 1 stage. First Class <u>Dolch</u> words were covered during Cycle 2	

**INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED POST-CYCLE 2**

	<b>Oral Language/ Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>PHONEMIC AWARENESS</b>	Recognition and recall 'R' controlled vowels (called 'Bossy R')	Application of 15 examples of 'R' controlled vowels in
<b>DOLCH WORDS RECOGNITION AND APPLICATION</b>	Recognition of <u>First Class Dolch</u> words completed in Cycle 2	Application of 15 <u>First Class Dolch</u> words in writing completed in Cycle 2

**INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED PRE-CYCLE 3**

**Oral Language/ Reading**

**Writing**

**FLUENCY  
INTONATION  
AND  
EXPRESSION**

Assessed children's reading using a fluency rubric. Children's books were differentiated across 3 levels

No additional assessments

**INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS COMPLETED POST-CYCLE 3**

**Oral Language/ Reading**

**Writing**

**FLUENCY  
INTONATION  
AND  
EXPRESSION**

Re-assessed children's reading using a fluency rubric and the same books as at the pre-cycle stage

No additional assessments

### **3.7 The Intervention**

#### **3.7.1 Research Cycle 1: Differentiated Literacy Stations**

With ethical approval received and the data collection tools identified and in place, the initial assessments of the children's literacy skills were completed. RC1 ran from 17<sup>th</sup> January to 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022. Assessments were completed during the previous two weeks of January 2022. I individually assessed children in phonemic awareness identifying 42 phonemes and 27 alternates as illustrated in Image 3D. Appendix 8 presents the summary of the initial assessments, and these results highlighted the 'messiness and uncertainty' (Goodnough, 2008) which is inherent in action research. On analysing this information in excel it became apparent that children's recognition of sounds was better than expected. I immediately changed my plan for the RC1 Phonics station. I noted in my reflective journal 'to establish where the gaps are in children's phonics knowledge, I am completing another assessment of how children are applying their phonics knowledge in writing. I will particularly focus on Long Vowels' (Rock, 2022: CRJ 14/01/22). The starting point of any activity must focus on what the child can do rather than what it cannot achieve. (Bruce, 2021: 142). As outlined in Chapter 2, elements of Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) gave a particular focus within each of the stations for each AR cycle

I then assessed each child in Dolch (Sight) words starting at Junior Infants. As the children are in First Class I assessed each child in both Junior (40) and Senior (52) Infants words. Where a child appeared stressed while reading Junior or Senior Infants words, I stopped the assessment, giving praise for their attempts.

The following approach was then adopted:

- a. Where a child exceeded 90% of Senior Infants words, I progressed to First Class words.
- b. Where a child exceeded 90% of First Class words, I progressed to Second Class words.
- c. Where a child exceeded 90% of Second Class words, I progressed to Third Class words.

Initial analysis of assessments indicated that 16 out of 26 (62%) children recognised more than 133 Dolch words exceeding the First Class level. As a result, children were assessed in the application of those words in spelling to establish a starting point in Dolch words. Appendix 9 illustrates all First Class children's pre-cycle 1 assessments in the application of 15 specific words at Junior Infants, Senior Infants and First Class level. These results demonstrated a gap which I could support through this DST intervention.

These assessments were analysed on an individual child basis using excel. This provided a running record of each child's progress which could be added to at the end of each cycle. Detailed analysis provided a deep understanding of how each child was progressing from a quantitative perspective. From this excel model, I created differentiated groups. The groupings were arrived at, firstly, based on how many Dolch words children could apply in writing, and secondly, by how children performed in their application of long vowels in writing. As previously mentioned, these groups were named as Yellow (higher able), Red (high average), Green (average), Blue (lower ability). Children were not aware of the purpose of the colour coding.

The ability grouping of children challenged my thinking as I considered in my CRJ ‘am I living to my value of equality of education with both higher and lower able groups? Am I preferring the needs of one to the other in preparing the materials? Why do I find myself constantly thinking more of the lower ability children? How can I create the Power Hour in as equitable a manner as possible?’ (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 12/01/22).

Both sets of quantitative assessments above were matched with the qualitative data gathered through teacher observations and questionnaires from all participants. Children’s pre-RC1 questionnaire indicated that the higher ability group felt that books available to them were not challenging enough. Children 1, 2, 5, 9, 12 and 15 all identified their preference for more challenging books and tricky words. Children within the Blue group identified their struggle with reading and comprehension and needing help while reading to understand stories.

Discussions through collaboration with teachers took account of other holistic factors (e.g., child’s self-confidence/self-esteem) to arrive at final differentiated groupings. Teacher B noted in pre-cycle 1 questionnaire, that she wanted to see an improvement in ‘children recognising digraphs, an improvement in the spelling of tricky words and a rise in confidence in literacy across the entire class’ (Teacher B, 31/01/22: pre-RC1 questionnaire). Teacher A noted in the same questionnaire that ‘the identification of all digraphs and vowel sounds, a focus on blending’ was where she was seeing the gaps arising and widening in the class (Teacher A, 31/01/22: pre-RC1 questionnaire). As no quantitative assessments of children’s reading fluency took place at this stage of the process, the qualitative data was relied upon to confirm the grouping.

Throughout the initial collaboration process with my colleagues, I had become aware of the need to reflect on my relationship with them as I had noted ‘how can I encourage my teaching colleagues to question what I am saying, speak up and offer their opinions? I am trying to encourage them to question my suggestions, but they are coming to our meetings with a pen and paper ready to take notes!’ (Rock, 2021: CRJ August). While reflecting on my practices I noted that reflection becomes critical when it clarifies teachers’ understanding of power and hegemony (Brookfield, 2017: 9). I explored the power dynamics between myself and my colleagues. Through the application of one of Brookfield’s four lenses ‘Colleagues’ Perceptions’ (Brookfield, 2017: 8), I offered to model lessons to allow my colleagues make observations about how children participated, withdrew or listened, during my lessons. This provided them with an opportunity to engage in the observation process but also become aware of elements of our practice that often go unnoticed (Brookfield, 2017: 8).

This approach served to support an equal footing where teachers were more willing to engage in meaningful collaboration prior to RC1. I subsequently noted ‘teachers are very much looking forward to participating in and collaborating with me on literacy skills. They feel unprepared to deliver the programme. I remember that feeling’ (Rock, 2021: CRJ, 16/11/21). The transformative power of critical reflection combined with dialogue with others is highlighted by McDonagh et al. (2020: 10).

### **The Stations**

Through this collaboration process the content of RC1 was agreed and designed. See Appendix 10 for RC1 Plan. This included four stations which lasted 12-15 minutes depending on set up time. ‘Reading’, ‘Phonics’, ‘Dolch Words’ and ‘Free-writing’ were the centres to which children rotated. Three stations were manned by a teacher, with

‘Free-writing’ reflecting the independent nature of the activity. Each differentiated ability group moved from station to station with a ‘daily leader’ responsible to bring the clipboard carrying that groups colour-coded feedback sheets for the teacher to fill in. A high level of organisation was required with a trolley housing all of the resources in colour coded folders. It was also essential to prepare the children for ‘how to move’ in advance of RC1. A simulation of Power Hour was therefore created during the week prior to the intervention in preparation for its commencement.

### Reading Station

The Reading station incorporated levelled readers where children read through echo, choral, and independent reading. Image 3.E illustrates the levels used and titles read during RC1.

### Image 3E

Research Cycle 1 Reading Station: Big Cat Levelled Readers

√ = Read

Blue Group Level 5		Green Group Level 6	
Sam the Big, Bad Cat	√	The Mermaid and the Octopus	√
Dance to the Beat	√	Sounds	√
Rebecca at the Funfair	√	What’s Underground?	√
Percy and the Rabbit	√	Talk, Talk, Talk	√
Have a Party	√	Robots	√
Hands	√	Bertie’s Band	√
The New Kite	√	Hansel and Gretel	√
The Wind	√	The Rainforest at Night	√
Where is my School?	√	Percy and the Badger	√
The Little Egg	√		
Rat-a-tat-tat	√		
Red Group Level 7		Yellow Group Level 9	
Jodie the Juggler	√	Castles	√
A Day at Eden Project	√	Harry the Clever Spider	√
Spines, Stings and Teeth	√	Fly Facts	√
Big Cat Babies	√	A Visit to the Farm	√
Worm Looks for Lunch	√	Chewy Hughie	√
Scary Hair	√	The Stone Cutter	√
Making Books	√	Africa’s Big Three	√
The Magic Pen	√	Horses’ Holiday	√



Children made predictions, connections, and visualised the circumstances of each story while incorporating these key comprehension strategies. Each child within the group had their own copy of the book and teachers had flexibility to move the group up or down a level as required. The teacher repeated the story on occasions where it was felt that repetition would support fluency. Some comments from the Yellow group's feedback sheets noted that 'Child 7 is finding it hard to predict based on the cover and is only reading the author's name' (Teacher A, RC1 week 2, Feedback sheet). Child 25 (Yellow) has great fluency but needs to focus on intonation' (Teacher A, RC1 week 1, Feedback sheet). Teacher A also commented during week 2 that Child 16 (Red group) has 'good decoding skills, focus on fluency'.

### **The Phonics Station**

The Phonics station commenced in RC1 using a multisensory approach to the embedding of phonics and utilised a variety of resources. At this station children covered 'Long Vowels'. Activities within this station commenced with children identifying the target sounds through sandpaper tiles, feeling the sound while engaging other senses. Children were invited to write the sound on another child's back or in the air as a method of reinforcing it. For each individual group we brainstormed words using the target sounds on mini whiteboards. Children worked individually or in pairs depending on the needs of the group. Matching games through pictures and word cards were utilised to support the blending process. Dictation of sounds, 'swap games', snakes and ladders games, word shape quizzes and word searches were all utilised as part of this station to support each groups' recognition and application of Long Vowels. See Table 3.1 for how digraphs were approached:

**Table 3.1**

Week	Vowel Digraph	Alternates covered
1	Long 'I'	/ie/ /i-e/ /igh/ and 'y' as I
2	Long 'U'	/ue/ /ew/ /u-e/
3	Long O	/ow/ /oa/ /o-e/
4	Long A and Long E	/ai/ /ay/ /a-e/ and /ee/ /ea/ 'y' as E, /e-e/

Children were challenged to think of 'WOW' words using these sounds and a list of these challenging words were displayed on the classroom wall to build on each day. They were also invited to look in their home and school environments to become aware of the sounds they see each day becoming a 'sound detective'. Children within the weaker groups completed less of the final written tasks as the focus remained on blending skills and word building using the target sound and movable alphabet. Learning outcomes for each group were differentiated with resources created for each group to provide the opportunity of working at their own pace.

### **Dolch (Sight) Words Station**

Senior Infants Dolch words were targeted during RC1. Children were initially introduced to the words for that week through large flash cards at the station. A Montessori technique called a '3 period lesson' was implemented which I had trained all teachers in previously. This involves introducing 3 words at a time using 'this is 'all'', 'show me all'', what is this'? For both periods one and two of the lesson the teacher introduces the language of the target words, whereas at period 3 the teacher only progresses to 'what is this' when the children are identifying the word through repeated games. This allowed for individual differentiation within the group. Whole body movement was then used with the children jumping, following the teacher's instructions, to find the work on the floor. The final part of the session involved the written application of the word in a written activity which I had created with the target words for the week. This was called 'roll-a-sight-word'.

Children first read the words on the sheet and identified which number (1-6) on the die it was associated with on the sheet. See Appendix 11 for Child 2's sample of this activity. Children then rolled the die individually or in pairs and used a 'look, say, cover, write, check' approach to read, write then check the target word. The challenge at this station lay in reminding the children that it was not a copying exercise, writing the words independently was the task. Accuracy and not speed was preferred as some children raced to finish first. Children were reminded to focus on the parts of the words they got correct rather than their errors or omissions. When finished, children were invited to challenge themselves to write a sentence using each word on the back This practice was reviewed in RC2 to include a more SOR approach. Words were approached as in Table 3.2:

**Table 3.2**

Week	Target Dolch Words – Senior Infants
1	all, are, ate, black, be, brown
2	eat, came, do, four, good, did, have, he, like, new, now, no
3	out, our, please, pretty, ride, saw, say, so, that, they, she, soon
4	under, was, went, white, who, will

### **Free-Writing Station**

The 1999 curriculum suggested that the reading process requires particular skills, and these include an understanding of the conventions of print, knowledge of sight word vocabulary and word identification strategies. The LECPE recognised the interrelationship between reading, writing, listening and speaking and, how supporting one area can transfer into another area of literacy. The link to reading is created through

the 'free-writing' station which involved the children writing a story using a cue card as a stimulus. Higher able or more confident children had the option to write their own stories based on characters and settings of their choice.

### **Changes In My Practices in RC1**

While reflecting on my practices during RC1 I noted further questions arising from the interventions and the 'messiness' (Goodnough, 2008: 431) once again of AR. Although I was reflecting-in-action (Schon, 1983), by adjusting the stations on a daily basis to suit the needs of the children, I questioned 'how do I differentiate equitably for Children 6 and 19? Is Power Hour working for them? Do I continue with the programme as it is showing improvements or adjust their Power Hour even further'? (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 20/01/22). I decided on reflection, to slow the pace even further for these children at the Phonics Station, and complete tasks using a multisensory approach only. Written work was excluded. Feedback from these children in their post-RC1 questionnaire showed that both children 6 and 19 found the phonics station helped them 'more than a little' when asked to indicate its usefulness from 'A lot', 'more than a little', 'a little' and 'not at all'.

Feedback from pre-RC1 questionnaires indicated some children found the busyness of the class difficult so during the course of RC1, I changed the practice of all groups being in the classroom. Instead, I set the phonics groups close to the classroom door, allowing for noise reduction. I provided more regular feedback to children on how they were improving as I noted from my reflective journal 'while children are improving significantly in phonics this is in contrast with how they think they are actually performing. I think I need to give more immediate feedback to boost their confidence and motivation' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 07/02/22)

Another change in my practice occurred as I became more aware of my own hegemonic assumptions. Brookfield (2017: 17) argued that critical reflection is possible when an individual uncovers their own hegemonic assumptions that is the ‘very assumptions that work to enslave us’ (Brookfield, 2017: 5). One such hegemonic assumption was that the First Class children would have had an inherent interest in participating in the completion of questionnaires on how to improve Power Hour, as it would assist other First Class children in the future. I asked myself did the children feel the research was being imposed on them rather than completed with them? On reflection I noted ‘maintaining momentum for the children is harder than I thought. Is it the power dynamic? How can I address it?’ (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 18/02/22). The change I adopted in my practices was to highlight to the children the crucial role they played in this process. I reminded them that they were ‘co-researchers’ which transformed the power dynamic and demonstrated to me that children ‘can be conduits for other children’s voices’ (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015). Children’s motivation to participate in the mundane task of questionnaire completion was transformed.

### **3.7.2 Research Cycle 2: Differentiated Literacy Stations**

This AR cycle took place from March 14<sup>th</sup> to 05<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Following RC1, I re-assessed children in the 15 ‘Long Vowels’ targeted at the Phonics Station and 15 Senior Infants Dolch words, which were originally assessed prior to RC1. Although all Senior Infants Dolch words were targeted during this cycle, I felt that, to ensure consistency, validity and rigour in the data, the same words should be retested out of context. This data was once again collated in excel, to extend the information previously noted for each child. The groups were re-sorted based on their knowledge of Long Vowels and their application of Senior Infants Dolch words in writing. Qualitative data was also collated

with children feeding back their opinions on RC1 through questionnaires. See Appendix 12 for a sample Child 13's (Blue) pre and post-cycle 1 assessment of 'Long Vowels'.

Teachers, SNA's and the other Support Teacher participated in collaboration again through a joint discussion on 18/02/22. This meeting served two purposes. Firstly, it provided me with the opportunity to present the quantitative analysis I had completed on a child-by-child basis over all the literacy indicators. Secondly, it allowed for discussion and collaboration as a basis for planning RC2 and allowed everyone to examine the quantitative data to agree on new differentiated groups. As a result of the quantitative analysis and qualitative discussions, four children moved groups. Child 9 moved from Yellow to Red, Child 13 moved from Blue to Green, Child 20 moved from Green to Blue and Child 12 moved from Green to Red.

