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WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH:

PROMOTING RESILIENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH

A CROSS-CURRICULAR APPROACH IN FOURTH CLASS

ELAINE CUMISKEY

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Supervised by: Dr Tríona Stokes

Ainm / Name: *Elaine Cumiskey*

Bliain / Year group: *Master of Education (MEd): Research in Practice 2021/22*

Uimhir mhic léinn / Student number: *12273074*

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

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ABSTRACT

When the Going Gets Tough: Promoting Resilience and Self-Esteem through Cross-Curricular Approaches in Fourth Class is an Action Research Project focusing on promoting resilience and self-esteem in an all-girls primary school. The topic ties in deeply with my own values of care, inclusion and respect and enabled me to develop an approach my class in the area of self-esteem and resilience. A programme was created from four components: specific SPHE lessons based on well-being, the *Weaving Well-Being Programme*, literature that relates to the themes of resilience, self-esteem and self-image, and activities and projects across the curriculum that focused on boosting self-esteem and resilience. The children were surveyed to assess their knowledge of key terms around self-esteem and resilience and an adapted Rosenberg Scale of Self-Esteem survey was used to assess their image of their own self-esteem. The surveys confirmed the need for explicit teaching of well-being in the classroom. The study found that specific SPHE / well-being lessons are a necessary first step to approach the explicit teaching of vocabulary, terms and tools in order to develop the children's self-esteem and resilience and that resilience can be imparted to children. The cross-curricular approach allowed topics to be approached multiple times throughout the term and greater time to be allocated to self-esteem and resilience topics, and also opened the door for children of different abilities to benefit more from subjects such as art, drama and music. The *Weaving Well-Being Programme* with its portfolio of tools, provided a solid basis, specific vocabulary and a structured framework for the study. The children have become more confident in performing, have learned the language and tools to constructively deal with problems and have built stronger and more inclusive relationships. As a teacher, I too have grown. The design and implementation of the year's programme have greatly assisted my own observation, listening, reflection and communication skills. Well-being, as a key factor in the teacher's success with children, will be the foundation for my future classes on development of self-esteem and resilience.

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

ANTs	Automatic Negative Thoughts
BERA	Brainstorm Evoked Response Audiometry
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EAL	English as an Additional Language
HSE	Health Service Executive
IPPA	Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NHS	National Health Service (UK)
RSES	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SESE	Social, Environmental and Scientific Education
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
WHO	World Health Organisation

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Action Research Question

My Action Research question is ‘How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?’

1.2 My Teaching Values

When I began to think about my methods of teaching and my philosophy of teaching at the beginning of this course, I began with my values. I value the inclusion and safety of all the children in my class. This is important because every child needs to feel like they are part of the environment they are in no matter what additional needs they present with. I believe mutual respect in the classroom is also essential as, without it, the class does not mix well and function well together, and friendships and classroom management suffer. I believe it is important that every child feels that their specific way of learning is catered to and that they feel comfortable and able to learn. I also value how each child relates to their environment and to what I am teaching them. I see my values being lived out in my everyday practice when I truly involve each and every child in my class and in my lessons, when I see the children showing kindness, understanding and respect to each other and to me as teacher and when I, together with the children, create a safe learning space for all. I also see my values being lived out when every child is encouraged to do their best, and to be their best self.

Through experience and reflection over eight years of primary school teaching, I realise my values are being denied in my practice when I am restricted or prevented from achieving my goals due to school policies, rules or limitations. An example of this was during the pandemic

when everyday practices were affected by the need for social distancing. Children were restricted from sitting close to friends, taking part in subjects like music and drama and touching resources in the classroom, many of which were essential to their development. When I cannot involve every child due to issues of resources, funding, disability, or culture, I believe this is damaging to the children. This leads to exclusion and loss of learning experiences. My values are also being denied when I see children being disruptive and not inclusive. The disruptive behaviour of one child or a small number of children can influence a whole class, potentially leading to problems with relationships and learning and ultimately leading to issues with classroom management and unhappy children.

1.3 Rationale and Purpose of this Research

My reasons behind choosing this topic for research were mostly because my Fourth class this year was struggling with friendships and resilience. Arguments were happening frequently and many children did not want to attend school.

While my school community has few behavioural issues, the problem that arises every year is that the children in the school are lacking resilience. This presents as ‘worry’: worrying about tests, about what a friend might think or say about them, or about not succeeding.

I realised that I needed to adopt a positive approach to the resolution of this problem, so I started to research confidence in children in the classroom and self-esteem and what these terms mean and how a teacher can assist with the development of self-esteem in a child.

What I discovered is that the term ‘resilience’ was consistently referenced in the articles and books I was reading and that ultimately, high self-esteem, resilience and confidence are

needed in a person to be successful in school and ultimately successful in their future job and in personal relationships. I also discovered that resilience can be taught (Masten, 2013).

I started to investigate how I could develop a successful programme that would build a child's self-esteem, resilience and confidence. I decided to use my Froebelian training and try and make it a cross-curricular teaching, as from experience I have learned that integration across multiple subjects means I can approach the topic constantly throughout the term and the children generally become more interested in the topic. Also, primary school teachers are tasked with SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) for 30 minutes once a week in primary school, however, this does not leave sufficient time to explore the various areas that the SPHE curriculum requires that we cover.

This study also ties in well with the new initiative *Stronger Together* being rolled out by the HSE (Health Service Executive) from 2022 – 2027. This is the first mental health promotion plan to be published by the HSE and it resonates with my own thoughts on the importance of building resilience, confidence and self-esteem from the youngest age possible as “Poor mental health can mean lower self-esteem, reduced resilience and ability to cope with day-to-day challenges.” (HSE, 2022)

1.4 Research Setting

The setting for this research is a small all-girls Primary School in an affluent area of South County Dublin. The class selected for study was my own assigned class for this year, Fourth class. All sixteen of the children in the class were involved in the study. The children ranged from 9 to 11 years.

One quarter of the class are 'New Irish' (parents non-Irish and children born in Ireland). One third of the class is composed of recent immigrants. The remaining students are children of Irish-born parents.

1.5 Research Process and Methodology

I started my research with two surveys which were carried out to determine what the children in the class already knew about resilience, confidence and self-esteem and to establish how the children see themselves. The first survey was carried out to determine the children's knowledge of resilience, self-esteem and confidence. The second was based on an adapted version of the Rosenberg Scale of Self-Esteem (RSSE) in children. I altered the survey because the original Rosenberg survey is directed towards children of 12 years and older and I was concerned that the children in my class might not understand everything in the survey. I also used it as a means of assessing the whole class rather than each individual child.

These surveys confirmed to me the need for explicit teaching of well-being in the classroom and gave me a gauge of the children's self-image and self-esteem. I moved into my intervention stage in my classroom in January. I carried out two phases. Phase one was from January 10th – February 18th and phase two followed quickly after from February 28th – May 23rd.

My interventions over the two phases consisted of:

- SPHE lessons focused mostly on resilience. I used the *Weaving Well-being* programme as the Fourth Class programme focuses specifically on resilience.
- Two novels which gave us many opportunities to discuss a fictional character facing behavioural and personal challenges in life.

- Each child also focused on the importance of positive self-talk and finding talents and positive points both individually and in the class as a whole.
- We created a music video as a class
- We created projects on famous people who showed resilience throughout their lives.

1.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics were of great importance when approaching my Action Research project. I requested permission in writing for gathering data from my school's Principal and Board of Management. I provided information to the parents and children in my class making sure to explain my research question, giving opportunities to ask questions, and the means in which data would be collected and how anonymity would be maintained, this included timelines and means of storing data. I provided consent forms to the parents and children involved explaining that the children could choose to opt-out at any time.

1.7 Thesis Structure

1.7.1 Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter lays down the foundation for the thesis and provides an overview of the rationale behind the research, and outlines my research question, aims and objectives. The chapter discusses my values as a Primary School teacher, briefly introduces the research methodology used and gives an overall picture of the self-study research project.

1.7.2 Chapter 2 Literature Review

A review and synthesis of the available relevant literature is provided in Chapter 2. This chapter highlights the importance of imparting resilience and self-esteem in the Primary

classroom. It discusses the relationship between self-efficacy, self-concept and self-confidence which ultimately lead to building resilience and self-esteem.

1.7.3 Chapter 3 Research Methodology

This chapter lays out the methodology and methods used for the research. It discusses the timeline and activity plan used throughout the year. It identifies the methods of data collection (surveys, teacher observation and reflective journalling) and the importance of a critical friend.

1.7.4 Chapter 4 Findings

This chapter examines and discusses the findings from the research. It identifies the benefits of cross-curricular teaching of resilience and self-esteem and studies the need to use a specific programme to act as a foundation for the teacher's work on this important area, and provides the specific vocabulary and tools essential to teach this topic.

1.7.5 Chapter 5 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the work done throughout the project and identifies the findings, benefits, conclusions, recommendations and future plans, and provides some final reflections. The principal contribution to knowledge from this research is that a cross-curricular approach is a highly effective tool in teaching resilience and self-esteem in a Primary School classroom.

In Chapter 2, I will review the literature on the subjects of resilience and self-esteem.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In order to address my research question ‘How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?’, this chapter discusses various philosophers’ opinions and definitions of resilience and self-esteem. It discusses self-esteem and its connections to self-concept, self-efficacy, self-image and self-confidence. It shows the relationship between resilience and the development of self-esteem and the benefits to the child of building resilience and how this bolsters self-concept, self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-image.

The benefits and methods of developing self-esteem, how development of self-esteem improves physical and mental health, one’s ability to cope with disease, and decreases anxiety, hopelessness and depressive symptoms are discussed in the sections below.

The chapter examines the need for positive attachments at an early age in developing self-esteem throughout a person’s life. In developing early attachments, a child is more likely to create a foundation at a young age for the possibility of high self-esteem (i.e., success building success). It examines writings from Dewey (1899; 1902), James (1892), Rosenberg (1965) among others, and investigates a variety of methods to measure self-esteem.

The chapter finally examines cross-curricular approaches and integration in teaching and the benefits of both in developing self-esteem. Music, drama and art have a key role to play in cross-curricular integration and these are also examined. The Irish SPHE curriculum is reviewed and the procedures around the teaching of well-being are discussed, particularly in relation to the new HSE programme.

2.2 Self-Esteem

Self-esteem means having a more positive affect. “Positive affect refers to the extent to which an individual subjectively experiences positive moods such as joy, interest, and alertness.” (Miller, 2011). It also leads to more life satisfaction and healthy functioning in life aspects such as achievements, success, and general happiness. It leads to more positive relationships in various settings and greater job satisfaction, and choice of a job which is more consistent with one’s interests and, in turn, leads to greater overall satisfaction. (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Kansky et al. (2016) concluded that early positive affect is a predictor for later life happiness, satisfaction and success in areas such as career, relationships and mental health.

The earliest interest in self-esteem can be traced back to the philosophers Aristotle and Plato. Although the term ‘self-esteem’ itself appears not to have been coined until 1892, Aristotle and Plato questioned the positives and negatives of ‘self-love’. Aristotle realised the benefits of ‘true self-love’. “He viewed true self-love as the primary basis for seeking virtue and maximizing one’s potential.” (Greenberg, 2008: 48). Aristotle also recognised the dangers inherent in ‘vulgar self-love’ and agreed with Plato’s realisation that it could cause “great harm, leading people to excessive pride, greed, vanity, and bias.” (Greenberg, 2008: 48).

Though Aristotle’s and Plato’s understanding of ‘self-love’ contrasts with the more modern idea of ‘self-esteem’, we see the same distinctions being made by philosophers including Hume (1711-1776) and Mill (1806–1873) similarly differentiating between the positive and negative consequences of self-esteem. More recent studies of ‘self’ and ‘self-esteem’ come from the philosophers John Dewey (1899; 1902), William James (1892) and Morris Rosenberg (1965). Dewey focused on the broader term ‘the self’ and how the self develops.

He recognises that it not only develops in education but in everyday life. He also came to realise that it is not only a thing, but a process.

The term ‘self-esteem’ was coined by William James. James emphasized that “self-evaluation is influenced by one’s self-perceived competencies in important domains.” (James, 1892). He developed an equation for self-esteem:

$$\text{Self-esteem} = \frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$$

Figure 2.1 – Equation for Self-Esteem (James, 1892)

How we feel about ourselves (our pretensions), and how well we do (our success), are closely tied together. This equation suggests that the more success we experience in our lives, the higher our self-esteem will be. We can feel better about ourselves by succeeding in the world but also by varying the levels of our hopes and expectations. In James’ view, we should focus on developing our strengths and skills so that we might succeed in everyday life.

Nearly eighty years later, Rosenberg stated that self-esteem can be defined as “one’s positive or negative attitude toward oneself and one’s evaluation of one’s own thoughts and feelings overall in relation to oneself.” (Rosenberg, 1965: 65). There is overlap in the use of the terms ‘self-evaluation’ and ‘one’s evaluation’ in their definitions, which in turn can be seen in other definitions.

Having a negative self-image can certainly influence self-esteem, and having low self-esteem is likely to be accompanied by a negative self-image, but they are at least somewhat independent “self” aspects. A more recent definition of self-esteem states that “Self-esteem

is a judgment or self-evaluation of our work or goodness and how well we feel we are doing in areas of our life that we rate as important.” (Yang, Xu, Chen, Shi and Han, 2016). Even though there is a fifty-year gap between these definitions, the understanding and definition of ‘self-esteem’ remains very similar to how it was perceived in 1965.

In seeing the growth of the definition of self-esteem over the last one hundred and thirty years, we come to realise that self-esteem is a complex concept. Webster’s dictionary defines self-esteem as ‘satisfaction with oneself’ and ‘one’s good opinion of one’s dignity or worth.’ It is clear from this that self-esteem is essential to our mental health and physical well-being.

2.2.1 *Self-Concept, Self-Confidence, Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem*

Key words such as self-concept, self-confidence and self-efficacy are often used in conjunction with the term ‘self-esteem’. They differ from self-esteem but ultimately self-esteem and self-efficacy fall under the same term ‘self-concept’.

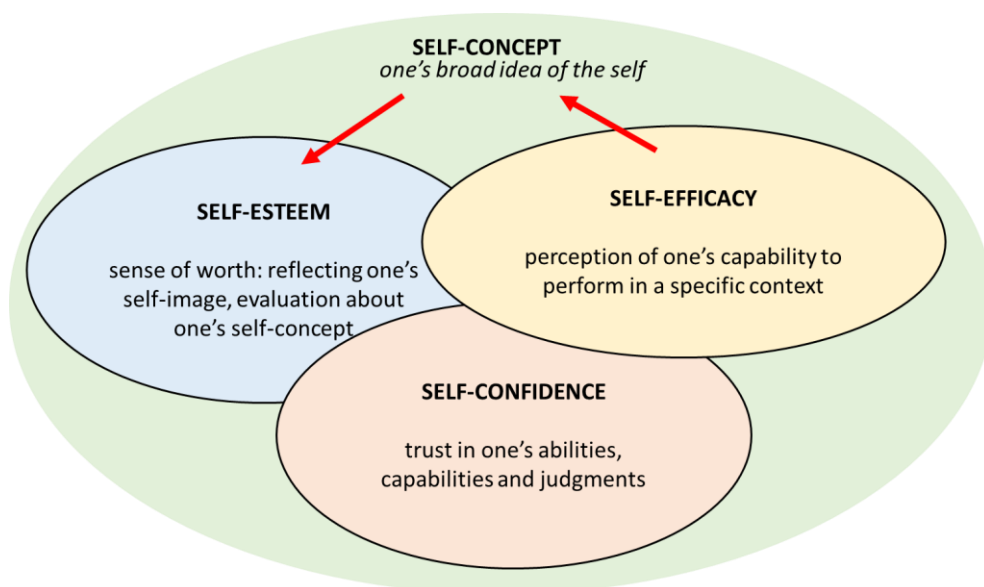


Figure 2.2 – Relating Self-Concept, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy and Self-Confidence (author’s image based on sources)

Sources: Bong and Skaalvik (2003); Coopersmith (1967); Cooley (1902); Wylie (1974); Pajares and Schunk (2005); APA Dictionary of Psychology (2022)

Self-concept is one's broad idea of oneself, an overall idea of who a person believes they are. Self-esteem is part of that overall idea, and refers to one's self-worth. "Judgments about our self-efficacy influence our self-esteem, which influences our self-concept." (Leonard, 2020). Self-confidence is our trust in our capabilities and judgments. Dr. Judith Myers-Walls of Purdue University says, "Self-concept can be seen as an overall term that includes all ideas a person has about him/herself." It is defined by Carl Rogers as "the organized, consistent set of perceptions and beliefs about oneself." (Rogers, 1986: 115). This is informed by Dewey's ideas, nearly one hundred years earlier, on the subject of Self.

Self-concept is not static. It can change depending on the situation a person finds themselves in. It also depends on how we feel others see us. This is best described in Cooley's Looking Glass Theory. "The concept of the looking glass self demonstrates that self-relation, or how one views oneself is not a solitary phenomenon, but rather includes others... Cooley believed that the process of discovering the 'looking glass self' occurred in two steps: (1) we imagine how we appear to another person, and (2) we imagine how the person feels about us, based on the judgments made." (Rousseau, 2002)

Rogers suggests that self-concept includes three components; self-image, self-confidence and self-efficacy. Self-image is how we see ourselves and is composed of self-esteem and the ideal self, "the self we would like to be" (Vinney, 2021). "Confidence reflects a degree of certainty about a perception, event, or outcome" (Merkle and Zandt, 2006) and self-efficacy is "the belief that you have the ability to succeed at a task or achieve a goal" (McAnaney, 2020) or "a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations." (Bandura, 1977).

While people tend to think of self-confidence and self-efficacy as similar concepts, Bandura differentiated between them noting that “the term confidence lacks a target of certainty, whereas self-efficacy targets perceived competence in a given behavior. In other words, self-efficacy represents both ‘affirmation of capability and strength of that belief,’ and ‘confidence reflects only strength of certainty about a performance or perception’”. (Bandura, 1997).

All three of these components are required to develop a successful, confident and mentally stable person. “Just as with self-esteem and motivation, self-efficacy and confidence can work in a positive cycle: the more confident a person is in his abilities, the more likely he is to succeed, which provides him with experiences to develop his self-efficacy. This high self-efficacy, in turn, gives him more confidence in himself, and round it goes.” (Ackerman, 2019).

2.3 Resilience

The roots of ‘Resilience Theory’ date back to 1955 when Emmy E. Werner wrote the paper ‘Risks, Resilience and Recovery: Perspectives from the Kauai Longitudinal Study’. This study focused on how these children grew up to lead successful lives despite the hardships they faced in their childhoods.

Bonnie Benard also studied a group of children from the inner-city and researched children born into seriously high-risk conditions such as poverty, crowding and ill-health. Out of these two studies came the term ‘resiliency’ and Benard states that; “What began as a quest to understand the extraordinary has revealed the power of the ordinary. Resilience does not come from rare and special qualities, but from the everyday magic of ordinary, normative

human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities.” (Benard, 1991: 10).

Masten (2013) defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development” and discusses the emergence of the science of resilience after World War II. Psychologists began to study the effects of the war on children affected. This research was limited at the time because of a lack of resources due to the war however, they realised that it is not a simple change that occurs in a child when they have to adapt. In fact, the development in the child happens across multiple dimensions including physical, cognitive and social/emotional.