During this reflection on qualitative and quantitative data, I highlighted where the next steps in the children's phonics knowledge should take us. This will be examined further in Chapter 4 'Data Findings and Conclusion'. R-controlled vowels were identified as a target for RC2. Children had improved significantly in their knowledge of 'Long Vowels' and the vowels with 'r' (e.g., ar, or, er/ir/ur) had appeared as a gap in our pre-cycle 1 intervention. See Appendix 13 for a sample of Child 16's pre and post-cycle 2 assessment of R-controlled vowels

Feedback suggestions from this collaboration (Meeting with First Class Team, 18/02/22) also suggested additional differentiation through further fine-tuning of objectives for the Blue group. Extended games to challenge the Yellow group in Dolch words and a focus

on comprehension written activities after reading was also suggested by Teacher A. She noted that children were decoding but not necessarily comprehending when reading. Children's post-RC1 questionnaire also supported the decision to extend the reading' station to include written comprehension questions. Child 24 commented 'we need harder readers' and Child 2 (both Yellow group) added 'I like the fact books but I'd like harder readers' (Children's post-RC1 questionnaire, 18/02/22). These comments formed part of the discussion during the First Class team meeting on 18/02/22. My suggestion of an approach called 'heart words' at the Dolch station was agreed upon to be implemented. Elements of Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) were addressed through the elements of 'Language Comprehension' and 'Word Recognition' at each station. See Appendix 14 for RC2 Plan.

## **The Stations**

### **Reading Comprehension**

As in RC1, comprehension' strategies of 'prediction', 'connections', and 'visualising' were the focus during reading. 'Determining importance', another comprehension strategy, was introduced during RC2. In line with RC1 the author, illustrator, and title were discussed before reading the story. A resource called 'The Literacy Box 1' with individual graded literacy stories and answer cards provided the reading materials. Once again differentiated materials for each group were copied and colour coded in folders to ensure all children had their own reading comprehension material. I identified 'Points to note' in the preparation materials for teachers. See Appendix 15 for RC2 notes on the titles, genres and notes created for this station.

Children within the Blue group however, required further differentiation as they were not yet ready to attempt the basic level of this series. I sourced and prepared copies of materials which looked similar in style to Literacy Box 1 but with very clear objectives. These stories called 'My Very First Phonics Passages' (Appendix 16) presented information in story form, with key questions for children to extract information. These books used sight words they had previously learned, and worked on repeating word families e.g., 'ab', 'en', 'ig'. At this station each child read the materials through independent reading and discussion. Children then completed the comprehension questions in writing.

### **Phonological Awareness: Orthographic-Mapping**

Orthographic word-mapping activities were explored in RC2. This system is a physical way to represent the relationship between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (their written representation). 'R-controlled Vowels' (ar, er/ir/ur, and or) activities employed a system of 'say it, tap it, map it, graph it, write it', making the phoneme to grapheme connection.

Initially, children were introduced to the concept through a 'Bossy R' video and song to stimulate their interest. Each of the digraphs were then approached systematically through building the sound with the movable alphabet. A booklet of words had been prepared in advance with the target sound for the week. The process involved initial discussion of the pictures to identify the words and children were invited to put them in a sentence orally. Then children said the word and 'tapped' the sounds while touching the circles under each phoneme in the word. Next children 'mapped' the word and coloured in each phoneme circle using a Bingo marker while repeating the phoneme. Then each child 'graphed' the



word by writing each phoneme in a shape box and finally wrote the word fluidly in cursive handwriting. See Appendix 17 for Child 10's sample of orthographic mapping of R-controlled Vowels.

Children were invited to count the phonemes when the number of circles differed from activity to activity and work out why they thought that was happening. This was to engage higher order thinking. For each digraph children were also asked to think of WOW or challenging words e.g., 'participate', 'universe', 'mercury' and these words were displayed within the class during the term. Phonological awareness became evident where some children began relating two 'R-controlled' vowels in words as in 'mercury' using 'er/ur. Children also related their new learning to previous learning e.g., 'participate' with 'ar' and 'a-e'.

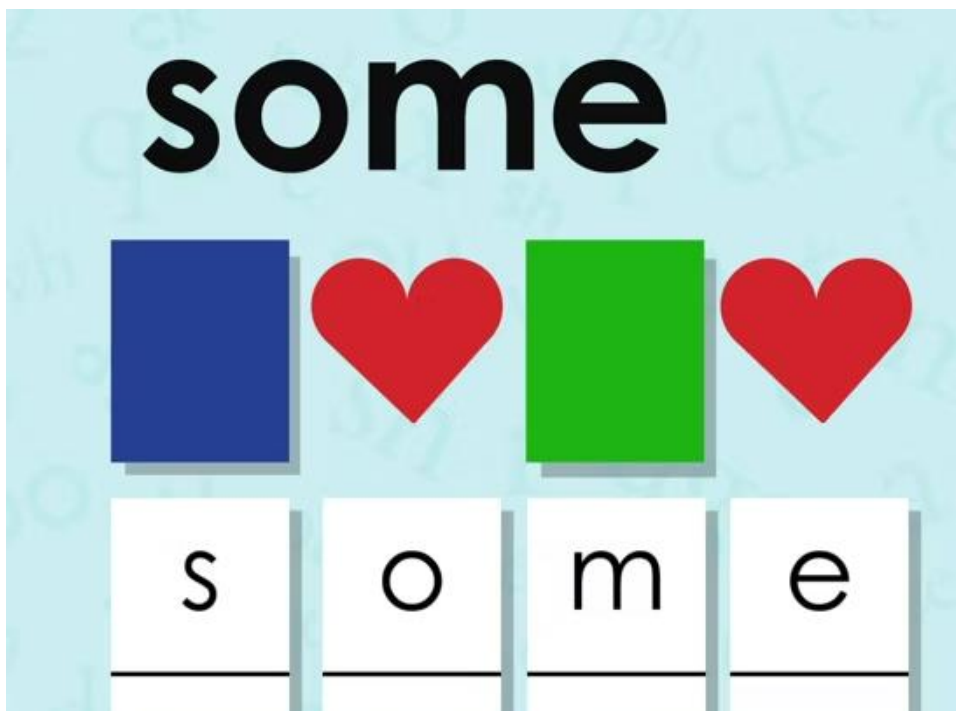
While reflecting-in-action at the beginning of RC2 I noted: 'R-controlled vowels are a more difficult topic to teach. Some children need to be reminded of what the vowels are and the importance of vowels in a word' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 16/03/22). A gap in children's vocabulary became more evident and I commented 'children did not understand words like turf, surf, cord and kerb. As a result, language understanding has to supported along the way' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 28/03/22). I also noted their increased motivation and enthusiasm for this station as children were rushing to pick their Bingo marker. On 21/03/22 I noted in my CRJ 'Child 6 (Blue group) had a 'lightbulb' moment today as she has not been able to hear medial or end sounds. She shouted 'I can hear it''. This was a very significant moment in this research project as I, once again, identified my emerging value of 'hope' which is a 'sense of glad anticipation for the future, one of purpose and of fulfilment' (Laidlaw, 2018: 31). She also states that hope is essential in anything

professing to have an educational basis. (Laidlaw, 2018: 31) While participating in this meta-reflection process during the critical reflective assignment, I noted that ‘through this ‘narration’ (Kelchtermans, 2018: 237) process of self-understanding I have now uncovered a key ontological value of ‘hope’ (Rock, 2022: CRA, 11/03/22).

### **Dolch (Sight) Words Station**

First Class Dolch (Sight) words formed the basis of this station with children repeating the techniques used in RC1. However, a SOR approach was incorporated where children identified the target words with ‘heart’ components orally with the teacher. These ‘heart’ elements identified the part of the word which children could not sound out. So, for the word ‘some’, children could hear the sounds ‘s’ and ‘m’. The sounds ‘o’ and ‘e’ had to be learned by heart. See Image 3E.

**Image 3E**



Roll-a-sight word activities provided opportunities for children to practise the word with a new activity ‘break-the-code’ inviting children to associate a sound with a number to find a hidden message.

### **Free-Writing Station**

Children had the choice of using ‘Rory Story Cubes’ as a stimulus to create their own story, or to write independently. The focus remained that children would continue to write freely and not worry about their work being corrected. This was to allow a creative process to arise. See Appendix 18 for a sample of Child 2’s free-writing.

### **3.7.3 Research Cycle 3: Readers Theatre**

At the initial planning stage of this living-theory project, I had anticipated completing two cycles of DST. However, on completion on RC2, I felt a sense of wanting to do more, understanding that the task of AR creates as many questions as it can answer (Biesta, 2019: 1). Children’s feedback in post-cycle 2 questionnaires was taken into consideration as they expressed their appreciation for the more challenging reading material. Child 5 commented ‘make it (PH) longer, do more reading and longer books’ (Post-RC2 feedback 26/04/22).

On discussing the qualitative and quantitative information from post-cycle 2 station teaching, Critical Friend F questioned ‘how do I know that the children wouldn’t have improved in their knowledge of Dolch and Phonics if there is no control group?’ I was reminded of my reflection on the writings of Biesta (2019:1) when he suggested that, within an educational research perspective, the researcher should ask ‘what works’, but

should also ask ‘what does it work for’? He suggests that by operating research in a problem-posing manner rather than a problem-solving one, research exposes hidden assumptions that may also provide value to education (Biesta, 2019: 3).

Motivated by my belief in providing for equality of education with compassion, empathy, care and emerging value of hope, this challenged me to provide for all children to ensure no one child was left behind. RC3 a ‘Readers Theatre’ was developed as it was agreed with Critical Friend F that ‘a Readers Theatre would consolidate the work previously completed’ (Critical Friend F (principal), Reflection Meeting: 26/04/22). As a participant who was not involved in the daily running of the project, her role would be to attend a session in RC3 to observe and give the children feedback on their progress. ‘A Readers Theatre’ is a collaborative Literacy activity incorporating reading, speaking, and listening. With motivation and attitude to reading at the core of a Readers Theatre (Young et. al., 2021: 495), children read the script to an audience, following on from opportunities of repeated reading. Readers Theatre consolidated all work completed in RC1 and RC2.

Reflecting back on ‘Scarborough’s Reading Rope’ (2001) elements of ‘Language Comprehension’ and ‘Word Recognition’ to result in ‘Fluent word recognition and comprehension’, this ‘Readers Theatre’ activity sought to bring together the elements outlined in Chapter 2 Literature Review (Refer back to Image 2.2). Preparations involved writing the novel out as a script and copying each script for the corresponding number of characters. During RC3 the Novel ‘Care of Henry’ (Fine, 2005) was the basis of the Readers Theatre intervention. The objective of this cycle was to improve children’s reading fluency and comprehension skills. Stimulating enjoyment and motivation to read independently was also a major objective as ‘the more motivated students are to read, the

more likely they are to be proficient' (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000: 403). The positive impact that Readers Theatre has on word recognition automaticity and prosody (Young & Rasinki, 2018; Corcoran & Davis, 2005), reading comprehension (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004; Garrett & O'Connor, 2010), vocabulary (Keehn et al., 2008) and overall reading ability (Vasinda & McLeod, 2011) were driving factors in selecting this final research cycle of Readers Theatre. This concept links directly with the SOR and the view that 'to develop mature reading abilities the child must develop speaking, writing, and other language abilities as fully as possible' (Banton-Smith, 2002: 268).

### **Readers Theatre Session**

Comprehension strategies previously covered were revised. Children were invited to predict and visualise what the story was about based on either an image of items associated with the book or a treasure box of similar concrete items relating to the novel. As this was the children's first experience of a Readers Theatre the terms 'theatre', 'script', 'character' and 'narrator' were discussed and explained, and children viewed a video of a Readers Theatre telling 'The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs' (Scieszka, 1989).

The format of each lesson began with modelling of the chapter, discussion of the language used and inferences in the story to ensure comprehension. Each chapter had language identified for 'depth and breadth' using a SOR approach. Inferences were selected for discussion. Punctuation such as exclamation marks, commas, full stops and question marks were highlighted to enhance understanding. See Appendix 19 for RC3 Plan of Readers Theatre.

Children then engaged in collaborative group work of mixed ability selecting and agreeing roles and completing a 'First read' individually, a 'Practice read' within their group and this was repeated for a 15 minute period for each daily reading. At the end of this time period, groups had the opportunity to perform for the rest of the group using skills of expression, intonation, fluency and projection as discussed during the session.

As agreed, Critical Friend F visited for a class presentation of a chapter and I noted in my CRJ 'the presence of the principal gave a new dimension to their performance and children's improved fluency, intonation and projection was clearly evident to all. We still have children of all reading abilities, some children are reading in choppy blocks but what was really apparent was the huge improvement in children's confidence' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 11/05/22). The value of dialogue with all adults in this study is embedded in my practices now more than ever.

### **3.8 Changes in My Practice RC2 and RC3**

During RC2 and RC3 I became aware of my renewed value of the 'child's voice'. Children made valuable suggestions within each cycle which demonstrated their critical thinking skills to improve their own learning e.g., more time to digest reading materials, quieter environments, games and rewards to motivate everyone. As I always considered myself a 'reflective practitioner' who valued equality of education, I had to consider that, perhaps this had not been visible to the children. I had in fact been 'a living contradiction' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009: 94). I decided to 'perceive the experiences of oneself as a living contradiction as a positive, as a good opportunity for new learning and inspiration' (Sullivan et al., 2016: 63). The intentionality of my 'purposeful intervention' (Kelchtermans, 2018: 234) was called into question by the children's emerging attitudes.

With regards to Literacy, I identified that my understanding of the depth and breadth of this subject is far greater than I had previously acknowledged. With this new understanding, even more focused and discrete lesson plans were required by me to deliver to the differentiated groups. I recognised that focusing on a smaller area was ultimately more beneficial to children and this resulted in me living to my values more completely. As a teacher who has always valued play and a multisensory approach to learning, I had a renewed emphasis on motivation through greater use of fun and interactive lessons. I accepted that ‘play environments foster the development of children’s literacy’ (Roskos & Christie, 2001; Saracho & Spodek, 2006).

### **3.9 Validity with Action Research**

As previously outlined a MMR approach to data collection underlined this research project. Cohen et. al. (2018) suggest that ‘combining quantitative and qualitative data may also strengthen the validity of the research and the inferences that can be drawn from it’. They suggest that a MMR approach enables rich data to be gathered which addresses the triangulation that has been advocated in research for many years. It also acknowledges the messiness of real-world situations and as a result increases the validity and reliability of the research presented.

#### **Qualitative Validity**

I employed multiple approaches to demonstrate the validation and accuracy of the data I gathered. Triangulation (Sullivan et al., 2016: 82) occurred which cross-checked the data from several different research participant perspectives. Questionnaires, surveys and my CRJ provided me with a range of opinions from which to support my claims during the validation phase. A ‘Validation Group’ further supported this process. Glenn (2017: 138)

posits that ‘a learning community can readily act as a validation group’. Sullivan et al. (2016) add that these groups question ‘the accuracy and reliability of both the research approach and the practice of conducting it’. As outlined by LaBoskey (2004: 849), ‘gathering multiple perspectives on our professional practice setting helps to challenge our assumptions and biases, reveal our inconsistencies, expand our potential interpretations, and triangulate our findings’. I adopted a Habermas (1976) four staged approach to demonstrating social validity which enhances the validity and rigour of my research data including truth, legitimacy, comprehensibility, and sincerity.

### **Quantitative Validity**

Through the tracking of changes in children’s baseline assessments, increases or decreases in children’s knowledge of phonics was analysed along with their ability to transfer this newly acquired knowledge to their writing. Improvements in children’s knowledge of Dolch words also formed part of the analysis to demonstrate validity. This applied to both reading and writing. The provision of qualitative and quantitative data provides rigour and validity to my discussions with critical friends and a validation group.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

The purpose of this living-theory AR is to reflect on and improve my practices in the area of Literacy at First Class level. An overview of the research methodologies undertaken was outlined in this chapter. This overview included the origins and purpose of AR, the research paradigm that is applicable and it examined the research setting and participants. Data collection methods were discussed, and a MMR approach was identified as the chosen method of data collection. The merits of this method and ethical challenges within this research project were also explored. Finally, the validity of the data and how the findings will be assimilated was examined and discussed.



## **Chapter 4: Data Findings and Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the findings of this SSAR project and reflect on the changes in my practices throughout this process. A ‘Reflexive Thematic Analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2019: 2) approach was adopted in identifying themes from the data collected. In line with my values and ethical considerations, this approach ‘required reflexivity, theoretical knowingness and transparency’ (Braun & Clarke, 2019: 4). The following are the three main findings from this research. Firstly, DST results in improvements in children’s Literacy levels. Secondly, DST generates improvements in children’s attitude to Literacy and confidence in their literacy abilities. Finally, collaboration among adults enhances the delivery of DST and results in professional development for all teachers involved. I will examine each finding now in more detail.

### **4.1 Finding 1: Differentiated Station Teaching Resulted in Improvements in Children’s Literacy Levels**

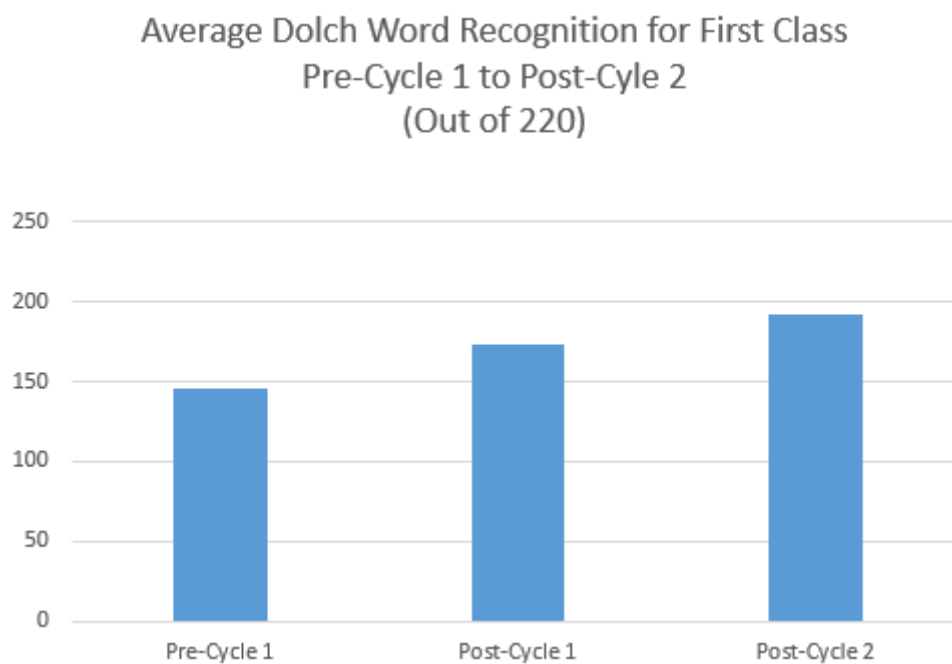
The improvements in children’s literacy skills were identified in key areas of their literacy development. These included Dolch words recognition, phonemic and phonological awareness and improvements in how the children applied this new knowledge in their writing.

#### **Dolch Words Recognition**

Prior to each cycle of DST, an initial assessment was carried out based on the objectives of what I hoped to achieve during each cycle. The four stations included in RC1 and RC2 included ‘Reading’, ‘Phonics/Phonological awareness’, ‘Dolch word recognition and spelling’ and ‘Free-writing’.

Children were initially assessed in Dolch words recognition for Junior and Senior Infants as they had been introduced to all of these prior to the research commencing. As outlined in the ‘Intervention’ section, if the child knew in excess of 90% of a particular class level, the next stage words were also assessed. e.g., 90% of First Class, then Second Class was assessed also. The average number of words known by children, up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Class standard, increased from 146 to 192 per child between pre-RC1 and end of RC2, representing a 32% increase (See Image 4A). This is out of a maximum of 220 words. Children were not re-assessed post RC3 as 22 out of 26 children had in excess of all First Class words.

#### Image 4A



There was also a 30% (from 10 to 2 pupils) reduction in children knowing less than 100 words from the start of RC1 to the end of RC2. 15% of children recognised all 220 Dolch words prior to commencing RC1 and this increased to 62% by the end of RC2.

### **Dolch Words Application in Writing**

This high level of Dolch words recognition was a driving factor in the assessment of the application of Dolch words, prior to RC1, to see how children were applying these words in practice. Children were assessed in the writing of 15 randomly selected Dolch words in each of the Junior Infants, Senior Infants and First Class words. During this pre-assessment the average score for Senior Infants Dolch words was 7/15 (48%). Suprabha and Supramonian (2014: 24) note that station teaching can provide an environment for children to learn key literacy skills using concrete materials, thereby supporting them in these skills.

After RC1 targeted all 52 words at Senior Infants level, the 15 words were reassessed. The average score in independent writing increased to 10 out of 15 representing an 18% increase in the children's application of Senior Infants Dolch words in writing. The single largest percentage increase was found in the Green group (lower average) with Child 10 seeing an increase of 53% during RC1. The benefit of DST groups became evident as this child was absent due to Covid during RC2 and he did not display any improvement during RC2.

Child 13 in the Blue group (lower ability) displayed a 47% increase in Dolch work application at the end of RC1. This resulted in this child progressing from the Blue to the Green group based on this finding and other qualitative information gathered. See Image 4B (1) and 4B (2) for Child 13's pre and post-cycle 1 assessments.

Image 4B (1)

1<sup>st</sup> Class Check-up 11/01/22 Primer

Name: Child 13 Pre power hour 1 SI  
Dolch assessment

Part 1: Quiz

1. <u>red</u>	11. <u>ix</u>
2. <u>box</u>	12. <u>they</u> ✓
3. <del>ix</del>	13. <u>was</u>
4. <u>good</u>	14. <u>was</u>
5. <u>had</u>	15. <del>ix</del>
6. <u>loc</u>	
7. <del>ix</del>	
8. <del>ix</del>	$\frac{1}{15}$
9. <u>ped</u>	
10. <del>ix</del>	

Image 4B (2)

Pre 1-8/15 (+7)

10/02/22 after P  
1<sup>st</sup> Class Check-up 10/02/22

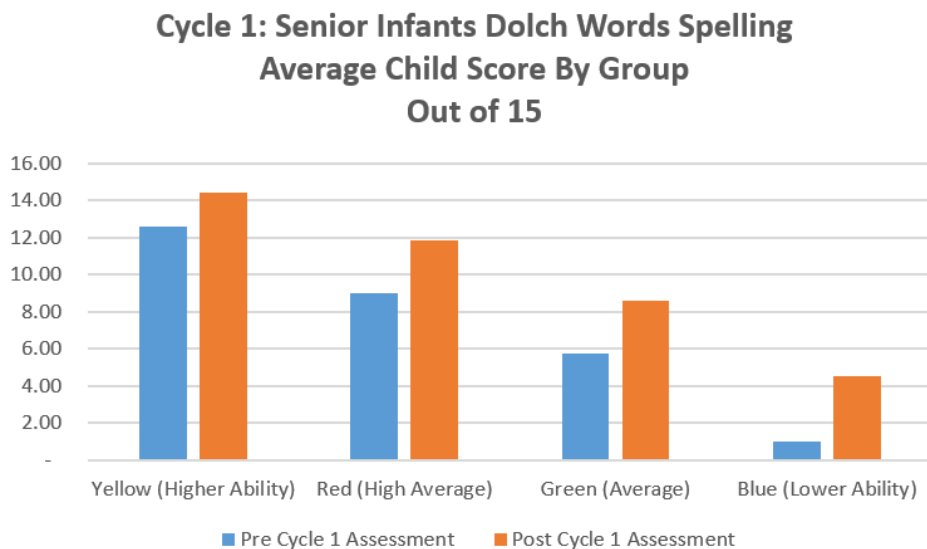
Name: Child 13 Post PHI assessment

Part 1: Quiz

1. <u>are</u> ✓	11. <u>there</u> ✓
2. <u>be</u> ✓	12. <u>they</u> ✓
3. <u>at</u>	13. <u>was</u>
4. <u>good</u> ✓	14. <u>was</u>
5. <u>had</u> ✓	15. <u>was</u>
6. <u>like</u>	
7. <u>new</u> ✓	$\frac{8}{15}$
8. <u>on</u>	
9. <u>read</u>	
10. <u>new</u> ✓	

The weakest of the groups displayed a 23% increase in the application of Senior Infants Dolch words from pre-assessment to the end of RC1. The Green group presented with a 19% increase, while the Red and Yellow groups saw smaller percentage increases at 18% and 12% respectively, as they approached full marks. See Image 4C for the analysis of findings over groups

**Image 4C**



First Class Dolch words were targeted in RC2. The average score went from 8/15 to 10/15 per child, a 13% increase. The single biggest increase was recorded by Child 11 (Yellow) who went from 8/15 to 15/15 between pre and post-cycle assessments. Two children remained the same within the Blue group, Child 23 who had just commenced in First Class with no English and Child 19 who was in the process of an assessment. Image 4D shows the increases over the differentiated groups.

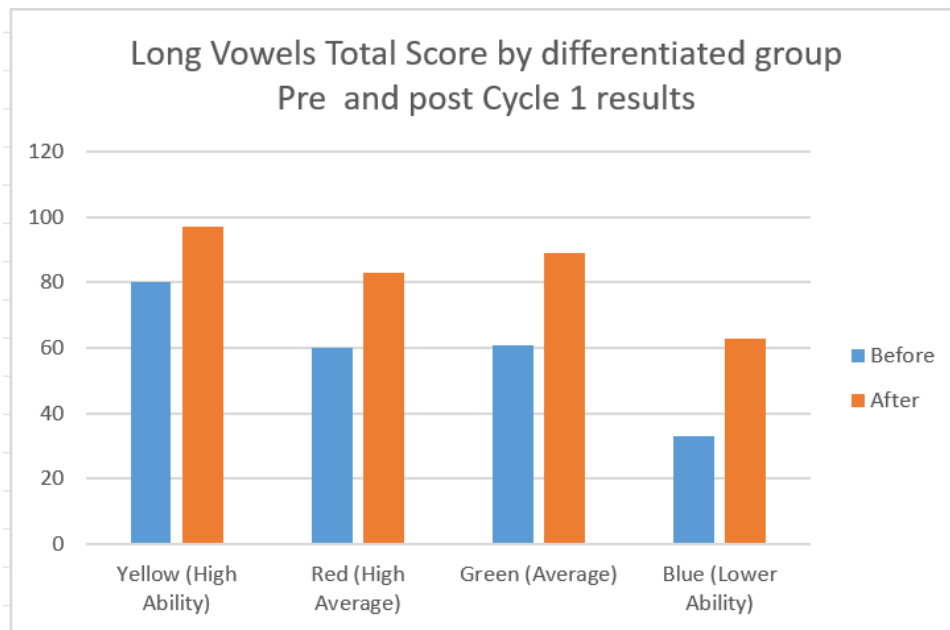
**Image 4D**

Cycle 2: First Class Dolch Words Average Score by Group (Out of 15)			
	Pre-Cycle 1 %	Post Cycle 2 %	% increase
Yellow (8)	87%	95%	8%
Red (6)	63%	78%	14%
Green (6)	37%	61%	24%
Blue (6)	10%	23%	13%

**Phonemic Awareness and Application in Writing**

As outlined within ‘Interventions’, RC1 focused on the application of ‘Long Vowels’ in writing after assessing children in 42 original sounds and 27 alternatives. As the average number of original sounds recognised by the group was 86% and alternatives was 36%, Long Vowels were targeted as the next gap in the children’s learning. After RC1 the average score for the class increased from 9/15 to 13/15, a 27% increase. The results split by differentiated groups is shown in Image 4E.

**Image 4E**



The results of the Yellow group were explored further as 2 children in this group did not improve in this area. It was noted that Child 9 scored 12/15 in both pre and post assessment but had missed substantial time during the Cycle due to Covid. The most significant increases in the application of Long Vowels were seen by Child 6 and Child 13 (both in the Blue group) who reported increases of 40% and 53% respectively. It is also significant to note that there were children in the top three groups who achieved 15/15 supporting my claim that differentiated groupings improve Literacy within First Class. This can be seen in Image 4F.

#### **Image 4F**

##### **Long Vowels Assessments Analysis of Post Cycle 1 who scored 15 after cycle 1**

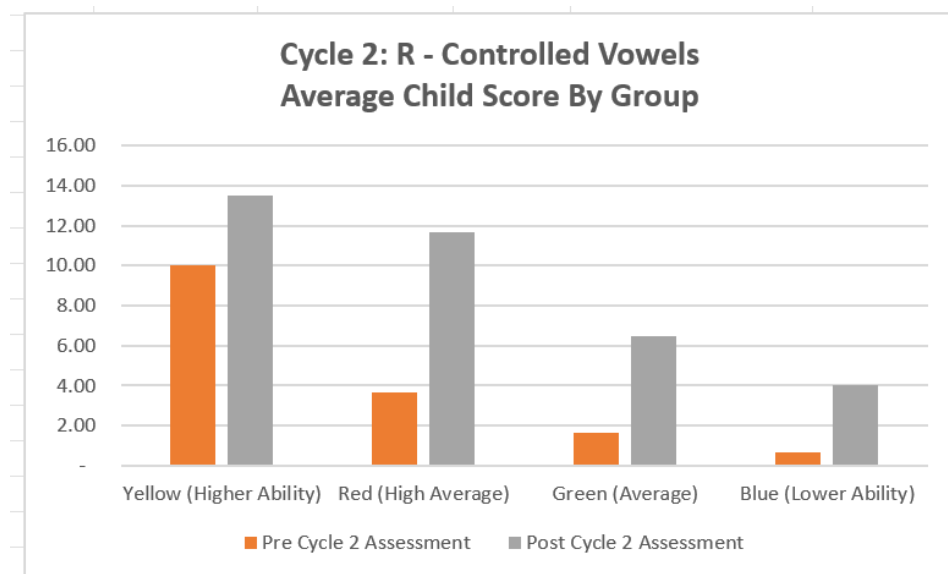
<b>Child</b>	<b>Original Score</b>	<b>Post Intervention Score</b>	<b>Group</b>
18	11	15	Green
26	8	15	Green
16	9	15	Red
21	10	15	Red
28	11	15	Red
2	14	15	Yellow
15	10	15	Yellow
24	10	15	Yellow
25	11	15	Yellow

My CRJ also noted improvements in children's phonological and phonemic awareness skills. Daly (2015) posits that 'there are many skills and strategies that are essential to effective literacy teaching including phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and writing. These skills can be taught during Station Teaching'.

## Phonological Awareness

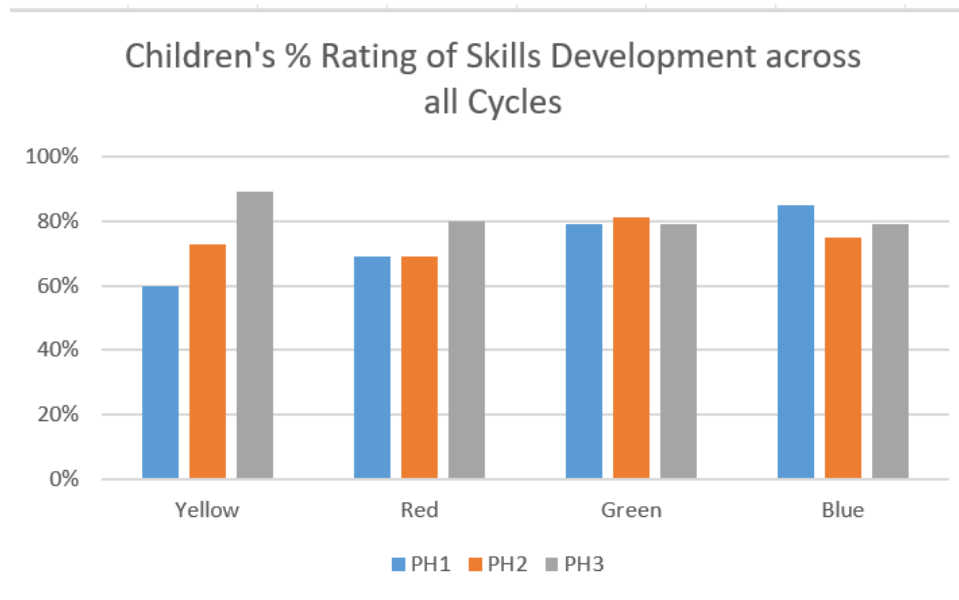
Having identified the gap as R-controlled Vowels after RC1, it was found that the average score per child at pre-assessment stage was 4.5 out of 15, while at the post-assessment stage (end of RC2) the corresponding score was 9 out of 15, representing a 32% increase. Child 9 (Yellow) who had been absent during RC1 demonstrated one of the biggest increases going from 0/15 to 11/15 at pre and post assessment stages. During RC2 he participated in the Red Group. Child 13 (Green) did not increase between pre and post stage assessments, but it was noted that he too had been absent due to Covid during the intervention. See Image 4G for the analysis of the differentiated group performances.