Masten (2013: 23) questions whether we are born with a trait of resilience and answers it saying no. She states that there are, “personality (or temperament) dimensions consistently associated with resilience, such as conscientiousness”. She believes, however, that experiences shape personality traits and that many biological traits like age, gender etc. can influence how we deal with things. Many features of children’s resilience reflect adaptive systems such as reward, relationships and beliefs.

Cahill et al. (2014) defined resilience as a combination of social competence and pro-social values, optimism and purpose, attachment to family, school and learning, problem-solving skills, effective coping styles and a positive self-image.

Rutter (2006) defined resilience as “an interactive concept that refers to a relative resistance to environmental risk experiences, or the overcoming of stress or adversity.” This is similar to Forman and Rock’s (2016) definition: “Resilience is being able to cope with all of the normal set-backs, disappointments, failures and disappointments that are part of everyday life.”

There is a correlation between resilience and self-esteem and studies question whether both are needed to develop a true sense of ‘oneself’. There is also a question of which comes first.

Rutter believed that it was the ability to ‘bounce back’ after a traumatic or terrible event. “The term resilience is used to refer to the finding that some individuals have a relatively good psychological outcome despite suffering risk experiences that would be expected to bring about serious sequelae.” (Rutter, 2006). This is the definition being endorsed by this study.

Reachout (2019) suggests that “a great way to build resilience in young people is to help them feel a part of something bigger than themselves”. Making contributions to larger scale events can make young people better able to overcome obstacles and be positive about outcomes.

2.4 Benefits of Developing Self-Esteem and Resilience

The benefits of self-esteem have been widely examined. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943) considers the various necessities for human life. Maslow’s is a five-tier model that consists of a pyramid of needs.



Figure 2.3 - Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2022)

The pyramid begins with the base of physiological needs such as food and water, and gradually builds to other needs, including self-esteem and accomplishments. Mental health is top of the list of benefits of developing self-esteem and resilience. MacDonald (1994) states that “The most basic task for one's mental, emotional and social health, which begins in infancy and continues until one dies, is the construction of his/her positive self-esteem.” This is very important as “living with low self-esteem can harm your mental health and lead to problems such as depression and anxiety... smoking, drinking too much, as a way of coping.” (NHS, 2020).

Self-esteem and resilience not only benefit mental health but also promote better health and social behaviour. They are also seen “to actively promote healthy functioning as reflected in life aspects such as achievements, success, satisfaction, and the ability to cope with diseases like cancer and heart disease.” (Mann et al, 2004). Another benefit of self-esteem and resilience is the development of positive social, romantic, professional relationships. (Harris and Orth, 2019).

Korman (1970) predicts that “individuals with high self-esteem choose occupations consistent with their interests, which would lead to greater levels of job satisfaction.” Also referring to occupations and the link to high self-esteem, Locke et al. (1996) found that “a person with a high self-esteem will view a challenging job as a deserved opportunity which he can master and benefit from, whereas a person with low self-esteem is more likely to view it as an undeserved opportunity or a chance to fail.”

Kernis (2006) believes that “strong self-esteem is strongly related to the effective tone of daily life, with high self-esteem people reporting more positive affect, more life satisfaction,

less anxiety, less hopelessness and fewer depressive symptoms than people who are low in self-esteem.”

Stronger Together is a programme being put in place by the Irish Health Service Executive (HSE) over a five-year period. This is the first programme to support children’s mental health by the HSE in Ireland. “It works at three levels: strengthening individuals, strengthening communities, and reducing structural barriers to mental health at societal level.” (Health Service Executive, 2022: 6) The HSE recognises that there are various benefits of positive mental health and well-being, as shown in the figure below, found in the *Stronger Together* Programme.



Figure 2.4 - Benefits of positive mental health and well-being (HSE, 2002: 11)

In summary, the significant benefits of high (or strong) self-esteem and resilience include:

- better physical and mental health
- the ability to overcome obstacles
- reduces anxiety and stress-related disorders
- ability to cope with disease
- more positive affect
- more life satisfaction
- healthy functioning in life aspects such as achievements, success, satisfaction
- more positive relationships
- decreased anxiety, hopelessness and depressive symptoms.

While the above-listed benefits of high self-esteem can refer to any age, three other benefits will be of greater concern in future life:

- greater job satisfaction
- seeing a job as a deserved opportunity
- choice of a job more consistent with interests

2.4.1 The Importance of Attachment

Research on the importance of attachment in early life has identified “the significance of childhood attachment in predicting individuals’ intrapersonal qualities such as self-esteem and emotion regulation during adulthood.” (Shen et al, 2021). Supporting this, studies by Bowlby, Ainsworth, Main and Solomon, Draper and Schaffer among others in the important area of early attachment emphasise the significant benefits to self-esteem of secure early

attachment. “Research shows that mental health promotion is most effective when it takes place early in a person’s life” (Oireachtas Library & Research Service, 2012).

Cherry (2019) found that with early attachment, infants grew to have higher self-esteem and resilience and had better outcomes in school and social relationships, in addition to having lower levels of depression and anxiety. Similarly, Armdsen and Greenberg (1987) in their Inventory of Parental and Peer Attachment (IPPA), concluded that “both peer and parental attachment were significant predictors of self-esteem and life-satisfaction.” (Wilkinson, 2004).

2.5 Measuring Self-Esteem

It is vital in studying self-esteem to have a standard and consistent means of measurement. Two of the best-known scales for self-esteem are the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Janis-Field Feeling of Inadequacy Scale.

“The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is perhaps the most widely used measure of self-esteem in psychology research”. (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1991: 151). Rosenberg developed his scale (1979) as a measure of global self-esteem in adolescents and adults. The RSES consists of ten items and they are rated on a scale. The RSES was originally used to measure self-esteem in high school children but it is now used for various groups all around the world.

The questions asked in Rosenberg and Janis-Field tests, however, are geared towards adolescents and adults. This means children could have trouble answering some of the questions and this might lead to a false result. Therefore, there are specific scales and tests

that can be used with children like the Pope's 5-Scale Test of Self-Esteem for children, Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, and Kid-KINDL.

Regarding Pope's 5-Scale Test of Self-Esteem for children, "Pope defined self-esteem as the evaluative feelings one holds for oneself and the sense that one has essential worth, and asserted that self-esteem is evaluated as the difference between the actual self and the ideal self." (Hosogi et al, 2012).

This scale evaluates self-esteem on the following scales:

- Global
- Academic
- Body
- Family and
- Social Scale.

"Contemporary belief is that self-esteem is rooted in early childhood with a foundation of trust, unconditional love and security, impacted on as life progresses by a combination of positive and negative evaluations". Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory examined children's self-esteem and reported that higher self-esteem is founded on better boundaries set by parents. (Nayler, 2010).

In his work *Antecedents of Self-Esteem*, Coopersmith (1967) defined self-esteem as "positive and negative attitudes toward oneself." Self-esteem to Coopersmith is "an expression of approval or disapproval of oneself, and a measure of the extent to which one believes that he or she is talented, successful, and that his or her life has meaning and value."

Coopersmith created sets of evaluation criteria for adults and children (age 8+ and grades 4 to 6). Respondents answer each question with either 'like me' or 'unlike me.' Coopersmith clarified how healthy self-esteem is created by using the test to identify three main conditions:

- 1) parental warmth and acceptance;
- 2) clearly defined and enforced limits and
- 3) respect for action within these limits.

KID-KINDL is a short and flexible measure of "Health-Related Quality of Life in children and adolescents". Different questionnaires are used for different age groups and stages of development for children from 3 to 17 years. Questionnaires can also be completed by children's parents. The questionnaire assesses "Health-Related Quality of Life" in both healthy and sick children. While this measure is not used in the current study, it provides an interesting perspective and assisted me in deciding which questionnaire I would use for the research study.

2.6 Well-Being in the Irish Curriculum

At primary level, teachers are required to teach 30 minutes of SPHE per week. The primary school teacher is required to follow the 1999 SPHE Curriculum which is broken into three strands: *Myself*, *Myself and Others*, and *Myself and the Wider World*.

Some of the aims that the curriculum seeks to promote are:

- a sense of care in the child
- a healthy living
- to enable the child to make decisions and right choices

- to develop a sense of community
- to encourage the child to include others especially those with disabilities

“An SPHE programme particularly contributes to the development of personal attributes and skills, such as learning how to manage feelings, how to resolve conflicts and how to cope with new and demanding situations.” (NCCA, 1999: 3)

An interesting observation is that the NCCA 1999 curriculum encourages teachers to teach through various means of implementation such as a positive school climate and atmosphere, discrete SPHE time and an integrated approach.

The Irish Department of Education created a policy in 2018, later revised in 2019, that states that all schools across Ireland should have a whole-school well-being approach developed by 2023. *The Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice* states that schools are in an ideal position to build well-being as children spend so much of their time there, however it acknowledges that this can only be done with the support and consultation of parents. “*The Wellbeing Policy Statement & Framework for Practice – Revised (2019)* builds on the good work already going on in schools to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills and competencies to enhance their wellbeing and deal with life’s challenges.” (Department of Education and Skills, 2018: 34).

The framework takes into account the work that already happens in a school to promote healthy well-being and asks schools to build on that by using the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to note how they promote well-being under the four areas of consideration, (culture and environment, curriculum, policy and planning, and relationships and partnerships). Schools must then identify one key area that they would like to work on.

A related Circular *Best practice guidance for primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*, No. 0042/2018 states that Principals, the Board of Management and teachers all have a duty to promote well-being in their students. It recommends, along with *The Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice*, that this should be done through a whole-school approach. This means that all teachers and personnel in primary schools should take responsibility for their own CPD relating to well-being training.

“The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and she/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students’ attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education.” (Department of Education and Skills, 2018: 2).

This whole-school approach can be implemented in various ways and this is the reason the Department does not state specific ways of how to implement it. However, it gives ideas such as supporting teaching of well-being with a programme or using external facilitators to supplement and complement the approach chosen by the school.

2.7 Developing Self-Esteem and Resilience in the Classroom

Developing self-esteem is not an easy task. This is mostly due to the fact that to develop self-esteem we must first develop many other component needs including respect of others, confidence, achievement, self-concept and self-efficacy. There are many ways of developing these needs in the classroom, and programmes that can be used in primary school along with day-to-day tasks that will develop resilience in children while giving them a chance to succeed. "National and international research has consistently shown that the classroom

teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with pupils to effect educational outcomes." (Department of Education and Skills et al., 2015).

There are various programmes for children in primary school that support building resilience, self-esteem and general understanding of one's self-concept. These programmes support the current SPHE curriculum in Irish primary schools.

The *Weaving Well-Being* programme focuses on various topics over a five-year programme focusing on one main topic each year. The annual main topics are character strength, positive emotions, resilience, positive relationships and empowering beliefs. The programme particularly focuses on positive psychology and provides resources for children aged 8-12 years. "Positive Psychology is the science of well-being, personal growth and resilience. It is founded on the concept of identifying and developing personal strengths, as opposed to correcting deficits." (Forman and Rock, 2016).

Walk Tall is another SPHE programme used in primary schools across the country. This programme deals with a wide range of topics such as self-identity, friendships, bullying, online safety, and taking care of my body. It is used alongside classroom lessons and delivered through Circle Time discussions, role play, videos and many other means.

All of these programmes cover self-identity, friendships and general social skills and encourage the children in the class to be mindful, resilient and to treat themselves and others with respect which can be beneficial to the building of self-esteem. Developing these skills increases a child's awareness of their own physical and mental health and gives them the opportunity to discuss situations that might otherwise be ignored.

These programmes support the SPHE curriculum and are a means of explicitly teaching a series of tools and vocabulary to students resulting in their improved learning. Payton et al., (2008: 8) identified the benefits of school-delivered SEL programmes (such as *Weaving Well-Being*) with explicit teaching of specific social-emotional skills as improving “children’s behavior, attitudes toward school, and academic achievement”.

Another way of developing self-esteem and resilience is through positive affirmations which are “short positive statements targeted at a specific set of negative beliefs. They can be used to combat negative self-talk, which is frequently linked to low self-esteem.” (The Better Life Project, 2018). While this source refers to adult coaching, positive self-talk in children is also recognised by researchers as beneficial to self-esteem (Sherman and Cohen, 2006; Tesser, 2000). Negative self-talk can be damaging to one’s mental health and self-esteem. In speaking to ourselves in a positive, respectful and reassuring way, we can reduce the chances of suffering from anxiety and other mental health issues.

Self-love is extremely important and ties in with positive affirmations. If we can learn to love ourselves then positive inner talk will come naturally. New York’s Mather Hospital states that “First and foremost you need to love yourself in order for others to love you. If you love yourself, your self-esteem will naturally boost.” (Mather Hospital, 2021). Brown agrees with this and states that, “If you want to make the most of your abilities and become the most self-actualized version of yourself you can, then you actually have to love yourself first.” (Brown, 1998). Studies with elementary school children found that “positive self-talk is positively related to self-esteem and negatively related to irrational beliefs and depression”. (Burnett, 1994)

Affirmations help to replace negative thoughts with positive ones. They harness the mind's power by directing your intentions toward *your best self* and *your happiest life*.

2.8 Cross-Curricular Integration

While there is a need for explicit teaching of tools and vocabulary, an effective way to develop the teaching of well-being is through a cross-curricular approach. “The approach to the SPHE curriculum is determined in the first instance by the school ethos and will be mediated to the child in three contexts: through a positive school climate and atmosphere, through integration with other subjects, and in specifically allocated curriculum time.” (NCCA, 1999: 57).

Integrated learning has significant recognised benefits in connecting subjects and increasing student motivation within subjects that individual children may find more difficult or less interesting. “Integrated learning engages students in a rich learning experience that helps them make connections across subjects and brings the learning to life. Integrated learning provides students with opportunities to work towards meeting expectations from two or more subjects within a single unit, lesson, or activity.” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

Cross-curricular integration is “a conscious effort to apply knowledge, principles, and/or values to more than one academic discipline simultaneously. The disciplines may be related through a central theme, issue, problem, process, topic, or experience.” (Jacobs, 1989). “Cross-curricular teaching, or instruction that intentionally applies multiple academic disciplines simultaneously, is an effective way to teach students transferable problem-solving skills, give real-world meaning to school assignments, and increase engagement and rigor.” (Weinstein, 2018).

Through integration, teachers can reinforce skills from various topics and subjects across the complete curriculum which means that children are enabled to put new learning into practice. Reinforcing Dewey's early thoughts on education, this allows students to learn not only in the classroom but throughout their lives.

2.8.1 Benefits of Cross-Curricular Integration

Cross-curricular integration provides students with significant benefits. These include the practice of working in teams, individual and group motivation, creation and practice of new skills, and better insight into learning itself.

Cross-curricular integration is implemented by discovering a theme that can be applied across multiple subjects. The teacher would take a subject like English and choose, for example, a novel and a theme from that novel (e.g., bullying). From this, the teacher finds links to other subjects (e.g., history, drama, music, SPHE, religion) and creates a thematic approach across several of these subjects for a period of time (perhaps a month). In spite of the time limits to subjects within the curriculum, this effectively creates added time and allows for more in-depth examination of certain themes/topics.

Integration of this kind has sometimes been criticised for potential dissolution of subjects, i.e., that all subjects are actually one 'big subject'. However, cross-curricular integration does not attempt to dissolve subjects. It intends to create a more meaningful educational experience for all the children in the classroom, including those who are weaker in certain subjects. "Despite the teachers' differences for implementing an integrated learning unit and their concerns about the considerable time and effort required to design and deliver an integrated unit in relation to existing curriculum requirements, they were agreed on the value of curriculum integration for students. They noted improved motivation, engagement and

collaboration and were keen to continue using integration.” (Kearney and Hayes, 2016). In summary, cross-curricular education can lead to a more rounded education and discrete subject education may lead to ‘artificial barriers’ between subjects. (Hayes, 2010).

2.8.2 Benefits to Self-Esteem and Resilience

By approaching a single theme multiple times across the curriculum, children learn that knowledge is connected (holistic) and that there is a reason for learning, other than just for the sake of learning. By approaching a single theme across multiple subjects, there are more opportunities for the teacher and students to interact which breaks down barriers and positively benefits communication.

Because a topic has been approached multiple times through different subject lenses, children can feel more confident engaging in lessons as they feel that they will ‘get the answer right’. This leads to children sharing their opinions/knowledge, raising their hands (participating), asking questions which means not only are they getting something from the lesson, but have the added self-confidence to express themselves. In this way, children become more empowered and confident.

“The heightened sense of agency that the pupils experienced allowed them to claim more agentic positions within the community of practice that existed within the classroom.” (Earley, 2019: 4038).

Because cross-curricular integration allows students to effectively revise thematic material repeatedly, and use skills learned in one subject in other areas, it promotes a better sense of belief or confidence, as students encounter the theme numerous times and have the

opportunity to look at it from various perspectives, thus encouraging greater opportunities for communication and self-esteem.

This also encourages more familiarity with terms in different subjects (the jargon of each subject). Students' own reticence about particular subjects and the language used in those subjects, is decreased by the practice of working thematically across subjects.

Working in teams is encouraged by this method. This promotes healthy trust relationships which we know from previous reading positively affects self-esteem. "When the pupils encountered a new lesson situated in the cross-curricular approach, it appeared that the pupils have a heightened sense of belief or confidence as they have encountered the theme numerous times previously." (Earley, 2019: 4038).

When children have the chance of success, their motivation is boosted, which helps both the children and their teacher. A cross-curricular approach encourages children to look at learning as a lifelong process, and to understand that all subjects can link. "Thus, cross-curricular instruction offers many great advantages to students. It fosters teamwork, new discoveries, more motivation, and more knowledge of the learning process. A greater appreciation of the learning process leads students to become life-long learners." (Sullivan, 2019).

Using this approach, children take more responsibility for their own learning and begin to understand the learning process better. This is because there is more student-led activity and project work rather than the teacher always being the centre of knowledge.

2.8.3 *Using the Arts in Cross-Curricular Teaching*

Music, drama, and art particularly encourage a creative side to learning and use parts of the brain that might not have been used in other areas. This also allows for children who are not as academically strong to succeed and be seen to succeed. Farmer recognised that drama may be used in a cross-curricular approach to highlight “the human dimension of subject areas, such as how scientific progress may impact on individuals and communities. Drama is particularly useful when working on cross-curricular themes as it naturally bridges subject areas.” (Farmer, 2021).

My own experience of teacher-led drama activities in subjects such as history, science and geography supports this finding as the children could relate better to the subject matter by acting out a range of roles which provided them with a clear insight into historical, scientific and geographical events.

Martin (2020) has researched the effects of the arts on well-being. One example of how art can promote positive mental health is through art therapy. She states that “arts-based techniques” like painting, dance and role-play can be applied “as evidence-based interventions for mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression.”

Martin has also researched studies carried out by cognitive neuroscientists who found that “creating art reduces cortisol levels (markers for stress), and that through art people can induce positive mental states.” (Martin, 2020)

Similarly, The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises the importance of the arts in well-being producing its *Intersectoral action: the arts, health and well-being* report based on the Health 2020 policy framework, and adopted by all Member States of the WHO European Region. The report identifies the benefits of the arts in improving health and well-

being which, in turn, can prevent a variety of mental and physical illnesses. “Activities such as dance provide opportunities for engaging in physical activity, improving strength and reducing obesity.” (WHO, 2019).