### Image 4G



At the end of each cycle, children completed a questionnaire with key questions about how they felt these DST interventions helped their 'Literacy Skills', and how much they enjoyed it. Children ticked a box for each area covered in the stations (Reading, Phonics, Dolch and Free-writing) to express their opinions. Choices ranged from 'A lot' (4), 'More than a little' (3), 'A little' (2), 'Not at all' (1). On a differentiated group basis, children rated their experience of how they felt these skills developed across the 3 cycles. See Image 4H.



**Image 4H**

The top half of the class identified their rising skills while the bottom half were less sure of their skills. However, valuable information was gathered through parents' questionnaires at the end of this research project outlining their opinions across 'Skills' and 'Enjoyment'. While 19/26 (73%) responded, the average score for 'Skills' improvement was 14.3/18 (79%), meaning that parents rated the entire intervention at 79 out of 100 for the benefit to their child.

Parent 15 from the Yellow group (Post RC3 parent questionnaire: 07/06/22) scored her child's increase in skills at 47%, and commented about the benefits of DST as in Image 4I.

#### Image 4I

Is there any other information you would like to include about your child's Literacy development since January 2022?

reading & spelling was quite good before his involvement in Power Hours, however we have definitely noticed an increased comprehension in the stories that he reads, plus an improved interest in reading during the past year so it's been very worthwhile for that reason.  
Thank you - continued success in your masters & your research.

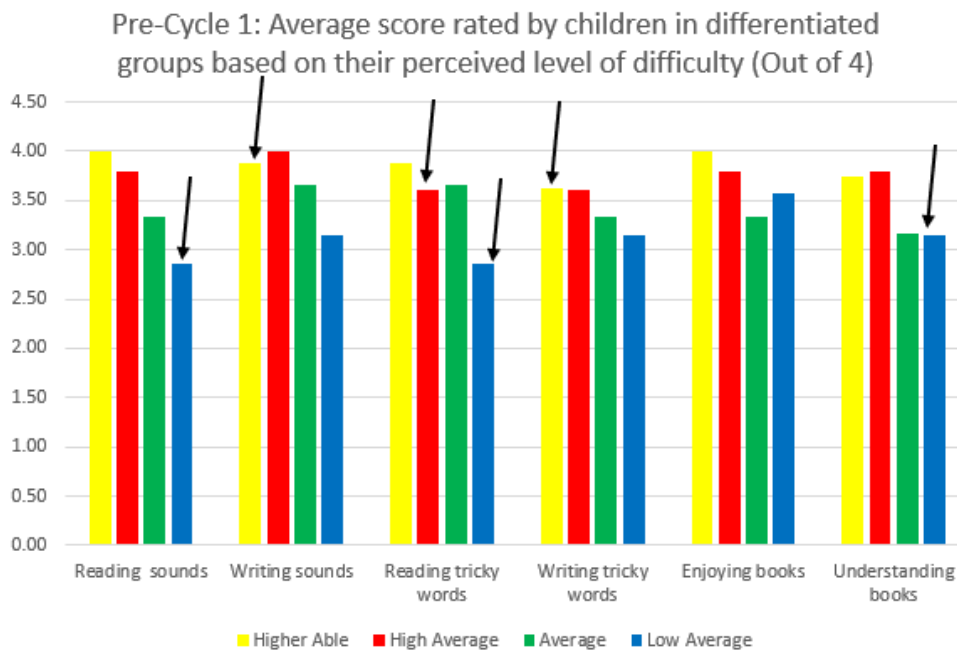
#### 4.2 Finding 2: Differentiated Station Teaching Resulted in Improvements in Children's Attitude to Literacy and Confidence in their Literacy Abilities

Willingham (2017: 190) discusses the link between how a positive attitude to reading, results in positive reading experiences. These positive reading experiences motivate a child to choose to read creating a 'reading self-image as a reader' (Willingham, 2017: 191). These intrinsic factors became evident in children's attitude and confidence in their Literacy abilities through DST.

Children completed pre-RC1 questionnaires to establish their views of their own strengths and weaknesses in Literacy. Children were asked to rate their opinions on how they were performing in key literacy indicators including identifying and writing sounds and Dolch words. Their enjoyment and understanding of books were assessed by ticking an emoji ranging from 'very easy', 'a little easy', 'a little hard' or 'very hard'. They were also invited to include any other thoughts they had about Literacy. Once gathered the comments and ticks were collated with ticks given a rating ranging from 4 for 'very easy'

to 1 'very hard'. Children's responses highlighted the potential 'messiness' (Goodnough, 2008) of AR as they commented generally that they found the Literacy process very easy. On deeper analysis however, while linking their responses with the results of their assessments, valuable additional information was presented. The average score that each child rated themselves within their differentiated groups is illustrated in Image 4J.

**Image 4J**







This was also reflected in children's initial questionnaire comments. See examples below.

Child 16 (Red)

Is there anything else you would like me to help you with in reading or writing?  
I need help with spelling

Child 19 (Blue)

	 Very Easy	 A little easy	 A little hard	 Very hard
Reading sounds			✓	
Writing sounds		✓		
Reading tricky words			✓	
Spelling tricky words		✓		
Enjoying books	✓	✓		
Understanding books	✓		✓	

Child 2 (Yellow)

Is there anything else you would like me to help you with in reading or writing?  
*Really hard books with loads of words, or can I bring in my own books*

Child 18 (Green)

	 Very Easy	 A little easy	 A little hard	 Very hard
Reading sounds		✓		
Writing sounds	✓			
Reading tricky words		✓	✓	
Spelling tricky words		✓		
Enjoying books		✓		
Understanding books	✓			

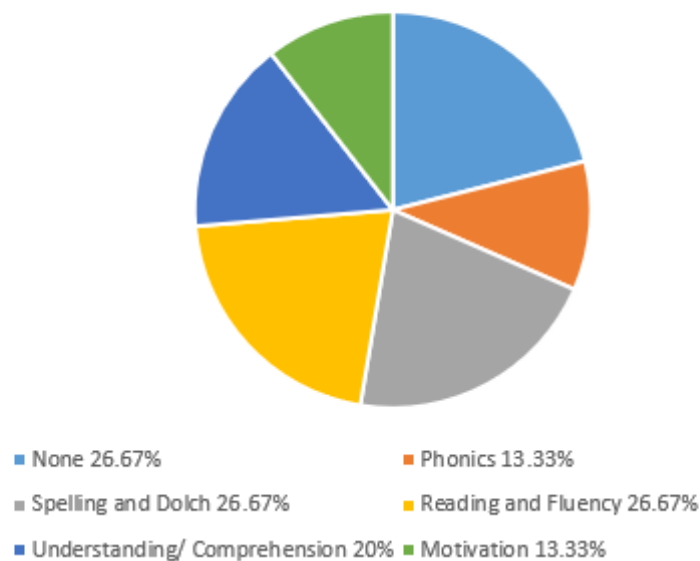
Is there anything else you would like me to help you with in reading or writing?  
*I don't work can help me.*

In the pre-RC1 stage, parents were surveyed to identify their areas of concern in Literacy for their child and 58% completed this survey. To encourage more meaningful engagement by parents, I communicated with them on a regular basis identifying what had been covered during the intervention to support further discussion at home.

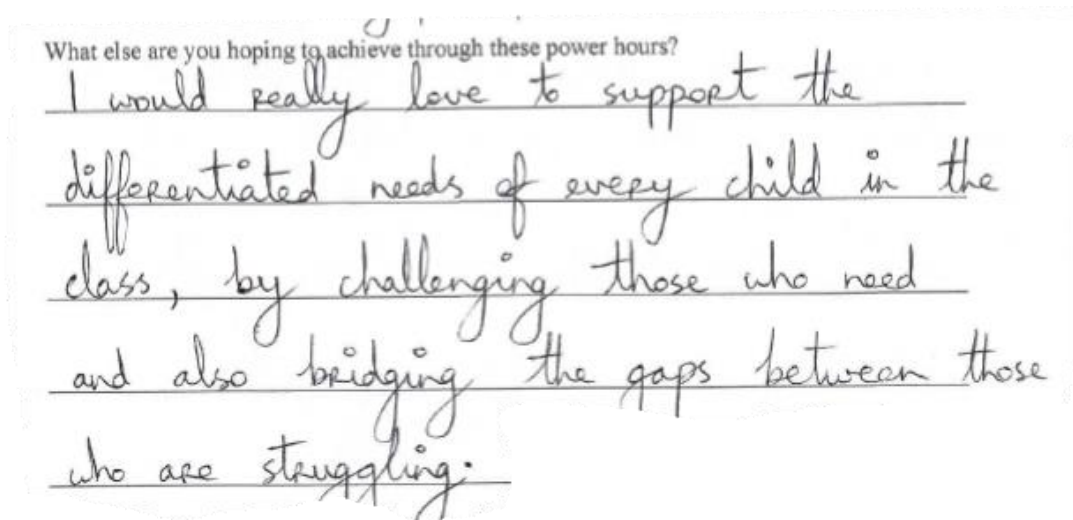
Of the pre-survey questionnaires, 47% identified the area of reading fluency and comprehension as areas of concern for their children. Although no specific question was directed at motivation to or interest in reading, 2 parents commented that they would like to see an improvement in this area for their child. 27% of parents selected 'none' in terms of their areas of concerns about their child's literacy skills. Image 4K below shows a breakdown of their concerns.

**Image 4K**

Areas of Parental Concern Across Literacy Indicators  
Pre-Cycle1 Questionnaire



The First Class Team agreed that meeting the differentiated needs of the class was a key focus as there was a broad range of abilities and needs. Teacher A commented:



I noted 'how can I design a RC to motivate children when they feel that they don't need support in any area? Play is critical now more than ever!' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 12/01/22).

### **Child's Voice**

Following on from RC1, post-cycle 1 questionnaires were completed by children across each area of reading, phonics, tricky words and free-writing. Choices ranged from 'A lot (4) to 'Not at all (1). Feedback on how to improve RC2 was invited. It was important to note that while there were positives across all differentiated groups, the scores improved progressively from Yellow (Higher Able) to Blue (Lower Able).

This data was crucial in the planning of RC2 as children in the Yellow group wanted more challenging reading material. Comments noted by Child 1 'get harder books', and Child 2 'I like fact books and harder readers' were instrumental in designing the 'Reading Comprehension' activity for RC2.

**General comments included:**

<b>Child</b>	<b>Score (out of 16)</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Positive Finding</b>
25	16	Yellow	It is fun!
15	11	Yellow	I like free-writing
5	11	Red	It helped me with new words
11	16	Red	I love reading and phonics helps me with my writing
4	16	Green	It helps you with sounds
20	11	Green	It (reading) calms me down and makes me feel happy
17	16	Blue	I like reading
13	15	Blue	I like reading

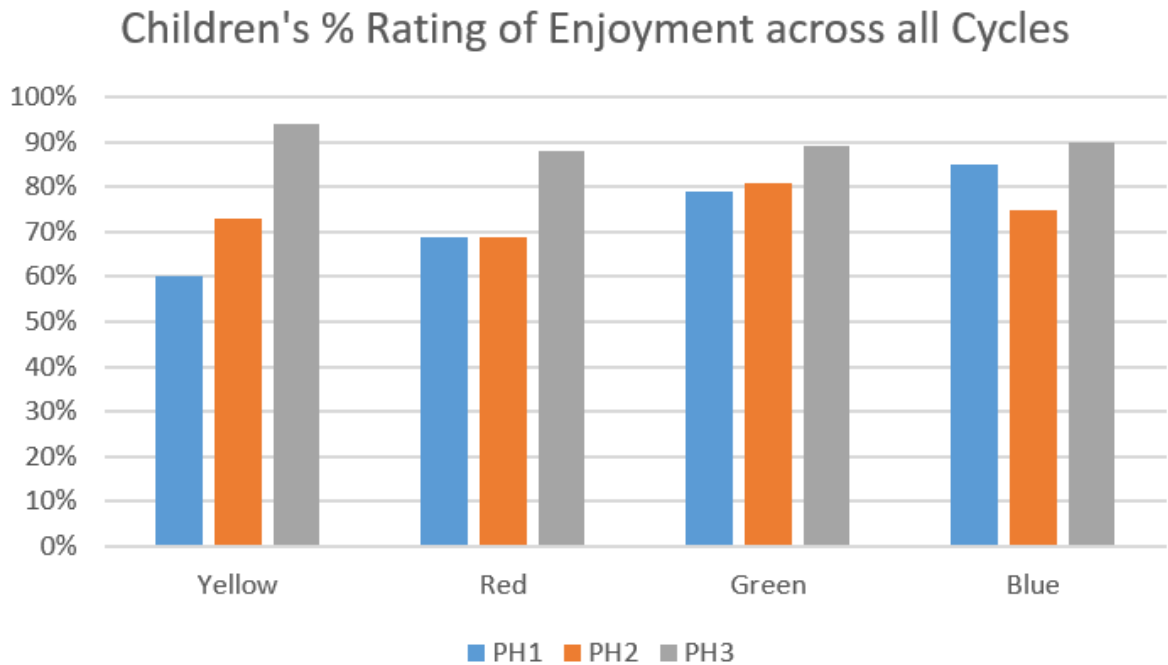
A post-cycle questionnaire was completed by each child following RC2. This questionnaire revealed a number of positive comments on children's attitude to Literacy. Child 2 (Yellow) identified 'reading and comprehension station' as her favourite part of RC2. Child 11 (Yellow) commented 'I enjoy the tricky words because I loved everything there' (Post-RC2 child questionnaire, 26/04/22). Child 21 reported that he 'thought it was really fun and loves reading, while Children 9,16 and 28 (Red group) pointed out they liked the 'say it, tap it and map it' referring to the orthographic mapping station. Child 17 (Blue) commented that 'Power hour is fun' (Post-RC2 child questionnaire, 26/04/22). While the Yellow and Green groups increased their scoring for the RC2 intervention, the Red group remained the same and Blue group reduced their scoring. This was directly linked to the free-writing station, where it had been noted on Teacher feedback sheets that weaker children were struggling. Teacher E commented on Child 6 (Blue Group 29/3) 'with free writing she is very slow to start'. This once again informed planning for RC3.

Findings from RC3 which involved a 'Readers Theatre' intervention to consolidate RC1 and RC2 were examined through children's questionnaires for a final time. This questionnaire specifically highlighted areas across 'Enjoyment' and 'Skills'. Children were invited to score RC3 over 6 headings again with the ability to rate each category on a 1-4 scale from 'A lot' (4) to 'Not at all (1). The maximum score under the two areas was 12.

Child 24 (Yellow) commented 'I love it SOOOO much!!!!' and Child 15 (Yellow) stated 'it was really fun; I really like the book'. This attitude was repeated across all differentiated groups with Child 27 (Blue) responding 'I loved it so much it was so much fun, it was brilliant, thank you for doing it'. Interestingly my CRJ reflected the enhanced positive attitude and motivation during RC3. The following comment is particularly noteworthy. 'Children are completely engaging with the story now and I can see a level of motivation by children of all abilities. We introduced the term 'intonation' and Child 24 put on an accent we have never heard before! Children are highly motivated' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 05/05/22).

This changes in children's attitude to Literacy can be summarised in the comparison of their scorings from RC1 to RC3, with every group's score increasing from RC1 to RC3. See Image 4L.



**Image 4L**

Recordings of children's comments were completed through a 'Highlight's Chair'. This proved to be a very valuable source of data collection as children were not limited to the questions presented and were not challenged by the writing process. I recorded the children's comments and subsequently transcribed them. Voice recordings were then destroyed. Notably 59% of the children present on the day were happy for their comments to be recorded. All children who commented, spoke positively about how the entire DST intervention improved their skills and enjoyment in Literacy.

Some comments included:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Child</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Blue	23 (EAL)	'I love when we work in a group. I am very good in this and I feeling good in this helping each other'
Blue	27	'Readers Theatre helped me with bigger words, it was too hard before.'
Green	18	'Reader's theatre helps me read, there are tricky words and I don't like reading books but I like readers theatre'
Red	12 (EAL)	'I like tap it and map it because it helped me pronounce the words'
Yellow	5	'I liked the comprehension questions as it gave us a chance to read and write and I like writing. I loved readers theatre too because you can be a character and a narrator'.