“Engagement with the arts can help to address social determinants of health, such as by developing social cohesion, reducing loneliness and social isolation and building individual and group identity.” (WHO, 2019). The Arts (music, drama and art) significantly assist in developing confidence, building a strong image of who we are and give us the opportunity to express ourselves. “Attempts at artistic expression are valued, self-esteem is enhanced, spontaneity and risk-taking are encouraged and difference is celebrated.” (NCCA, 1999: 2).

Swapp (2016) describes the process of drawing arts education students in a multi-subject task with many significant benefits. “The arts are a mode of expression that transforms thoughts and emotions into a unique form of communication -- art itself. Research connects learning music to improved ‘verbal memory, second language pronunciation accuracy, reading ability, and executive functions’ in youth.” (Swapp, 2016).

Within these three arenas, we experience success and failure and how to deal with both, creativity, friendship, criticism (both positive and negative) and much more. All of these experiences, whether good or bad, help develop a sense of self-concept and help build our self-esteem. The Arts also help children not be as academically gifted as others to express themselves through a more practical and creative means.

2.8.4 Using Literature in Cross-Curricular Teaching

The reason that I chose literature as one of the cross-curricular approaches to building resilience and self-esteem was because literature provides an opportunity to vicariously

experience things the children may never experience in their own lives. This gives the children the chance to experiment with ways of dealing with specific situations and problems in a vicarious way. It also introduces them to methods in which characters deal with situations, which the children in turn may internalise in dealing with their own issues and situations. “They allow us to imagine scenarios and how we might behave, as we create images in our minds of what we have not experienced.” (Egan, 1986: 7).

Likewise, the child gets to know a character very closely and, in turn, empathises with them and learns lessons to assist with decision making in their own lives.

Story has many benefits including assisting understanding of self and our response to external experiences and also teaching how alternatives we may not have recognised can deliver different outcomes. “Children’s literature offers examples that deepen children’s understandings of themselves and the inner and outer resources that may help them to survive and overcome negative experiences. (Tovey, 2021).

2.9 Conclusion

Self-concept is the umbrella term that refers to one’s understanding of self. We see from the literature that the terms self-esteem, self-efficacy and resilience fall under this term, meaning that without developing these attributes, one’s self-concept may be damaged which could ultimately lead to mental instability.

Even though 130 years have passed since the term ‘self-esteem’ was first introduced, there is a limited development in the understanding and definition of self-esteem. However, it is clear that it is extremely important to develop a child’s self-esteem and resilience throughout

their early years so as to develop a confident, mentally healthy individual who is successful and happy in later life.

This chapter discussed the connections between self-esteem, self-concept, self-efficacy and self-confidence and showed the relationship between resilience and development of self-esteem as well as the benefits of building resilience.

Cross-curricular integration is the inclusion of multiple subjects across the curriculum. It builds confidence and skills in children, particularly in those who are weaker academically. It awakens the child to the realisation that learning is not just in the classroom, but throughout life, and not confined to just one subject. It encourages self-led and team learning and is a significant motivator. It is a key tool for building self-esteem particularly through the practical subjects of music, drama and art.

Irish primary school teachers are tasked with following the 1999 SPHE curriculum which aims to promote a number of standards and skills in the child through explicit and integrated teaching. A new policy and framework published by the Department of Education in 2019 aims to develop this teaching into a whole school approach.

This literature review provides a clear path to the research methodology I used to answer my research question: ‘How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?’ The review has defined self-esteem. It has discussed the cross-curricular approach and its benefits to classroom learning. In particular, my research will focus on the Arts, music and drama, and literature as a means of integration across the curriculum. In Chapter 3, I will introduce and review the research methodology selected for this study.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the rationale for the research methodology employed in this study. The chapter will critically examine why the methods and instruments chosen were the most appropriate to gather data for this study which explores how a cross-curricular approach might improve my understanding and development of self-esteem in my students and teaching. The research design, instruments, selection of participants, samples, setting, procedure, data analysis, ethical considerations and any potential limitations will also be discussed.

3.2 Research Context

The aim of this research is to improve my teaching practice. Sixteen children are taking part in this research, as the whole class were agreeable to participate in the research. However, I will also look at three individual students in detail to determine a comparison of their abilities with the answers provided through the study. The research site is a mainstream Fourth class in an all-girls school and the children are nine, ten and eleven years old. The school is a small school with fewer than 270 pupils. It is based in an affluent area in Dublin and the majority of the students come from an advantaged socio-economic background. The research took place over a seventeen-week period from January 2022 – March 2022 with lessons and interventions taking place across the curriculum and throughout the school day each week.

3.3 What is Action Research?

“Action Research is conducted by practitioners who regard themselves as researchers.” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009:17). I chose Action Research as my method of research as I

felt it suited my research question and I also believe it is a relevant means of research particularly for teachers in an educational setting and that within Action Research the researcher explores their personal values and beliefs, and methodological approaches. “Action Research is a form of investigation designed for use by teachers to attempt to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms.” (Parsons and Brown, 2002).

The term ‘Action Research’ was coined by Kurt Lewin in 1944. “He described Action Research as ‘comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action.’” (Janse and Van Vliet, 2021). Action Research uses a cyclical method moving from planning, to action, and fact-finding about the outcome of the action.

My reason for using Action Research was that it can “constitute a living, authentic form of continuing professional development that has the potential to change both the practice and the practitioner irrevocably” (Sullivan et al., 2016: 25).

3.4 Epistemological and Ontological Stance

It was essential to determine an understanding of what ontology and epistemology mean. McNiff and Whitehead (2016) describe epistemology as a theory of knowledge. Brown claims that “In research terms your view of the world and of knowledge strongly influences your interpretation of data and therefore your philosophical standpoint should be made clear from the beginning.” (Brown, 2015). Similarly, Moon and Blackman, (2017) state that “Epistemology is important because it influences how researchers frame their research in their attempts to discover knowledge.” (Moon and Blackman, 2017).

“Ontology refers to a theory of being, which influences how we perceive ourselves in relation to our environment, including other people.” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006:29-30). My core personal values are compassion, respect and inclusion. “Our ontologies influence how we view ourselves in relation with others.” (McNiff, 2017:39).

As a teacher, I believe it is my duty to prepare my students for the future and I believe high self-esteem, resilience and self-confidence are essential to succeeding academically, socially and in future endeavours. Through this self-study I believe I can not only develop the self-esteem, resilience and self-confidence of the children in my class but also develop their understanding of what these traits mean and the benefits of developing them. A vital part of this is through the Arts, as this opens many possibilities and opportunities particularly for children who might struggle academically or children who have a poor level of English. This allows for a cross-curricular approach which encourages the children to engage more fully, and by using different roles and roleplay, and by acting out of their comfort zone, gain self-confidence and self-esteem.

3.5 Ethics

For the purpose of this research, data storage, anonymity, permissions (School Board of Management and Principal and NUIM), information provided on the project for the parents, and consent from the class children and their parents, were considered. (See Appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, G)

Throughout this process, I adhered to the British Educational Research Association ‘Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research’ as they believe that researchers ‘should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values and dignity of individuals, groups and communities.’ (BERA, 2011: 4). I requested permission in writing for gathering data from the Principal and

Board of Management of my school. I provided information to the parents and children in my class making sure to explain my research question, giving opportunities to ask questions, and the means in which data would be collected and how anonymity would be maintained. The consent forms and information provided to the children were written in language appropriate for the children in order to make sure “all participants understand the nature of the research project” (Cohen et al., 2007: 53). These included “appropriate use of language, clear layout and larger than usual font” (Burton et al., 2011: 57).

Timelines, means of storing data and research requirements were included in the information provided to the parents and school. I provided consent forms to the parents and children involved, explaining that the children could choose to opt-out at any time and those who decide not to partake would be catered for by exclusion from the study but would still be included in the class activities. I also explained that anything provided by the children would be used anonymously in that the child’s name, image and school would never be used in my thesis. Parents were informed that, if they required further information on the research, that this would be provided for both parents and children.

I am aware that, because of the close relationship I have with the students in my class, the children may be influenced by their wish to please me. I will take this into consideration at all times during my research. This problem is a natural part of the power dynamic of the class. I will approach this potential issue by engaging in impartial questioning, by checking materials and questions as well as approaches with my critical friend ahead of lessons/activities.

The data collected is stored in my locked press that only I have access to and on my personal laptop which is password protected. All data will be destroyed after the appropriate time needed in line with Maynooth University guidelines.

3.6 Methodology

“Methodology refers to a theory of how we do things. It should not be confused with ‘methods’, which are the specific techniques we develop for finding something out.” (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006: 29-30). In choosing a methodological approach, it is essential that the researcher examines all methodologies before selecting the most suitable approach for their study. In order to do this, definitions of each methodology should be examined.

According to Bell, “quantitative researchers collect facts and study the relationship of one set of facts to another (Bell, 2005: 7). Patton and Cochran describe the qualitative method as “characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis.” (Patton and Cochran, 2002: 2).

In considering a quantitative approach, I came to appreciate that it can provide us with data that can be easily measured, minimising bias (Rubin and Babbie, 2010), and it can demonstrate frequencies, patterns, or regularities (Scott and Morrison, 2005).

Although the quantitative paradigm which is rooted in positivism seems to be more objective than that of qualitative research, it cannot be fully separated from the subjective nature of the researcher themselves (Carter and Hurtado, 2007). The use of quantitative questionnaires may limit the “scope for respondents to supply answers which reflect their true feelings on a topic” (McLeod, 2014).

I feel that a qualitative approach best suits my research area. I also appreciate the validity of mixed methods as it marries the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative together. The mixed methods approach outlines that “one approach may be enhanced by the positives of another.” (Scott and Morrison, 2005: 185).

“Triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena” (Carter et al., 2014). In more simple terms the research should gather various versions of the same data. I will do this throughout my research by using a variety of research instruments.

As the central research question for this study is, by its nature, a qualitative one seeking subjective and opinion-based teacher perspectives, I approached this study through an interpretative paradigm, which is most appropriate when researching the perspectives of an individual and the subjective world of their human experience (Cohen, et al. 2007: 21). This interpretive paradigm further supports the aim of the study enabling the researcher to “enter into the world of its participants” and it also allows us to “see the world from their perspective” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 16). It is for this reason that a qualitative rather than quantitative approach was used for this study.

I also explored the perceptions, opinions and feelings of the participants using the qualitative method allowing for a more, “holistic picture and depth of understanding” unlike the quantitative method which is more centred on, “a numeric analysis of data” (Ary et al., 2010: 31). The exploratory nature of the study informed the chosen qualitative method.

3.7 Research Design and Tools

The pedagogical interventions will focus on a few different areas. First, before I begin discussion on self-esteem, resilience and self-confidence, I carried out a survey to measure

the self-esteem of the children in my class. This survey was carried out at the beginning and end of my research. (See Appendix H)

I designed specific lessons around the concept of self-esteem; what it means, why it is important, how one develops high self-esteem. I taught these lessons and had Circle Time discussions based on this. This served to facilitate whole class discussion and to build vocabulary.

We created a comic strip called ‘what my reflection says about me’ – intended to focus on our self-image and positive self-talk, and a whole class recording of a song and a music video intended to develop the self-esteem of the children in my class. I taught the *Weaving Well-Being* programme, which specifically focuses on resilience in Fourth class but also has an overall focus on wellbeing in the classroom. (See Appendix J)

Finally, with the class, I read the novels *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom* (Louis Sachar) and *Wonder* (RJ Palacio), both novels focusing on the development of a main character, the self-image they have of themselves and the development of their self-esteem over a period of time. We had numerous discussions around the novels, did various activities based around them and created artwork based around the novels.

In approaching these lessons and discussions in many different ways; through written work, artwork, recordings; through individual, group and whole class activities, this allowed every child in the class to engage and express themselves in all material covered.

3.8 Research Model and Framework

For this research, I will follow Rossouw’s (2009) research model.

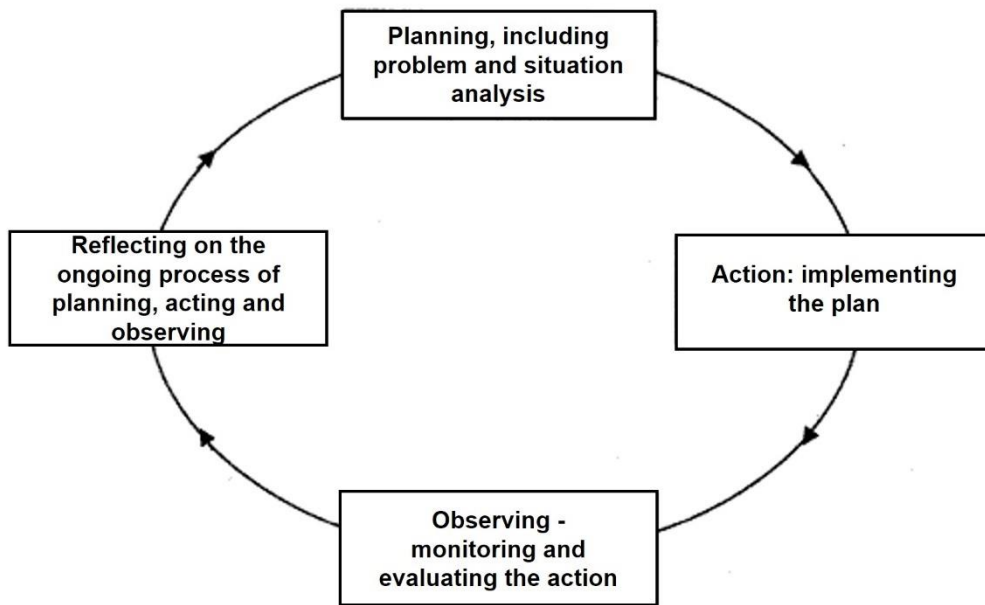


Figure 3.1 - Model of Action Research where reflection follows action

Source: From “Educators as Action Researchers: Some key considerations” (Rossouw, 2009:9)

I believe this approach is the most suitable model for Action Research. I used this model for planning, application, and reflexive process of my research, as seen in Figure 3.1 above.

3.9 Research Model and Framework

Schedule of actions during the two cycles of research:

Week	Activity List	Reasons for Activities
Week of Jan 10 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss my Action Research Project with class • Give out consent letters to children and parents • Meet with critical friend to discuss upcoming lessons and research methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the children understand what we are doing and why • Collect all consent needed • Get an idea of what methodologies may work for me
Week of Jan 17 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do survey on self-esteem in class • Give questionnaire based on the meaning and need for self- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See how the children see their own self-esteem

	<p>esteem before starting lessons on 'self-esteem'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start lessons based on self-esteem in SPHE • Start novel 'There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom' and do 2 activities based on what they have read • Start programme <i>Weaving Well-Being</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge the children's understanding of vocabulary related to well-being • Gather the children's written work from the Weaving Wellbeing programme in their Pupil Books and evaluate their responses
Week of Jan 24 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do art piece on how Bradley sees himself in his head at the beginning of the novel • Continue <i>Weaving Well-Being</i> programme • Create a comic strip called 'what my reflection says about me' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the children think the character sees himself based on the book so far - can they empathise with him? • Gauge understanding of how the children see themselves
Week of Jan 31 st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How my class sees me activity • Continue <i>Weaving Well-Being</i> programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See if the children understand that their self-image is not necessarily how others see them. See if this boosts the children's confidence as it may show them what they did not previously see.
Week of Feb 7 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do art piece on how Bradley sees himself in his head at the end of the novel • How I see myself activity • Continue <i>Weaving Well-Being</i> programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge if the children can empathise with Bradley at this point
Week of Feb 14 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do questionnaire on 'There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom' • Continue <i>Weaving Well-Being</i> programme 	
Week of Feb 21 st	Midterm	
Week of Feb 28 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue <i>Weaving Well-Being</i> programme • Begin novel 'Wonder' • Create a story in small groups about someone who develops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See how the children now suggest developing self-esteem for others

	their self-esteem (use 'A Bad Case of Stripes' as stimulus)	
Week of Mar 7 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Weaving Well-Being programme Continue novel 'Wonder' Create artwork for the story Do artwork on how Auggie sees himself in the beginning of the novel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See how the children visualise the process of developing self-esteem, and how the lack of self-esteem can affect a person
Week of Mar 14 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Weaving Well-Being programme Continue novel 'Wonder' 	
Week of Mar 21 st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Weaving Well-Being programme Continue novel 'Wonder' Begin creating music video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See the children's level of confidence now compared to previous class activities - do they involve themselves in the singing and dancing in the video, and how do they express themselves in costume and actions?
Week of Mar 28 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Weaving Well-Being programme Continue novel 'Wonder' Continue creating music video 	
Week of Apr 4 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue novel 'Wonder' Continue creating music video 	
Week of Apr 11 th	Easter Holidays	
Week of Apr 25 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue novel 'Wonder' Do artwork on how Auggie sees himself in the end of the novel Continue creating music video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See how the children empathise with Auggie
Week of May 2 nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue novel 'Wonder' Create a project on someone from famous or from history who showed resilience in their life Do questionnaire on 'Wonder' Continue creating music video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See how the children relate to a real person who shows resilience
Week of May 9 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a comparison piece on the characters Bradley and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing the characters and linking any similarities between

	<p>Auggie and how their self-esteem grew throughout the two stories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue creating music video 	<p>them that show how their self-confidence develops</p>
<p>Week of May 16th</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out final survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gauge the children's understanding of vocabulary related to well-being compared to the first survey undertaken
<p>Week of May 23rd</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish up anything that needs to be finished 	

Table 3.1 - Schedule of actions for research

3.10 Research Instruments

I used various methods of data collection including: observations, surveys, Reflective Journal, children's written work and artwork.

3.10.1 Reflective Journal

Laughran (1996) defined reflection as “the deliberate and purposeful act of thinking which centres on ways of responding to problem situations” (Laughran, 1996: 14). Sullivan et al. (2016) describe reflection as a critical part of Action Research. They also identify the importance of looking at reflection as more than just thinking about an event, “Reflective thinking about an event that has already happened is more than just recalling an event and describing it: it involves interpretation and explanation also.” (Sullivan et al., 2016: 10)

I used my reflective journal to keep a record of moments I have observed and feel are important or that I have a question about and also to reflect on experiences and decide whether something needs to be changed or whether the method I am using is successful.

Phelps also sees the importance of reflective journals, “In researching the learning experiences of students and their reactions to various life and learning experiences, journals

provide key in-sights that can be difficult to document in other ways.” (Phelps, 2005). This is important for the dual role of teacher-researcher because, as a teacher in action, it would be easy to forget these observations if they were not recorded. Similarly, as Göker (2016) states, the use of reflective journals provides an opportunity for ‘teacher autonomy’.

3.10.2 Observations

I used teacher observation to both reflect and plan on my actions. As Ross states, “observation is *not* passively looking and listening. It requires careful, conscious, purposeful effort.” (Ross, 2018). This is an important observation as like ‘reflection’, the researcher has to purposefully observe, take notes and act on those observations in order to practice, in line with the principles of Action Research. This is also considered as a ‘participatory study’ according to ‘Business Research Methodology’ (2011). From this point of view, I as observer do not have to rely on second hand accounts from others, it allows them to collect live data that may not have been expressed in their written work or surveys.