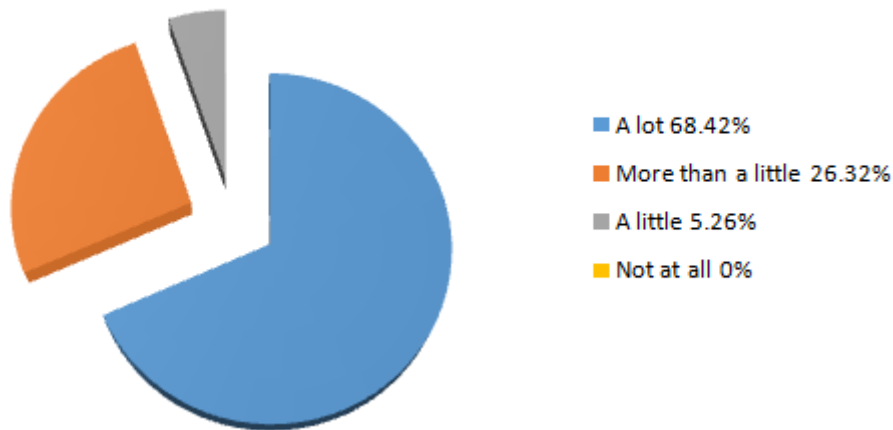
I conclude this finding with a quote from my CRJ on 16/05/22 'children are asking me all day when we are doing our next Power Hour, children are making suggestions for new Power Hour stations and commenting on books we may include in a new Readers Theatre'!

### **Parents' Voice**

Parental post-intervention questionnaires were completed after the RC3 with 73% returning feedback on the entire intervention. To support a more detailed analysis of these qualitative findings, more specific guidance was provided to parents with a tick box approach offered on a scale of 1 - 4. 1 represented a response 'not at all', while 4 indicated a response of 'a lot'. Additionally, questions focused on 'Skills' or 'Motivation' in Literacy. Skills included phonics, sight words spelling, comprehension and fluency while 'Motivation' questioned parents on their child's current attitude to, and interest in reading.

Image 4M shows a summary of how parents felt their child had benefitted from the entire intervention.

**Image 4M**



This can be further analysed into the ‘Skills of Reading’ and the ‘Motivation to Read’. Parents average score over each heading of ‘Motivation to Read’ during the intervention, was 3.24 out of 4 (81%).

Parent 27 (Blue) added that her child ‘has become a much more confident reader (Post-RC3 parent questionnaire, 01/06/22). She is willing to sound out more challenging words and is fluent in her reading. She is now routinely picking up books at home to read of her own accord – loving the intonation!’. Image 4N shows the response of the improvements noted by Parent 13 (Green) in Image 4N.

Image 4N

	1	2	3	4
How much (if any) do you think your child's knowledge of how to read sounds in words has improved during these power hours?				✓
How much (if any) do you think your child's ability to spell Dolch (tricky) words has improved during these power hours?		✓		
How much (if any) do you think your child's ability to comprehend information in stories has improved during these power hours?			✓	
How much (if any) do you think your child's voice projection and intonation (expression) have improved during these power hours?				✓
How much (if any) do you think your child's interest and motivation in literacy has improved during these power hours?				✓
How much (if any) is your child more willing to attempt to read a more difficult passage or book independently?				✓
How much (if any) is your child more willing to attempt to write independently?		✓		
Has your child commented on power hours during the past few months?			✓	
Do you feel you child benefitted from participating in these power hours?				✓

Is there any other information you would like to include about your child's Literacy development since January 2022?

His literacy development has increased so much since January 2022. He enjoys reading now and does it with great ease compared to 6 months ago. Thank you for all the help you have given here this year. It has been greatly appreciated.

### 4.3 Finding 3: Collaboration Among Adults Enhances the Delivery of Differentiated Station Teaching and Results in Professional Development

An unexpected finding of this SSAR centred around collaboration of adults within this project. Ongoing discussions, meetings, general conversations, and questionnaires created a space for collaboration to take place and continuous professional development to occur. This is a natural process within ST. Concannon-Gibney (2020: 4), comments

that the ‘untrained eye’ of a newly qualified teacher would not recognise the extensive planning linked with theory that is involved in meaningful literacy lessons for children’. These sentiments were reflected in my CRJ when Teachers A and B commented that ‘a lot of information was presented to them during their time in college without the specifics of how to put that in practice’ (Rock, 2021: CRJ, 16/11/21).

Nash (2010: 7) highlights the need for mentors to spend time with those they aim to train or support and model the qualities for teachers who inspired them originally. I adopted Nash’s view of being proactive ‘developing relationships with new teachers’ to break down the ‘power gap’ between myself and my colleagues. Through meta-reflection I noted within my CRA (11/02/22) that I looked to help Teachers A and B uncover their values and aspirations as teachers by reflecting my own values each day. Through this process we developed a positive personal and professional relationship (Nash, 2010: 8). A ‘self-caring behaviour’ (Bluestein, 2008) was evident and resulted in teachers ‘stepping up’ (Buchanan, 2015: 710) to the process of collaborating and offering valuable insights to this research programme.

Through this process a new ‘community of practice’ was formed. Wenger et al., (2002) define a community of practice as a group of individuals who interact together on a shared project or problem about which they are passionate. Through this interaction, knowledge sharing, and development occurs and expertise in the area is the result (Matsuo & Aihara 2022: 1). A culture of dialogue and autonomy (Doyle, 2022) was encouraged and a suggestion within the post-RC2 Teacher questionnaire was noted by Teacher A. She said ‘perhaps if every adult had the opportunity to work at each station during PH, I feel I would learn even more (Teacher A, post-RC2 teacher questionnaire). This suggestion was

discussed, and roles reassigned for RC3. Critical friend E (04/05) suggested in her feedback that ‘the teacher feedback form in real time is essential for observation assessment, information sharing and teachers continuous learning.’ Another comment from Teacher A’s email 01/03/22 ‘PH is really benefitting the whole class (and me)! We are learning so much.’ Daly (2015: 214) suggests that ‘the benefits to new teachers were identified as it provided in-service training in literacy teaching, assessment and support. The space for ‘professional dialogue’ was also noted’ (Daly, 2015: 214). Schwartz (2005) refers to this stage as the ‘enrichment’ stage of behavioural and emotional reaction of co-teaching.

#### **4.4 Triangulation of Data**

In line with Habermas (1976), I feel I have demonstrated ‘social validity’ through speaking ‘comprehensibly, truthfully, authentically and appropriately’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 106). I have given each participant the opportunity to ‘pick holes in your research and give you a hard time’ questioning assumptions I have made. This was evidenced by including all participants feedback on discussing and incorporating activities within all cycles.

At our meeting on 26/04/22 Critical Friend F commented that she ‘felt my practices as a reflective teacher resulted in a structured approach which was benefiting the children’s literacy skills across all the element of literacy.’ She could not suggest any improvement to the process. On reflection, Critical Friend F’s challenge of how I can claim an improvement without a control group, was a key factor in deciding to create RC3. Her comments during observing RC3 were noted by me in my CRJ. ‘Their reading fluency, intonation, projection and reading skills were very good. She was very impressed by their

enthusiasm to participate and persist. She said each adult participant was confident in their role and this could be seen in how the session flowed and how the children operated' (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 12/05/22). Critical Friend E noted on 04/05/22 'the whole environment induced by Power Hours gears them up for learning. The groups work really well. Peer interaction is very positive and there's an 'Aistear' type model for collaboration. This is further enhanced by the groups and would not be possible without them'! She also commented within this feedback that there is a 'spike in learning and what has been learned and children are way more engaged. These Power Hours propel them into a better state of focus and attention' (Critical Friend E, post-RC3 meeting, 04/05/22).

Teacher B (validation group) when asked how my underlying value of equality of education has been reflected in each research cycle replied 'all children's abilities are being catered for. Each group is learning from where their starting point is. I've seen a big improvement in both their attitude to literacy and their skills in decoding, blending and fluency' (Teacher B, post-RC3 questionnaire, 09/05/22).

SNA D (Validation group) when asked is Power Hour catering for all needs within the class she responded, 'yes, they are grouped according to ability so no one is feeling that they cannot do work given. Everyone is engaged and confident in what they should be doing. The streaming of groups to ability and differentiated materials worked well' (SNA, post-RC3 questionnaire, 06/05/22). With this social validity I feel this constitutes validation of my research claims and demonstrates the extension of my professional knowledge (Sullivan et al., 2016: 103).

#### **4.5 Limitations of this Study**

As outlined in Chapter 1, this research question arose from the identification of a gap in the Literacy processes within my school. This presented a clear challenge to my overarching value of equality of education with an emerging value of hope. DST was the teaching method through which I sought to answer my research question. However, as an ‘extended professional’ (Stenhouse, 1975), it is essential to present possible limitations of this research. On thorough reflection of these findings, the initial pre-assessment questionnaire for children did not adequately account for the impact of peer pressure while children were completing their written responses. This became evident in analyses when the results displayed that 65% of children felt that they did not need help in phonemic awareness and application, or Dolch words application. This was noted on the questionnaire day, as a few children copied each other’s answers.

The process of ST is reliant on teachers who are ‘innovative, volunteer and sufficiently experienced in the areas of planning and assessment’ (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011). A similar project delivered by teachers without these qualities could produce different outcomes. Moreover, there is a need for participants to ‘identify a shared philosophy’ (Suprabha & Supramonian, 2014: 23).

It must be noted that the reliance on a number of teachers rather than a single teacher, is an inherent limitation of ST. O’Connell (2017: 45) stated that in order to implement ST, schools must first invest in ‘resources, support and training’. Although I reviewed and enhanced the quality of my questionnaires used to collect qualitative data, the pre and post-questions asked were not identical in all cases. This led to an increased challenge in interpreting the improvements between cycles.



While ST has been used as a child-centred approach to teaching, there appears to be a lack of literature with regards to differentiated stations. This presented another limitation for the validity of findings. The differentiated nature of this study presented a unique research feature.

Another limiting factor related to absences due to the Covid pandemic. While I have mentioned some children within the findings who missed substantial time due to their own illness, other children missed time due to family Covid illnesses and this was difficult to quantify. While the absences were not for entire cycles, blocks of cycles were missed.

#### **4.6 Complexity of Change**

While considering the changing impact of ST in an educational setting it is essential to consider the complex nature of change. Mason (2008: 6) explains that complexity theory ‘concerns itself with environments, organisations, or systems that are complex, and the constituent elements or agents are connected to and interacting with each other in many different ways’. Brookfield’s (2017:1) view that ‘every good teacher wants to change the world for the better’ takes on a new perspective when considering the complexities of change. Fenwick (2012: 1) argues that ‘complexity concepts may prove more useful not only in analysing political dynamics of collaborative professional practice, but also in opening new questions and approaches for future research in professional learning’. Mason (2008: 37) suggests that complexity theory results in an emergence of ‘new properties and behaviours’ with a synergistic result, that is the whole is greater than the individual parts.

This concept was particularly noticeable with the community of practice mentioned previously when a level of ‘disturbance’ became evident. The complexity of change was apparent when I noted ‘preparing the materials for these stations is very time consuming and this project is only one element of our school day, I needed to continue collaborating with Teacher B on providing time for continued assessment’ (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 18/02/22). Teacher A noted at the end of the process ‘I have learned so much this year’ (Rock, 2022: CRJ, 01/06/22) and SNA D (Validation Group) commented ‘I have really felt part of the team this year and I’ve learned so much in the process’ (post-RC2 questionnaire May 2022). While these positive comments were expressed at the end of the year, SNA D had previously noted that ‘making sure all materials are easy to find on the trolley’ could improve the flow of Power Hour. This resulted in further collaboration with all team members identifying their part in maintaining the resources at the end of the session. Fenwick (2012: 28) cites Zellermyer and Margolin (2005) in explaining that, this ‘perturbation’ (Beabout, 2012) results in ‘emergence’ and this causes the ‘condition for productive learning’ Fenwick (2012: 28).

#### **4.7 Implications and Suggestions**

As outlined in Chapter 2 certain skills critical to Literacy should be developed during the child’s primary school experience. I suggest that in addition to instruction being balanced, it should be based in research on how we learn to read ‘based on a deep understanding of how language and writing systems work’ (Castles et al., 2018: 93). It is my hope that the results of this DST intervention will also avoid the ‘fourth-grade slump’ (Brozo, 2005: 3) as outlined in Chapter 2.

The findings of this study demonstrated the value of DST as an effective tool for improving and supporting Literacy at First Class. This strategy will be incorporated at School Policy level with the suggestion of developing it further across other bands within the school.

Finding 3 highlighted the need for further training and continuous professional development for newly qualified teachers in the area of Literacy. Within this study it was clear that participants in this research had not been exposed to training in the area of ST prior to working within the classroom. Kennedy et al. (2012: 332) posit that ‘given that there is no one method for teaching literacy, teachers should be equipped with a repertoire of pedagogies’.

I suggest that there is a need for future educational policies to consider ‘the provision of staff and training to alleviate the challenges associated with station teaching, in order to ensure that this approach may be a feasible methodology’ (O’Connell, 2017). Indeed, the purpose of educational research is ‘not only to find out what might be possible or achievable, but also to deal with the question of whether what is possible and achievable is desirable – and more specifically whether it is desirable from an educational point of view’ (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). From this perspective further studies would be beneficial in the field of Literacy and ST with a particular emphasis on differentiation.

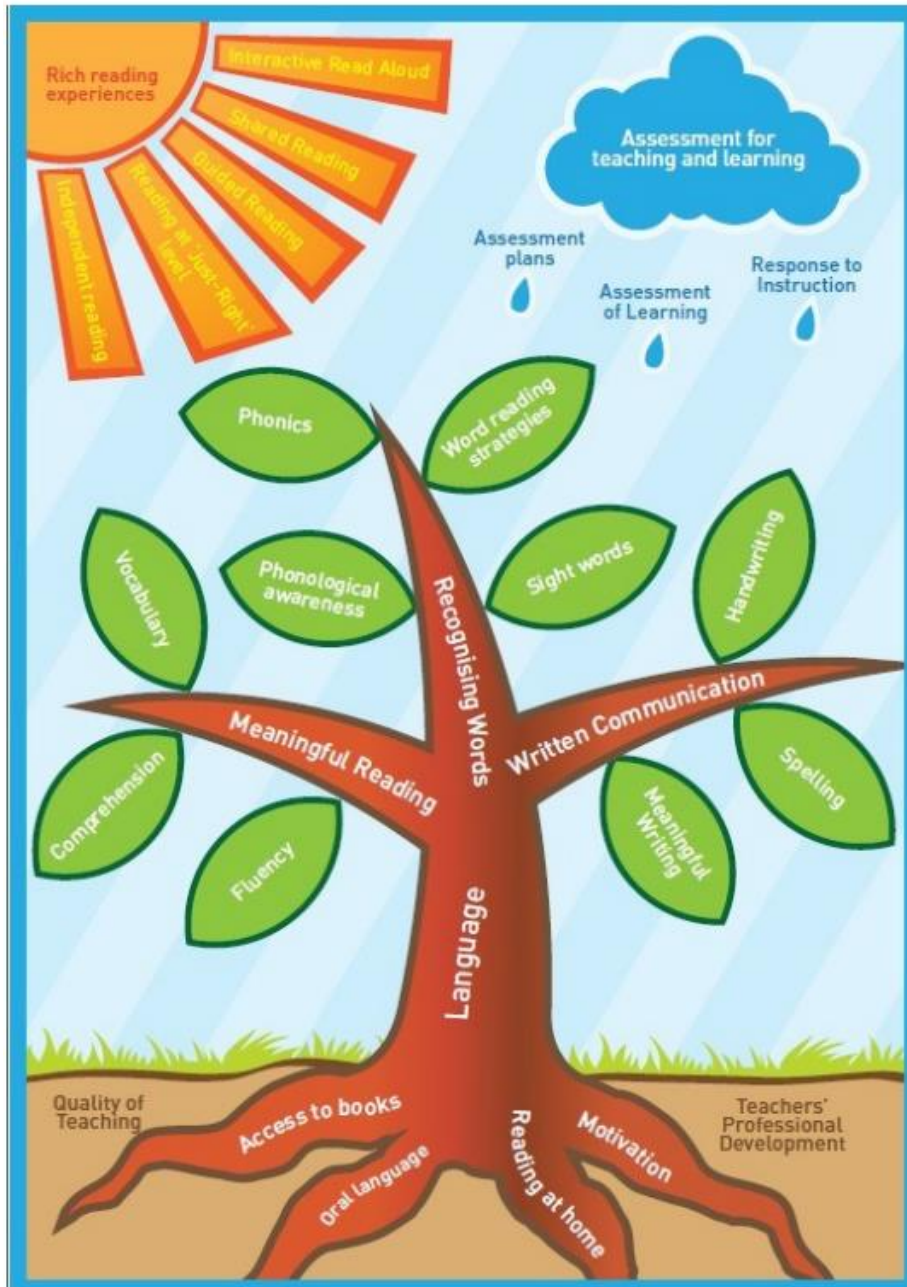
#### **4.9 Conclusion**

In conclusion, through engaging in this self-study I am once again reminded that ‘while reflection relates to the past and acts that have already been undertaken, it is important to remember that the motivation for reflection is future oriented’ (Sullivan et al., 2016: 11). At the start of this journey my value of equality of education inspired me to action. I now recognise that this inspiration was linked to my identity as a teacher and my unrecognised value of ‘hope’. I now see hope as a crucial component of the educational process. Once again, I reflect that ‘without hope there is little we can do’ (Freire, 1972: 3). I conclude by acknowledging that ‘who I am in how I teach is the message’ (Kelchtermans, 2009: 257)’.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### The Literacy Tree

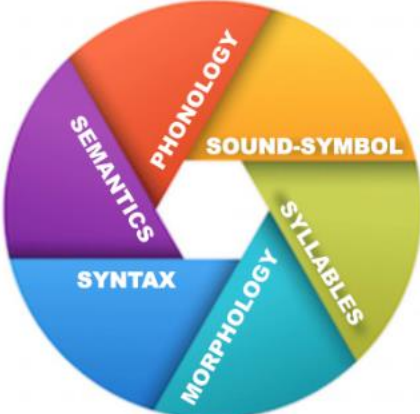


Appendix 2: Structured Literacy Elements

<https://dyslexiaida.org/what-is-structured-literacy/>

**STRUCTURED LITERACY PRIMER**

**Structured Literacy's ELEMENTS work together.**



Structured Literacy's Evidence-Based Elements

**Phonology** (study of sound structure of spoken words) is a key element of Structured Literacy Instruction. **Phonemic awareness** (ability to distinguish / segment / blend / manipulate sounds relevant to reading/spelling) is central to phonology.