I created a template with a few structured areas to observe, however, I kept in mind the importance of unstructured observations as Campbell et al., (2004: 94) state “simply noticing events can also provide insight into situations.” These observations also formed a part of my Reflective Journal and helped me reflect on lessons and plan new activities.

3.10.3 Child Work Samples

I collected a selection of anonymised children’s written work and artwork samples based on activities throughout my research to give me an idea of the children’s understanding of self-esteem and what teaching strategies work.

Various written samples based on activities in the classroom were collected. These written samples were based on SPHE lessons around the term ‘self-esteem’, around observations of the main characters in our novels and of themselves. I also collected artwork from the children in my class. Again, the artwork was based around activities I carried out in lessons and around how the children see themselves.

3.10.4 Surveys

I used a modified version of the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (Rosenberg, 1965) so that the children in my class would find it more accessible and easier to understand (see Appendix I). I did this survey at the beginning and end of my research to assess whether the children’s view of their self-esteem had changed. I also carried out a general questionnaire on how the child understood terms like ‘self-esteem’, ‘resilience’ and ‘self-confidence’.

3.11 Critical Friends

“A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend.” (Costa and Kallick, 1993).

This has been a valuable tool in maintaining validity and accuracy in the research process. I met with my critical friend (a colleague) multiple times throughout the research process to discuss progress, methods and to reflect on lessons. I asked them to give opinions and observations several times throughout the process based on some questions put to them. I used the opportunity of meeting with my critical friend to ensure an impartial approach to all questioning to avoid bias.

3.12 Conclusion

This Chapter began by reviewing Action Research and then described and provided the rationale for the methodology. It described the research design and tools and discussed the approach taken for the lessons while considering the ethics standards applied to this research. It laid out the research model and framework for the study and discussed the research instruments used for data collection. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the findings of the research.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the data gathered from my Action Research in this study and considers the benefits of explicitly teaching well-being in an Irish primary school and how this impacts on children's resilience and self-esteem. As I am a teacher in Fourth Class, this is the class level that this project is focused on.

I gathered data from my class through surveys, questionnaires, Circle Time discussions, the *Weaving Well-Being* Pupil Book and teacher made activities. I completed a reflective journal throughout the process, which contains various observations and interactions that occurred that demonstrate the output of the explicit teaching throughout the term.

“Research shows that students who participate in rigorously designed and well-taught SEL (*Social Emotional Learning*) programs show improved academic outcomes, demonstrate more positive social behaviour and are less likely to engage in risky and disruptive behaviour. The results also indicated that the programs that contained a direct teaching component (including explicit lessons in curriculum format), were of greater intensity and of longer duration, had a greater positive effect.” (Cahill et al., 2014: 23).

This supports my own research as the explicit teaching of the vocabulary and tools being used supported better behaviour and emotional regulation of the children. Through using a cross-curricular approach, this resulted in me being able to teach for longer periods on multiple occasions during the week.

Following discussion with critical friends, I analysed the data. In this chapter I will discuss the findings that emerged after this analysis. I will discuss the findings under the following headings:

- Whole-Class Understanding
- *Weaving Well-Being* Programme
- Use of a Cross-Curricular Approach
- Ability Levels versus Understanding
- Changes to Whole-School Life

4.2 Whole Class Understanding

4.2.1 Survey of understanding of terms

At the start of the Action Research, I assessed the children's understanding of the terms 'resilience', 'self-confidence' and 'self-esteem'. At the end of the study, I assessed this understanding again. The purpose of the chart below is to show the improvement in understanding of the three terms by the children over the period Jan-May 2022.

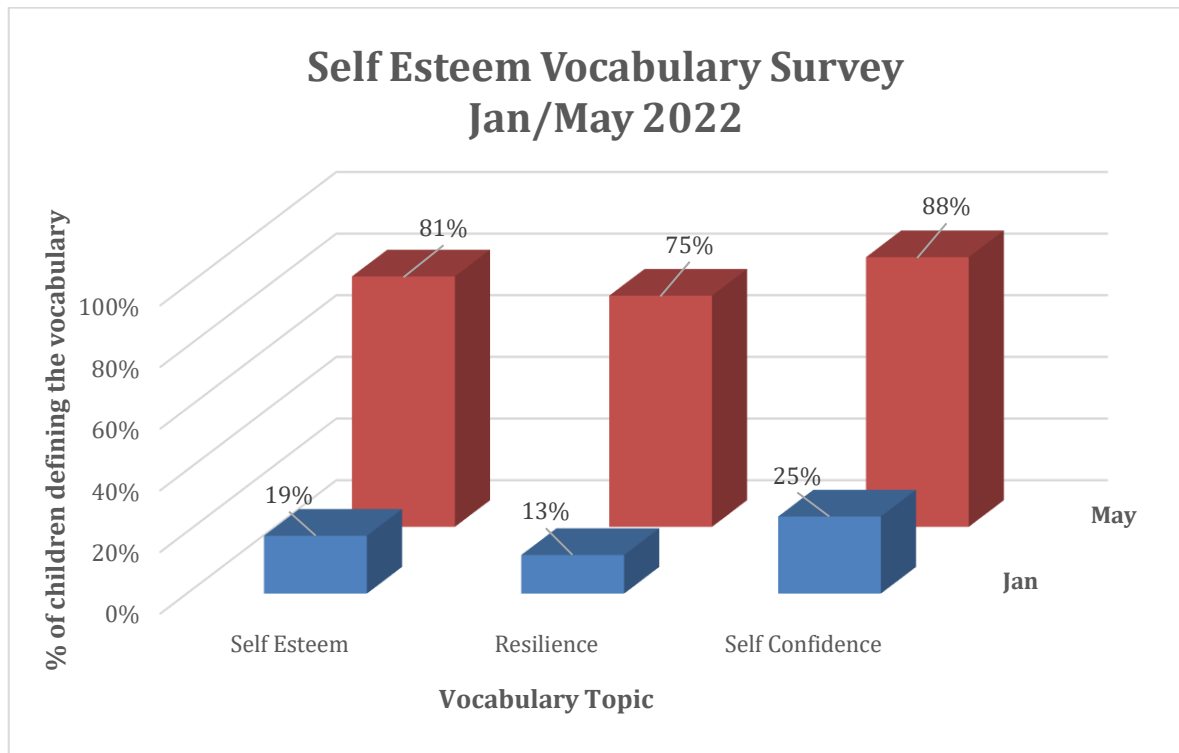


Figure 4.1 – Self Esteem Vocabulary Survey Jan/May 2022

As is evident from the chart above, before the research study, out of sixteen children in the class, four could define the term ‘self-confidence’, two could very simply explain what ‘resilience’ meant and three children could explain what ‘self-esteem’ meant.

It is interesting to observe that a quarter of the class had a basic understanding of what ‘confidence’ meant at the beginning of the study but almost none of the children could define ‘resilience’ or ‘self-esteem’. This may be that the word is used much more in everyday life and the children themselves use it when talking about getting up in front of an audience:

Child E	“It’s when you’re not scared of things and you could like sing in front of people and dance.”
Child F	“Self-confidence means to be sure of yourself and being able to get up in front of people and to forget your fears.”

Table 4.1 - Cumiskey, Reflective Journal, 13th Jan 2022

The chart also shows that, at the end of the study, there was a significant improvement in understanding of these three terms which, in turn, led to an improved ability to refer to this vocabulary in lessons and explaining real-life situations and events in classroom and yard-time. The explicit teaching of these terms and the delivery of the overall well-being programme supported this change.

The objective of teaching the terms and assisting with their retention was to provide the children with the vocabulary to express their emotions/feelings. This has important benefits for the children but also for me as teacher. Communication is now easier and more accurate and the understanding of the terms means that I, as teacher, and the children have a common language to use to describe issues and solutions.

4.2.2 Rosenberg Survey of Self-Esteem

At the start of the Action Research, I assessed the children’s self-esteem by using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Survey as modified by me to assure that the children would understand all the questions asked. As discussed before, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Survey was used in this study to provide a picture of the children’s level of self-esteem at the beginning and end of the study. At the end of the Action Research, I repeated the survey.

The results of the before-after survey are as illustrated (Figures 4.2 – 4.11) and discussed below.

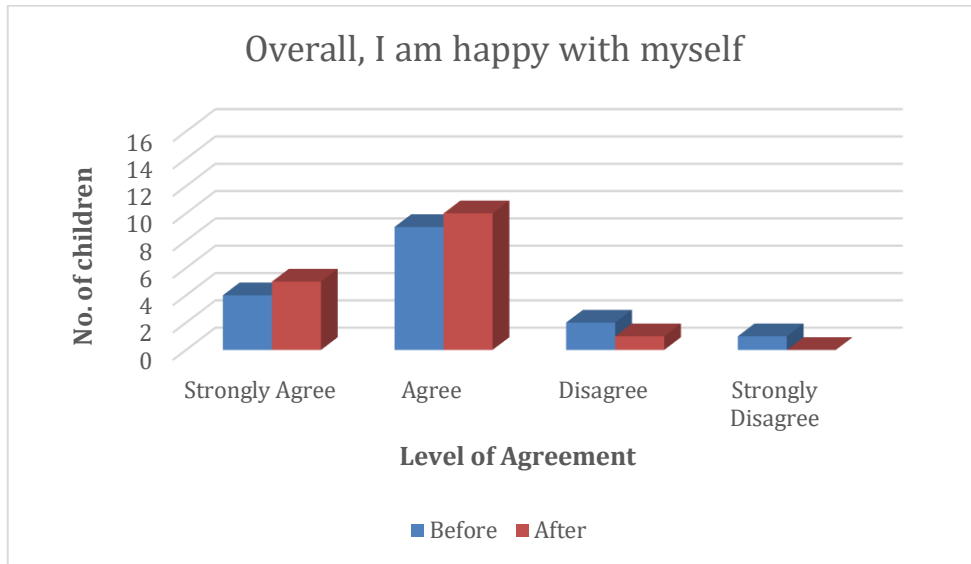


Figure 4.2 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (1)

For Question 1, the statement “Overall, I am happy with myself” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. While there is not a significant difference between before and after in the children’s perception of happiness, there is a positive change signifying that the majority of the children perceive their happiness has improved over the duration of the study.