**Sound-Symbol Association** Once students develop phoneme awareness, they must learn the **alphabetic principle**—how to map phonemes to letters (**graphemes**) and vice versa.

**Syllables** Knowing the six syllable / vowel grapheme types helps readers associate vowel spellings with vowel sounds. Syllable division rules help readers divide / decode unfamiliar words.

**Morphology** A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of meaning in language. Studying base elements and affixes helps readers decode and unlock the meanings of complex words.


**Syntax**—the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence—includes grammar, sentence structure, and the mechanics of language.

**Semantics** Semantics is concerned with meaning. The Structured Literacy curriculum (from the start) includes instruction in the comprehension and appreciation of written language.

Appendix 3: How Structured Literacy is Taught

**STRUCTURED LITERACY PRIMER**

**These PRINCIPLES guide how Structured Literacy's elements are taught.**



Structured Literacy's Evidence-Based Teaching Principles

**Systematic & Cumulative** Structured Literacy teaching is systematic and cumulative. **Systematic** means that organization of material follows the logical order of language. The sequence begins with the easiest and most basic concepts and elements and progresses methodically to the more difficult. **Cumulative** means each step is based on concepts previously learned.

**Explicit** Structured Literacy instruction requires direct teaching of concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction and does not assume students deduce concepts. (While **multisensory teaching** lacks the extensive research that validates Structured Literacy's other teaching principles, decades of clinical results support efficacy of simultaneous association of auditory, visual, kinesthetic-motor modalities for enhancing memory and learning in students with dyslexia.)

**Diagnostic** Teachers must be adept at individualizing instruction (even within groups) based on careful and continuous assessment, both **informal** (e.g., observation) and **formal** (e.g., with standardized measures). Content must be mastered to the degree of automaticity needed to free attention and cognitive resources for comprehension and oral/written expression.

Appendix 4: Differentiated Feedback Sheet

(4)

They forgot Green click better with long vowel en

Power Hour January 2022 3/11 - 4/2

Group Comments	Reading	Making and Breaking	Dolch and Free Writing
Child 5		oa, oe, o-e ow Crossword '2/2-	Absent - Absent 3/2/22 Absent - Absent 4/1? Absent Absent
Child 21	Excellent engagement + predictions V. engaged Reading well	Super 0 Excellent with Exce rhyming + dictation on	Started drawing after deciding on his dice picture Read words fluently quick at writing down words said saying down word Started drawing - slow to start writing Read for me
Child 28	Some difficulty but great effort made V. engaged Reading well + V. engaged	Copy v well Great with	Started writing straight away. - good at saying words V. quick to start her work Read words fluently
Child 11		Absent -	Absent - Absent 4/2 Absent Absent Absent 3/2/22
Child 16	Excellent effort + good engagement V. engaged Reading well	Copy <sup>strong</sup> 194 Excellent rhyming with Sadie	Started writing, but slow to get stuff down on her page. Started writing straight away got a bit down on her page, sounding out. Read for me. Having a little difficulty reading white
Child 22	V. engaged Requiring prompts	Absent slow with crossword Language gap	Absent Absent knows all

Appendix 5: Post-Cycle 1 Meeting Notes Teacher A

11:54 PM 1/3/22 (5)

Re: Power Hour 2

~~Teacher A~~

... you are a star! Thank you so much for this, it's absolutely amazing to see the breakdown of the children's performance and the super improvements made.

I think you are right with regards ... They are both well able so I think a chat with them is definitely a good idea to see how they feel about their learning during PH, especially going forward. I am delighted for ... with their amazing improvements! This will be such a fantastic confidence boost for them too. 😊

All the other groups sound perfect to me ... Thank you so much for everything, it is really benefiting the whole class (and me)! We are learning so much.

Appendix 6: Post-Research Cycle 2 Child 22 Questionnaire

Review of Power Hour 2 by Children- 28/04/22

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 26/04/2022

Can you tell me how you found Power Hour? It would be great if you help me think about how I could make Power Hours even better 😊. If you could answer some questions that would be fantastic! Did you think it helped you learn how to read a lot, more than a little, a little or not at all? Did Which station did you enjoy the most? Why?

	😊 A lot	😐 More than a little	😐 A little	😞 Not at all
Did the reading station help you read better?	✓			
Did say it, tap it, map it help you to learn your sounds better?	✓			
Did the tricky words station help you to spell your tricky words better?	✓			
Did the free-writing station help you to write better?	✓			
What did you enjoy most about Power Hour?				
I like crack the code because you have to crack the code.				
What did you not enjoy about Power Hour?				
I want it to be longer.				
How would you like to change Power Hour?				



Appendix 7 (1): Post-Cycle 3 Parent's Questionnaire

13

Parent questionnaire 2: Literacy Power Hours First Class

Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 1/6/2022

As you are aware your child has been involved in Power Hours since January 2022 as part of my master's research into Literacy at First Class level with Maynooth University. How to recognise and identify tricky sounds like long vowels (e.g. 'ai', 'ay', 'ue', 'ew') and how the sound 'r' in words is impacted by a vowel were all looked at in phonics. We practiced the reading and spelling of Senior Infants and First Class Dolch (tricky) words and children read many books getting the opportunity to read in small groups and answer questions. Children also worked on 'Free writing' to support the development of creative writing. We have now completed the final block of Power Hour which was a 'Reader's Theatre'. This gave children the opportunity to put into practice all the skills of reading that we have been working on since January in these Power Hours. The children also got to perform our book 'Care of Henry' for Susan during our final Power Hour. This added a huge sense of excitement for everyone, as children demonstrated their improved reading skills. It would be very helpful if you could complete this final questionnaire to identify any developments you have noted in your child's literacy skills during this time. This will allow me to incorporate any suggestions or comments you may have into my final research findings.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your child for your contributions to this research project. Your support during this process has been invaluable to me in developing this programme. Could you please complete the following questionnaire by selecting one box to tick, while answering the questions? The range spans from '1' to '4' where '1' is not at all, '2' is a little, '3' is more than a little and '4' is a lot.

Appendix 8: Pre-Cycle 1 Initial Sound Assessment by Child

Initial Pre-intervention Phonics Assessments						Points to note
1st Class Unique Identifier	Original sounds 43 10/01/2022	Original sounds known 10/01/2022	Alternatives 27 10/01/2022	Alternatives Percentage known 10/01/2022	Alternatives Percentage known 10/01/2022	
1	42	98%	27	100%	100%	
2	42	98%	27	100%	100%	
4	39	91%	13	48%	48%	
5	40	93%	20	74%	74%	
6	35	81%	6	22%	22%	
7	43	100%	25	93%	93%	
8	41	95%	18	67%	67%	
9	Absent	Absent	Absent	Absent	Absent	HA child present for assessment in writing
10	40	93%	23	85%	85%	
11	42	98%	25	93%	93%	
12	39	91%	15	56%	56%	
13	34	79%	6	22%	22%	
15	42	98%	26	96%	96%	
16	40	93%	24	89%	89%	
17	39	91%	11	41%	41%	
18	34	79%	7	26%	26%	
19	33	77%	4	15%	15%	
20	36	84%	9	33%	33%	
21	39	91%	21	78%	78%	
22	41	95%	20	74%	74%	
23	25	58%	0	0%	0%	
24	42	98%	25	93%	93%	
25	41	95%	23	85%	85%	
26	37	86%	15	56%	56%	
27	31	72%	7	26%	26%	
28	42	98%	21	78%	78%	
<b>Average percentage known at pre-intervention stage</b>						<b>62%</b>
<b>Original sounds known 10/01/2022</b>						<b>89%</b>

Appendix 9: First Class Children’s Pre-Cycle 1 Assessments of Dolch in Writing

Initial Pre-intervention Dolch Words Application in Writing					
1st Class	Junior Infants	Junior Infants	Senior Infants	Senior Infants *	1st Class *
Unique Identifier	Dolch 14 10/01/2022	Dolch % known 10/01/2022	Dolch 15 11/01/2022	Dolch % known 11/01/2022	Dolch 15 12/01/2022
7	14	100%	15	100%	15
1	14	100%	14	93%	15
24	12	86%	12	80%	15
15	10	71%	12	80%	13
25	13	93%	12	80%	13
9	Absent	Absent	12	80%	11
2	12	86%	11	73%	13
12	12	86%	11	73%	11
11	10	71%	11	73%	8
5	10	71%	9	60%	12
21	11	79%	9	60%	11
28	13	93%	9	60%	8
8	6	43%	9	60%	5
22	10	71%	9	60%	5
16	9	64%	7	47%	11
4	6	43%	7	47%	7
18	7	50%	6	40%	6
26	4	29%	4	27%	7
20	5	36%	3	20%	4
6	2	14%	2	13%	1
13	2	14%	1	7%	3
17	6	43%	1	7%	1
19	2	14%	1	7%	1
27	2	14%	1	7%	1
10	3	21%	0	0%	5
23	1	7%	0	0%	1

Note \* Data sorted based on Senior Infants words % known, then based on First Class words % known

## Appendix 10: Power Hour 1 Plan

### Power Hour – 1<sup>st</sup> Class: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022

The session lasts for an hour and will rotate every 12 minutes to allow for movement and reminding children what we are doing at each station. Children will bring their own dice and one person will be selected each day to carry the opposed from table to table. Teacher A will set a timer and tell the groups when to move.

The groups are differentiated in colour as follows

- Group 1 Yellow
- Group 2 Red
- Group 3 Green
- Group 4 Blue

Stations are:

#### 1. Reading Power Hour Books (Teacher 1)

The focus will be on identifying author, illustrator, title, blurb (if any) and predicting, connecting, and visualising before opening the book.

Children will be reading from the Big Cat series and will begin as follows

Yellow: Level 9

Red: Level 8

Green: Level 7

Blue: Level 6 or below

#### 2. Phonics: Making and breaking Long Vowels

At this station children will continue to revise digraphs and learn to make and break words with these digraphs. The approach will be repeated for each week of phonics work for the James period.

- Identify sounds through sandpaper cards, feel the sound using their fingers
- Write sounds down through dictation
- Children will transform words with the sounds on mini whiteboards
- Revise digraphs already covered through the 'SWAP!' snakes and ladders game
- Complete word shape quizzes using the sounds being covered
- Complete word searches with sounds covered
- Match pictures and word cards

**Week 1:** Long I sound, y as i / e, i-e, i-e

**Week 2:** us, est, ue, au/aw

**Week 3/4:** ow, oa, (long O)

**Week 1:** 17/01/22 – 21/01/22, Long I sound – ie, ie, ih, y, ai

Vocabulary covered in games: fight, light, right, night, bite, kite, lie, lie, cry, my, fly

**Week 2:** 24/01/22 – 28/01/22, Long U sound ue, aw, us

Vocabulary covered in games: blue, cue, egot, flex, chew, brew, new, knew, crew

**Week 3:** 31/01/22 – 04/02/22, Long O sound oa, o

Vocabulary covered in games: bow, crow, mow, flow, row, grow, boat, coat, float, note

**Week 4:** 07/02/22 – 11/02/22, Long A ai, ay, as, and Long E ee, ea, y, as, E, e, e

Vocabulary covered in games: rain, pain, plain, train, hay, play, day, may, pay, plate, plane, crate, date, hate, later, mate, sea, tree, bee, beach, teach, sea, teacher, creature, holly, Lily, Lucy, Peter.

**Outcomes for each group**

Learning outcomes for each group are differentiated with resources created for each group to provide the opportunity of working at their own pace.

Children in all groups will be challenged to create their own WCVI words.

Making sentences with the movable alphabet will be used throughout the phonics station.

**Resources:**

Movable alphabet, whiteboards, markers, picture and word cards, snakes, and ladders games

#### 3. SIGHT WORD RECOGNITION – Dolch, Senior Infants (Teacher)

At this station children will revise, practise, and learn to recognise and read sight words. The teacher introduces the large flash cards at the table with the technique this is x, show me x, what is this?

Introduce the sight words for the day, practise with use of whole body on flash cards on the floor and reinforce with roll a sight word handwriting sheet. The teacher invites

children to do whole body movement with the children jumping beside the flash card on the floor.

Revise the words using roll a sight word game: Rules are

1. Children in pairs with a sheet each and some dice between 2
2. Throw the dice
3. Look at the number on the dice and find the word below that number on your sheet
4. Read the word (not sound it out – these are tricky words). If the child cannot read it others help. They don't write until they have read it!
5. Use the word on the sheet once (only the child who throws)
6. Accumulate points for each word
7. When finished, children can turn over the word to write a sentence for each word on the back

**Resources needed:** Scholastic sheets, word files, blank board game, discs for each child, pencils

**Roll a sight word – Senior Infants Dolch Words**

**Week 1:** Sheet 1: all, are, ate, black, be, brown

**Week 2:** Sheet 2: eat, came, do, four, good, did,

**Week 3:** Sheet 3: have, he, like, new, now, no

**Week 4:** Sheet 4: out, our, please, pretty, ride saw

**Week 5:** Sheet 5: say, so, that, they, she, soon

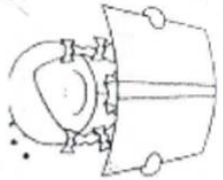
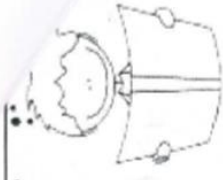
**Week 6:** Sheet 6: under, was, went, white, who, will

#### 4. Free Writing

Children will use a picture as a cue to write about. The focus is for children to write freely and not worry about their work being corrected.

Appendix 11: Roll a Sight Word Activity – Child 2

**Roll A Sight Word**



die roll	die roll	die roll	die roll	die roll	die roll
1	2	3	4	5	6
under	was	went	white	who	will
under	was	went	white	who	will
under	was	went	white	who	will
under	was	went	white	who	will
under	was	went	white	who	will
under	was	went	white	who	will

Appendix 12: Pre and Post Cycle 1 Assessment of Long Vowels – Child 13: Post-Assessment

.5 → 13/15 (r 8)

Name: Child 13 Post-PHI Assessment  
 Part 1: Quiz 6/2/2022 Long Vowels

A	1.	<u>o-e</u> ✓	
	2.	<u>ou</u> ✓	
	3.	<u>ai</u> ✓	
E	4.	<u>ee</u> ✓	
	5.	<u>E-e</u> ✓	
	6.	<u>ea</u> ✓	
I	7.	<u>ie</u> ✓	
	8.	<u>ih</u> ✓	
	9.	<u>yigh</u> ✓	

10.	<u>O-E</u> ✓	
11.	<u>ou</u> ✓	
12.	<u>ou</u>	
13.	<u>uo</u>	
14.	<u>ue</u> ✓	
15.	<u>ue</u>	

13/15

Appendix 12: Pre and Post Cycle 1 Assessment of Long Vowels – Child 13: Pre-Assessment

14/1/2022

Name: Child 13 Pre-cycle 1 assessment  
 Part 1: Quiz Long Vowels

A	1.	<u>ai</u> ✓	
	2.	<u>ae</u> ✓	
	3.	_____	
E	4.	<u>ea</u> ✓	
	5.	<u>el</u> ✓	
	6.	_____	
I	7.	<u>ia</u>	
	8.	_____	
	9.	_____	

10.	<u>oa</u>	
11.	<u>ou</u> ✓	
12.	_____	
13.	<u>uo</u>	
14.	_____	
15.	_____	

5/15

Appendix 13: Pre-Cycle 2 Assessment of R-controlled vowels – Child 16 Post-Assessment

1<sup>st</sup> Class Assessment Post Cycle 2 Power Hour 06/04/22  
R Controlled Vowels

Name: Child 16

Part 1: Quiz

1. <u>thru</u> ✓	11. <u>bird</u>
2. <u>utter</u> ✓	12. <u>sir</u> ✓
3. <u>chips</u> ✓	13. <u>dirt</u> ✓
4. <u>girl</u> ✓	14. <u>jam</u> ✓
5. <u>chart</u> ✓	15. <u>hand</u> ✓
6. <u>burn</u> ✓	
7. <u>bird</u> ✓	
8. <u>tiger</u> ✓	
9. <u>paper</u> ✓	
10. <u>bad</u> ✓	

the bird lost a letter  
I will start the paper  
I am at the top of the

Appendix 13: Pre-Cycle 2 Assessment of R-controlled vowels – Child 16 Pre-Assessment

8/2/22 Pre - power hour 2 (13)  
1<sup>st</sup> Class Check-up 11/03/22  
R Controlled Vowels 18/2/22

Name: Child 16

Part 1: Quiz

1. <u>thru</u>	11. <u>bird</u>
2. <u>air</u>	12. <u>bird</u>
3. <u>chips</u>	13. <u>dirt</u>
4. <u>girl</u>	14. <u>game</u>
5. <u>chart</u> ✓	15. <u>hand</u>
6. <u>burn</u>	
7. <u>bird</u>	
8. <u>tiger</u>	
9. <u>paper</u>	
10. <u>bad</u>	

## Appendix 14: RC2 Summary Plan

**Power Hour 1<sup>st</sup> Class: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – 08<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

The session lasts for an hour and will rotate every 13 minutes to allow for movement and reminding children what we are doing at each station. The groups continue to be differentiated in colour and children will swap as agreed depending on their previous experience and outcomes achieved in Power Hour 1

- Group 1 Yellow
- Group 2 Red
- Group 3 Green
- Group 4 Blue

Stations are:

**1. Reading Power Hour Books Teacher A**

This Power Hour will focus on comprehension while reading and developing the skills outlined in Building Bridges of Comprehension. At First Class Level we are focusing on 'prediction', 'connections', and 'visualising'. We will be introducing 'determining importance' during this power hour also. As before we will identify the author, illustrator, and title before opening the book.

During this Power Hour we will be using the resource 'The Literacy Box 1' with individual graded literacy stories and answer cards. The order of differentiation (from easier to harder) is Red, Yellow, Blue, Orange, Green, Purple, Brown. Children will begin reading the following levels and teachers will adjust as needed during the sessions:

Children's Group	Reading level colour assigned from Literacy Box
Yellow	Blue
Red	Yellow
Green	Red
Blue	My Very First Phonics Passages Series
	Week 1: (ab, ad, ag, am, an, ap, at)
	Week 2: (eg, en, eo, et)
	Week 2: (ig, im, in, ip, it)
	Week 3: (ob, og, op, ox, ot)
	Week: 4 (ug, um, un, up, ut)

**2. Phonics: Making and breaking: er, ir, ur, ar, or**

At this station children will continue to revise digraphs and learn to make and break words with these alternates

- Revise the meaning of a vowel and identify how bossy r impacts on a vowel
- Listen to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISJdqa4DRJg>
- Bossy r for e, i, u
- <https://phonicshero.com/r-controlled-vowels/>
- Work mapping - I can read 'Say it map it tap it graph it write it'
- Write sounds down through dictation
- Revise digraphs already covered through the 'SWAP' game
- Complete word shape quizzes using the sounds being covered
- Complete a word search with sounds covered

**Week 1 (14/03 - 16/03): (3 days) 'ar' sound**

- Listen to and recall <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISJdqa4DRJg> video
- Brainstorm words on whiteboards
- Identify sounds and syllables
- Sound substitution, rhyming and deletion
- Rhyming car, bar, far
- Substitution bark, barn
- Deletion bark, ark, farm, arm
- Ar + initial sounds f, b, c, m + ending sounds m, k, t, ch, d.
- Counting phonemes in words
- Say it map it tap it graph it (using bingo markers) write it or build it, activities 1-5
- Vocabulary includes car, bar, far, art, arm, jar, bark, farm, dart, yarn, cart, star, card, barn, park, hard, scar, yard, mark, mart, march, smart, shark, chart, sharp
- Wow word wall of 'ar' words: Participate, embarrassed, remarkable, partnership, particular, paralysed, marble, alarm

**Week 2 (21/03 - 25/03): 'or' sound and other first r-controlled vowels 'er'**

- Listen to and recall 'er' video and 'r-controlled vowels video'
- Brainstorm words on whiteboards
- Identify sounds and syllables
- Rhyming core, fore, more, nor, pore, sore, tore, wore,
- Substitution core, cork, cord,
- Deletion core, cork, core, fore, form

## Appendix 14 (Part 2): RC2 Summary Plan - Continued

- Or + initial sounds f, b, c, m + ending sounds m, k, t, ch, d.
- Counting phonemes in words
- Say it map it tap it graph it (using bingo markers) write it or build it, activities 11 – 13 and activities 6 - 8
- Vocabulary includes 'or': corn, pork, horn, torn, fort, cord, fork, cork, worm, sort, north, storm, thorn, sport, torch
- Vocabulary includes 'er': her, fern, over, herd, baker, tiger, paper, cover, water, under, otter, ladder, letter, hammer, butter
- Wow word wall of 'or' words: forward, laboratory, forgetful, decorate, platform, predator, fortress, tornado, author
- WOW word wall of 'er' words: experiment, supervisor, different, remember, universe, energetic, battery, dangerous

**Week 3: 28/03 - 01/04: 'ur' and 'ir' r-controlled vowels**

- Recall 'r-controlled vowels video'
- Brainstorm words on whiteboards
- Identify sounds and syllables
- Rhyming, substitution, deletion
- Guessing which sound is correct ur, ir, er?
- Counting phonemes in words
- Say it map it tap it graph it (using bingo markers) write it or build it, activities 14-15 and activities 9-10
- Vocabulary includes gir, bird, stir, dirt, shirt, chirp, third, skirt, dirty, thirsty, hurt, turn, curl, burn, surf, curb, turf, nurse, church, turkey,
- WOW word wall of 'ir' words: chairman, birthday, thirteen, giraffe, repair
- WOW word wall of 'ur' words: mercury, further, purchase, security, survive, century, adventure, natural

**Week 4: 04/04 - 08/04: Revision** of all sounds covered to date

- Say it map it tap it graph it (using bingo markers) write it or build it, activities 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 27, 30
- Vocabulary includes fem, fort, jar, girl, hurt, turn, herd, horn, car, dirt, curl, water, chirp, pork, arm, paper, church, third, worm, scar, torch, park, turkey, cover, thirsty, girl, otter, storm, yarn, turf, stir, mart, corn, turn, ladder

**SIGHT WORD RECOGNITION – Dolch First Class**

At this station children will revise, practise and learn to recognise and read sight words. For this power hour children will identify the 'heart' sounds in the words [i.e.](#) the parts of the words they will learn by heart.

**Roll a sight word:**

These are not split over weeks; children can proceed at their own pace once they are observed to be following the instructions correctly and benefiting from the spelling opportunity. They will complete the 'break the code' exercise afterwards revising and reinforcing SI Dolch words.

Sheet 1: after, ask, by, again, any, could

Sheet 2: every, going, has, fly, give, her

Sheet 3: how, know, live, his, may, him

Sheet 4: some, once, over, round, old, open

Sheet 5: thank, then, walk, take, them, think

Sheet 6: were, when (+ 4 words identified by each child)

On sheet 6 children will identify 4 words they find tricky and include them in the 4 spare boxes prior to starting the activity.

Sheet 7: Children will look over both SI and 1<sup>st</sup> Class booklets to identify 6 tricky Dolch words for them individually

Introduce the sight words for the day, practise with use of whole body on flash cards on the floor and reinforce with roll a sight word handwriting sheet

Revise the words using roll a sight word game: Rules are

1. Children work individually with their own dice.
2. Throw the dice
3. Look at the number on the dice and find the word below that number on your sheet
4. Read the word (not sound it out – these are tricky words). If the child cannot read it others help. They don't write until they have read it!
5. Write the word on the sheet once (only the child who throws)
6. Accuracy not speed is required
7. When finished children can turn over the word to write a sentence for each word on the back

**Free Writing**

Children will use a story cube (Rory story cubes) as a cue to write about. The focus is for children to write freely and not worry about their work being corrected



## Appendix 15: RC2 Reading Notes for Literacy Box 1

The Literacy Box 1	Group: _____	
There are a minimum of 8 copies of each title for children to have access to their own copy.		
<b>Red Title</b>	<b>Genre</b>	
1: The Dream Dragon	Imaginative Fantasy	
<b>Point to note:</b> Written as a poem with rhyming words telling the story		
3: Little Blue Jacket	Imaginative Fairy-tale	
<b>Point to note:</b> Connection with Little Red Riding Hood		
<b>Yellow</b>		
1: Catch the Clown	Imaginative Humour	
<b>Point to note:</b> Explain what the meaning of an exclamation mark is and identify an adjective.		
2: The Ants and the Grasshopper	Informative Fable	
<b>Point to note:</b> What is a fable, can they identify another adjective or exclamation mark?		
<b>Blue</b>		
1: Real Ninjas	Informative Report	
<b>Point to note:</b> Ninjas live in Japan centuries ago. They were mainly spies, assassins and scouts. These skills were passed down through a family. There were separate clans of ninjas		
4: Bubbles! Bubbles! Bubbles!	Persuasive Exposition	
<b>Point to note:</b> What is a 'persuasion'? Can they think of anything where they are persuaded to do something? (An advertisement for a toy). Grammar in this includes verbs and capital letters.		
<b>Orange</b>		
1: In the Garden	Imaginative Adventure	
<b>Point to note:</b> Children can empathise from the butterfly's perspective. Grammar includes verbs		
2: Fun Parks	Informative Report	
<b>Point to note:</b> Rhyming words and synonyms		
<b>Green</b>		
1: Cooking with Dad	Imaginative Recount	
<b>Point to note:</b> Pupils recall/ write about their own crazy dish. Long o sound in 'so' and 'don't'		
3: Red, red is far ahead!	Persuasive Exposition	
<b>Point to note:</b> Long u sounds (blue, choose, fruit, foods, you, use)		
<b>Purple</b>		
1: The sea creature with eight arms	Informative Report	
<b>Point to note:</b> Capital letters and full stops, question marks		
2: Whale of a tale	Imaginative Narrative	
<b>Point to note:</b> Pupils discuss how fish and whales are different animals		
<b>Brown:</b>		
4: Underwater adventure	Imaginative Adventure	
<b>Point to note:</b> synonyms and antonyms		

Appendix 16: RC2 Blue Group Reading Materials 'My Very First Phonics Passages'

(16)


Name: Child 6 / 01/04/2022

dig      big      wig      fig      pig

---

The Big Dig

Dig, dig, dig. Look, it is  
a wig! Look, it is a pig!



Look, it is a fig! It is big. Dig, dig, dig.

☺ ☺ ☺

---

1. Look, it is a pig.

dig       big       pig

2. It is big.


big       dig       fig
















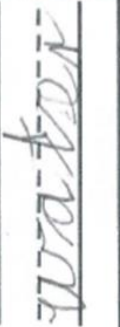




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Appendix 17: Orthographic Mapping Child 10

Name: Child 10

## Word Mapping: I Can Read



Say it	Tap it and Map it	Graph it	Write it
			
			
			
			
			

©Hove Shiffert © The McFadden Co.  
E- R-Controlled Vowels: tiger, paper, cover, water, under

Appendix 18: Free Writing – Child 2

8/4/2022 Child 2 (19)

color you can't see

color you can see

A shooting star is achly an ustriod  
and it is attracted to magnet. A rainbow  
is not really there it is just the way  
your eyes see it, and there are two  
colours that you can't see

## Appendix 19: RC3 Plan of Readers Theatre

Power Hour 3, 03.05.21 – 13.05.22	Power Hour 3, 03.05.21 – 13.05.22	Power Hour 3, 03.05.21 – 13.05.22	Power Hour 3, 03.05.21 – 13.05.22
<p>Purpose of this power hour is to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve children's reading fluency</li> <li>Improve children's comprehension skills</li> <li>Motivate children to engage in and continue independent reading</li> <li><a href="#">Readers Theatre 1, What's Missing?</a></li> <li><a href="#">Readers Theatre 2, Theatre: The True Story of the Three Little Pigs (2011)</a></li> <li>Learn street readers theatre</li> <li>What is a reader's theatre?</li> <li>What are they doing with story?</li> </ul> <p><b>Timeline of Cycle 3 Power Hour</b></p> <p><b>Day 1: Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> May 2022</b></p> <p>Discuss the terms author, illustrator, title, prediction, visualising, connecting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title – Visualising</li> <li>Group exercise 2 group</li> <li>Treasure box of idea for the chapter: Lead, dog toy, dog treat</li> <li>Give an image from the book</li> </ol> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tell the children we will be doing a reader's theatre</li> <li>What is a theatre?</li> <li>Acting out parts when reading the words, don't have to remember the words, but we get to know them through reading them</li> <li>Objective: Working on accuracy of reading, no added words in (this is where the next block of work would go after readers theatre)</li> <li>Who are the characters?</li> <li>What are narrators? What words do they say? (Sentence structure in books)</li> <li>How to use the script. The names of the parts are in bold. Children agree parts and highlight their part on the script with a pen-marker so they know when to speak. Tons used for exclamation marks and question marks to be discussed. Importance of full stops and commas highlighted.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inferencing: Chapter 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we know she was going to have a baby?</li> <li>Gone for 3 days</li> <li>Waddled off to the door</li> <li>Clutched her tummy – maybe the baby is kicking?</li> <li>Why is someone looking at the house do you think?</li> </ul> <p>Background knowledge – link to previous experience? (Stop here – why would they be looking at the house?)</p> <p><b>Breadth and depth of language: Chapter 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Come along</li> <li>Struggled</li> <li>Blank – expressionless</li> <li>Flat – apartment</li> <li>Push – fancy</li> <li>Tummy</li> <li>Accuzi</li> <li>Glammy</li> <li>Answered the door – opened</li> <li>Clutched</li> <li>Cupboards</li> <li>teatily</li> </ul> <p>Model reading chapter 1. Distribute script, select parts, and begin practicing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First read</li> <li>Practice read</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 2: Wednesday 04<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characters: Mum and Hugo</li> <li>Setting: In the house</li> <li>Problem in the story: Mum is having a baby and Hugo <del>has</del> decides where he will stay while Mum has the baby in hospital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are his options</li> <li>Activity: Performance Read Chapter 1</li> <li>Model reading chapter 2 and 3. Distribute script, select parts, and begin practicing (First Read and practice read)</li> </ul> <p><b>Inferencing: Chapter 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hugo put his clipboard on the table – what do you think he is going to do?</li> <li>Frothy – what did she say, if frothy?</li> <li>Can Henry sleep on Hugo's bed if things seem strange – will Hugo feel strange?</li> <li>If Granny were a house, he certainly wouldn't buy her – why???</li> </ul> <p><b>Chapter 2: Depth and Breadth of Language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punched – pressed</li> <li>Stompy</li> <li>Fire away – go ahead</li> <li>Frothy</li> <li>Tardy</li> <li>Toss – throw away</li> <li>Press on – continue</li> <li>Antiques, songs of praise, politics documentary</li> <li>Emusement!</li> <li>Shortage</li> <li>Clean out of</li> <li>Skip it – miss it</li> <li>Stretches</li> <li>Casseroles</li> </ul> <p><b>Inferencing: Chapter 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hugo put his foot in the soap – why?</li> <li>While you are my guest – my house is your house? What does that mean? Will he have to go to school?</li> <li>It had taken a full 20 minutes to pick up the broken china</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inferencing: Chapter 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do we know she was going to have a baby?</li> <li>Gone for 3 days</li> <li>Waddled off to the door</li> <li>Clutched her tummy – maybe the baby is kicking?</li> <li>Why is someone looking at the house do you think?</li> </ul> <p>Background knowledge – link to previous experience? (Stop here – why would they be looking at the house?)</p> <p><b>Breadth and depth of language: Chapter 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Come along</li> <li>Struggled</li> <li>Blank – expressionless</li> <li>Flat – apartment</li> <li>Push – fancy</li> <li>Tummy</li> <li>Accuzi</li> <li>Glammy</li> <li>Answered the door – opened</li> <li>Clutched</li> <li>Cupboards</li> <li>teatily</li> </ul> <p>Model reading chapter 1. Distribute script, select parts, and begin practicing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First read</li> <li>Practice read</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 2: Wednesday 04<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Characters: Mum and Hugo</li> <li>Setting: In the house</li> <li>Problem in the story: Mum is having a baby and Hugo <del>has</del> decides where he will stay while Mum has the baby in hospital</li> </ul>

Appendix 19: RC3 Plan of Readers Theatre

<p><b>Chapter 3: Depth and breadth of language</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hurdle – throw</li> <li>• Wisp</li> <li>• Chins - dikes</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 3: Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May</b> Finish modelling Chapter 2 and 3</p> <p><b>Activity with children in groups:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First read: individually</li> <li>• Practice read: group</li> <li>• Performance read: for audience</li> <li>• Focusing on 'imitation', projection – lead voice</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 4: Friday 06<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Read of Chapter 3 Mr Mariposa, Model Chapter 4</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 5: Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <p><b>Activity with children in groups:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4: First read: individually</li> <li>• Practice read: group</li> <li>• Performance Read</li> <li>• Focusing on intonation, projection, looking at punctuation, words in bold, different shape (italics), meaning of interjections by Hugo, what would his tone be, what do exclamation marks or question marks mean? What would you do with your voice?</li> <li>• Read Chapter 5 – Hugo's decision</li> <li>• Feedback sheets completed by all adults</li> </ul>	<p><b>Chapter 5:</b> <b>Language Depth and Breadth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Mournful</li> <li>o Glumly</li> <li>o Hopedli</li> <li>o Gobbling</li> <li>o Gazed</li> </ul> <p><b>Inferencing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o What does it mean when he is saying what will happen with Granny? What is he thinking about</li> <li>o My heart says granny</li> <li>o Going with his heart</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 6: Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of information from all chapters to date</li> <li>• Naming each of the chapters based on the information in them other than chapter 1 - 6</li> <li>• Performing all chapters to date</li> <li>• Model Chapter 6</li> </ul> <p><b>Inferences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think Granny said all these things? Was she stalling a job? Perhaps she was cross he was being rude?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day 7: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <p><b>Activity with children in groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating sentences with new language used – fill in the blanks from a bank of words</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 8: Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform for Principal</li> <li>• Highlights Chair Recorded with microphones</li> <li>• Design a front cover of the book</li> </ul> <p><b>Day 9 Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create their own clip board of 5 options – whose names would you put at the top? Pick 3 people</li> <li>• Feedback sheets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm having a problem with all the ticks and crosses myself – inference. Had the man bought a house?</li> <li>• Did Henry move house? Hugo's still waiting – for what. His sister is two?</li> </ul>

Appendix 20: Ethical Consent Forms

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Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.



**Declaration by Researcher**

This declaration must be signed by the applicant(s)

I acknowledge(s) and agree that:

- a) It is my sole responsibility and obligation to comply with all Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.
- b) I will comply with Irish and EU legislation relevant to this project.
- c) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Ethics Policy.
- d) That the research will be conducted in accordance with the Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy.
- e) That the research will not commence until ethical approval has been granted by the Research and Ethics committee in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

Signature of Student: *Linda Rock*

Date: 03/12/21

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**Child's assent to participate**

**My parent/guardian has read the information sheet with me and I agree to take part in this research.**

**Name of child (in block capitals):** \_\_\_\_\_



**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education**  
Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

03/12/21

**Letter of Consent for Parents/Guardians**

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am currently undertaking a Master of Education Degree in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. As part of my degree, I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on delivering excellent literacy lessons for every child in First Class through collaboration with their class teacher and the children participating in station teaching or 'power hours'. I will explore whether this leads to an improvement in literacy levels in First Class children.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by implementing Literacy power hours or stations during children's daily English classes. This will involve assessing children in key Literacy indicators before supporting teachers in developing and delivering these Literacy stations.

Data collection will involve observations, teacher's and children's reflective journals, individual child assessments, voice recordings, surveys, questionnaires, and samples of children's work. All data collected will be anonymised to protect children's identity.

All correct research and data protection guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. Only children of parents/guardians who give their informed consent and assent will be included in the study. These children's results and samples will form part of the

findings and results within the final thesis. All information collected will be treated in confidence and all participants will be anonymised in all aspects of the research project. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw from the study without repercussions.

All data collected will be stored in a confidential manner for the duration of the study and thereafter. Following the completion of this thesis, the data will be stored for a further ten years as per Maynooth University regulations. It will then be securely destroyed. This research will not be carried out until ethical approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I would like to invite you and your child to give permission for him/her to take part in this project. Please complete the written consent form attached to allow your child to participate. If you have any queries on any part of this research project feel free to contact me by email at linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie

Yours faithfully,

*Linda Rock*





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Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

03<sup>rd</sup> December 2021

**Letter of Information for Board of Management**

**RE: Linda Rock: Master of Education Permission to Conduct Research**

Dear Board of Management,

I am currently undertaking a Master of Education Research in Practice degree in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. As part of this master's programme, it is required that the researcher carries out qualitative or quantitative analysis in the form of an action research study. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Associate Professor Niamh Fortune, Head of Department in Maynooth University.

My chosen area of research aims to explore 'How do I effectively teach and support reading in First Class through differentiated station teaching?' This will investigate the extent to which literacy stations or power hours can be used to improve children's literacy skills at First Class level through collaboration with their teacher. I wish to obtain your permission to invite the pupils and First Class Team to participate in the study. Children will only participate in this study where parents have granted consent. Children's individual assent will also be requested. A parent's/guardian's explanation letter will be provided, to allow parents/guardians to discuss the purpose of this study with their child.

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In order to complete this research, I will model and deliver power hours to children in First Class and collaborate with their First Class Teacher to empower her to deliver these power hours independently. I am currently acting in the role of Core Support for First Class during this academic school year 2021/22. These literacy stations will take place during the children's daily English time.

Data collection will involve observations, reflective journals from children and teachers, critical friends, individual child assessments, highlights chair, voice recordings, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, conferencing, collaboration with the Class Teacher, station teaching plans and samples of children's work. All information collected will be treated in confidence and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any aspect of my research project. All participants will be anonymised. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time. On condition of receiving your consent to approach the pupils, parents, teachers and SNAs in the study, I will arrange for informed consent to be obtained from the participants as outlined. In the event of any school closures due to Covid-19, I will continue to carry out research and collect data through the secure form of Microsoft Teams available through the secure Maynooth University portal. Interviews or conversations completed will be carried out in line with Maynooth University Ethics guidelines and our own School Policy.

All data collected will be stored in a confidential manner for the duration of the study and thereafter. Following the completion of this thesis, the data will be stored for a further ten years as per Maynooth University regulations. It will then be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an

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Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

This research will not be carried out until ethical approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I attach the Research Consent Form and the proposed letters for parents, children and teachers for your consideration. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form.

Yours faithfully,

Approved by:

Print your name and title here \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.



**Board of Management Consent Form**

I give consent for Linda Rock to approach parents to gain consent for pupils to participate in this Research Project.

I have read the Letter of Information explaining the purpose of the research study and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw the schools' participation at any time
- The participants will be given informed consent and will understand that they may only participate in the study with this consent
- All information obtained will be kept confidential and will be treated in confidence.
- The participant's names will not be used, and individuals will not be identifiable throughout the study
- In the event of a school closure due to Covid-19, research will continue remotely through Microsoft Teams
- The school will not be identifiable in any part of the study in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of all participants
- Participants may withdraw during any part of the study at their discretion. No incentive to participate in the research study will be provided.
- I may look for further information about the research study from Linda Rock on 0874198345.

Chairperson's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.

03<sup>rd</sup> December 2021

**Letter of Information for Principal**

**RE: Linda Rock: Master of Education Permission to Conduct Research**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am currently undertaking a Master of Education Research in Practice degree in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. As part of this master's programme, it is required that the researcher carries out qualitative or quantitative analysis in the form of an action research study. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Associate Professor Niamh Fortune, Head of Department in Maynooth University.

My chosen area of research aims to explore 'How do I effectively teach and support reading in First Class through differentiated station teaching? This will investigate the extent to which literacy stations or power hours can be used to improve children's literacy skills at First Class level through collaboration with their teacher. I wish to obtain your permission to invite the pupils and First Class Team to participate in the study. Children will only participate in this

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study where parents have granted consent. Children's individual assent will also be requested. A parent's/guardian's explanation letter will be provided, to allow parents/guardians to discuss the purpose of this study with their child.

In order to complete this research, I will model and deliver power hours to children in First Class and collaborate with their First Class Teacher to empower her to deliver these power hours independently. As I am currently acting in the role of Core Support for First Class during this academic school year 2021/22, these literacy stations will take place during the children's daily English time.

Data collection will involve observations, reflective journals from teachers and children, critical friends, individual child assessments, highlights chair, voice recordings, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, conferencing, collaboration with the Class Teacher, station teaching plans and samples of children's work. All information collected will be treated in confidence and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any aspect of my research project. All participants will be anonymised. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time. On condition of receiving your consent to approach the pupils, parents, teachers and SNAs in the study, I will arrange for informed consent to be obtained from the participants as outlined. In the event of any school closures due to Covid-19, I will continue to carry out research and collect data through the secure form of Microsoft Teams available through the secure Maynooth University portal. Interviews or conversations completed will be carried out in line with Maynooth University Ethics guidelines and our own School Policy.

All data collected will be stored in a confidential manner for the duration of the study and thereafter. Following the completion of this thesis, the data will be stored for a further ten years

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as per Maynooth University regulations. It will then be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

This research will not be carried out until ethical approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I attach the Participant Consent Form for your consideration. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at [linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie](mailto:linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie)

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form.

Yours sincerely

Linda Rock

Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education

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Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.



### School Principal Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_, as School Principal, give my consent to participate in this Self-Study Action Research with Linda Rock .

I have read the Letter of Information explaining the purpose of the research study and understand that:

- The role of the school is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw the schools' participation at any time
- The participants will be given informed consent and will understand that they may only participate in the study with this consent
- All information obtained will be kept confidential and will be treated in confidence.
- The participant's names will not be used, and individuals will not be identifiable throughout the study.
- In the event of a school closure due to Covid-19, research will continue remotely through Microsoft Teams
- The school will not be identifiable in any part of the study in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of all participants
- Participants may withdraw during any part of the study at their discretion. No incentive to participate in the research study will be provided.
- I may look for further information about the research study from Linda Rock on 0874198345.

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04<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Letter of Information for the First Class Team (Class Teacher, S.N.A, Support Teacher, Critical Friend)**

**RE: Linda Rock: Master of Education Permission to Conduct Research**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I am currently undertaking a Master of Education Research in Practice degree in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University. As part of this master's programme, it is required that the researcher carries out qualitative or quantitative analysis in the form of an action research study. I am conducting this research under the supervision of Associate Professor Niamh Fortune, Head of Department in Maynooth University.

My chosen area of research aims to explore 'How do I effectively teach and support reading in First Class through differentiated station teaching?' This will investigate the extent to which literacy stations or power hours can be used to improve children's literacy skills at First Class level through collaboration with their teacher.

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I wish to obtain your permission to participate in this self - study of my teaching practices to allow me to plan, assess and analyse how the teaching of literacy in First Class can be improved. Your participation would take the form of collaboration through interview, reflective journal, collaboration, questionnaires and participating in the literacy stations during the children's English daily lesson.

In order to complete this research, I will model and deliver literacy power hours to children in First Class and collaborate with their First Class Teacher for further delivery of these lessons independently.

The children in this class will also be invited to participate in the study. They will only participate in this study where parents have granted consent. Children's individual assent will also be requested. A parent's/guardian's explanation letter will be provided, to allow parents/guardians to discuss the purpose of this study with their child.

Data collection will involve observations, teacher's and children's reflective journal, critical friends, individual child assessments, highlights chair, voice recordings, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, conferencing, collaboration with the Class Teacher, station teaching plans and samples of children's work. All information collected will be treated in confidence and neither the school nor the participants will be identifiable in any aspect of my research project. This means that your identity is always anonymised. At any time during the study you may withdraw from the research without question or consequence. In the event of any school closures due to Covid-19, I will continue to carry out research and collect data through the secure form of Microsoft Teams available through the secure Maynooth University portal. Interviews or conversations completed will be carried out in line with Maynooth University Ethics guidelines and our own School Policy.

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All data collected will be stored in a confidential manner for the duration of the study and thereafter. Following the completion of this thesis, the data will be stored for a further ten years as per Maynooth University regulations. It will then be securely destroyed. The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be viewed by my supervisor, the Head of Department and an external examiner. The study may be published in a research journal or available to future students on the course.

This research will not be carried out until ethical approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

I attach the Participant Consent Form for your consideration. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. If you have any queries on any part of this research project, feel free to contact me by email at [linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie](mailto:linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie)

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form.

Yours sincerely

Linda Rock

Maynooth University Froebel Department of  
Primary and Early Childhood Education

Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus Luath- Oideachas  
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad.



**First Class Team Consent Form (Class Teacher, SNA, Support Teacher, Critical Friend)**

I \_\_\_\_\_ give my consent to participate in this Self-Study Action Research with Linda Rock . My role in First Class is \_\_\_\_\_

I have read the Letter of Information explaining the purpose of the research study and understand that:

- I may decide to withdraw my participation at any time without repercussions
- All information obtained will be kept confidential and will be treated in confidence.
- My name will not be used throughout the study and I will not be identifiable through the study
- In the event of a school closure due to Covid-19, research will continue remotely through Microsoft Teams
- The school will not be identifiable in any part of the study in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of all participants
- I may look for further information about the research study from Linda Rock on 0874198345

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Role \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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### Information Sheet: Parents and Guardians

#### **Who is this information sheet for?**

This information sheet is for parents and guardians.

#### **What is this Action Research Project about?**

Teachers Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, Maynooth University are required to conduct an action research project, examining an area of their own practice as a student teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be gathered using observations, teacher's and children's reflective journals, individual child assessments, voice recordings, surveys, questionnaires, and samples of children's work. All data collected will be anonymised to protect children's identity.

The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### **What is the research question?**

- How do I effectively teach and support reading in First Class through differentiated station teaching?

#### **What sorts of methods will be used?**

- Observation, surveys, questionnaires, assessments, station teaching

#### **Who else will be involved?**

The study will be carried out by Linda Rock as part of the Master of Education course in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education. The thesis will be submitted for assessment to the module leader Dr Bernadette Wrynn and will be examined by the Department staff. The external examiners will also access the final thesis.

#### **What are you being asked to do?**

You are being asked for your consent to permit me to undertake this study with your child's class. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and the analysis will be reported anonymously. The data captured will only be used for the purpose of the research as part of the Master of Education in the Froebel Department, Maynooth University and will be destroyed in accordance with University guidelines.

**Contact details: Student: Linda Rock      Email: linda.rock.2022@mumail.ie**

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Ollscoil Mhá Nuad



**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to the participation of my child in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information. I understand that all information gathered will be kept anonymous and I may seek further information about the research study from Linda Rock.

Parent / Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Child's name** .....

I am trying to find out how children learn how to read and become good at learning how to write words from sounds. I am also looking to help other teachers become even better at helping children learn how to read well. To do this I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in school and to write down some notes about you.

Would you be ok with that? Please pick a box  Yes  No

I have asked your Mam or Dad or Guardian to talk to you about this.

If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them. If you are happy with that, could you sign the form that I have sent home?

If you change your mind after we start, that's ok too.



## References

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