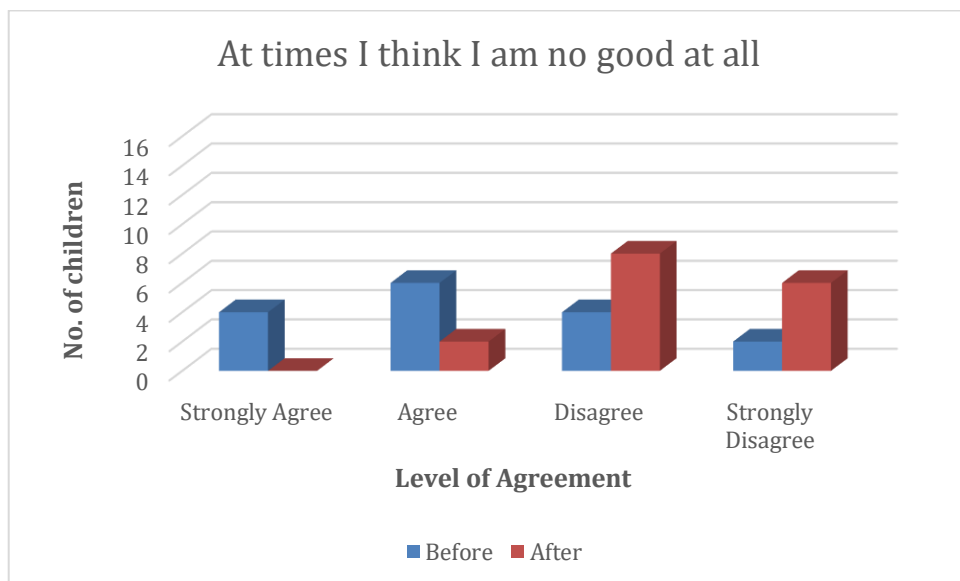


Figure 4.3 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (2)

For Question 2, the statement “At times, I think I am no good at all” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. While there is not a significant difference between before and after in the children’s perception, there is a change signifying that the majority of the children perceive their self-worth has improved over the duration of the study.

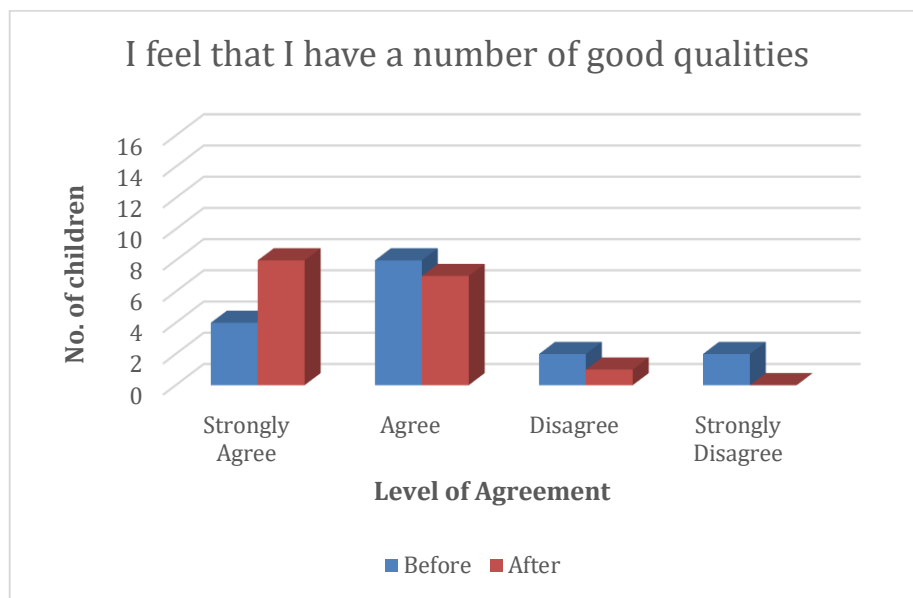


Figure 4.4 - Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (3)

For Question 3, the statement “I feel that I have a number of good qualities” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. Here, there is a change signifying that, after the study, twice as many of the children strongly agree that they have a number of good qualities. My own observations would indicate that, having carried out three activities with the children (*What my reflection says about me*, *How my class sees me* and *How I see me*), the children improved their ability to both identify and discuss their own qualities. It was necessary to carry out these activities in this order because, at the beginning of the study, the majority of the children in the class expressed embarrassment or a feeling that they were ‘boasting’ when

they labelled themselves as having good qualities. Over the study period, I noticed an increased ease or willingness to identify themselves in this way. Below is a conversation between teacher and student discussing the child’s reluctance to name their qualities and talents:

Ms Cumiskey	“What’s the matter, Child E?”
Child E	“I don’t what to write”.
Ms Cumiskey	“Just think about your qualities and talents and write them down. That will help you”.
Child E	“I don’t want to... I feel like I’m boasting... I don’t know, it doesn’t feel nice...”

Table 4.2 - Cumiskey, Reflective Journal, 26th Jan 2022

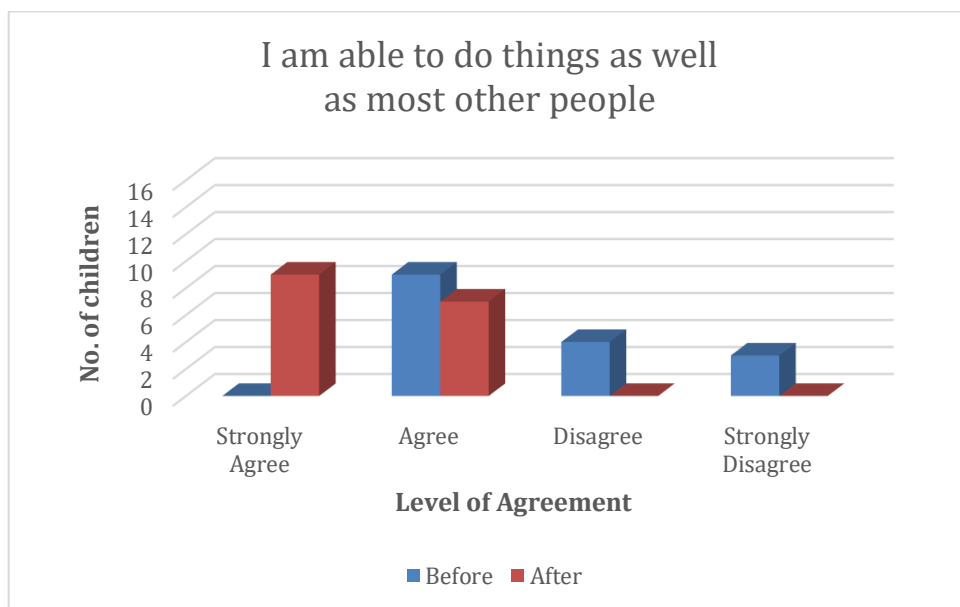


Figure 4.5 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (4)

For Question 4, the statement “I am able to do things as well as most other people” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. After the study, every child agreed or strongly agreed that

they had something to offer. This ties in with Question 3 as this indicates a realisation that “I do have something to offer” which is equivalent to self-worth/self-esteem.

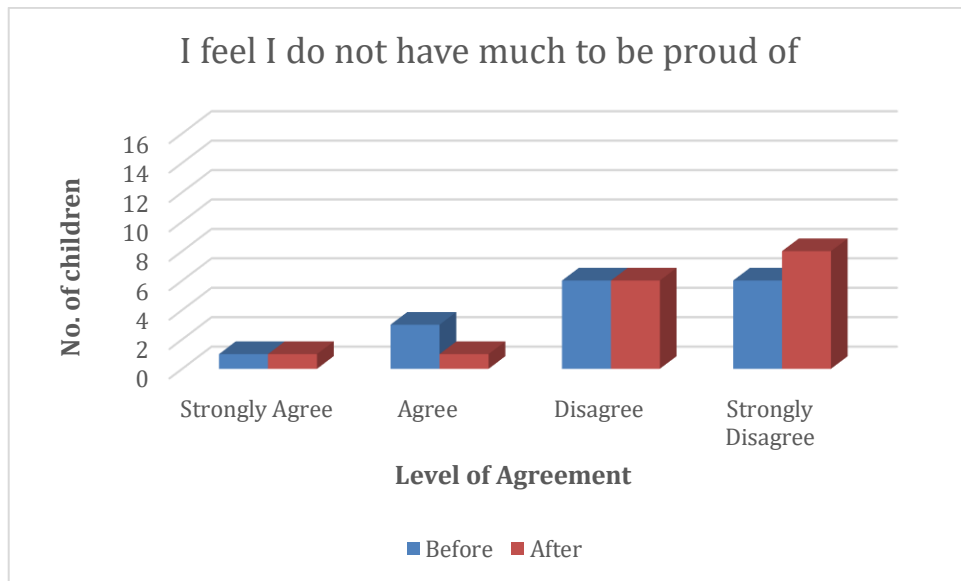


Figure 4.6 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (5)

For Question 5, the statement “I feel I do not have much to be proud of” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. Overall, the children felt that they do have much to be proud of, not showing much change over the duration of the study. While there is not a significant difference between before and after in the children’s perception, this signifies that the majority of the children are proud of themselves.

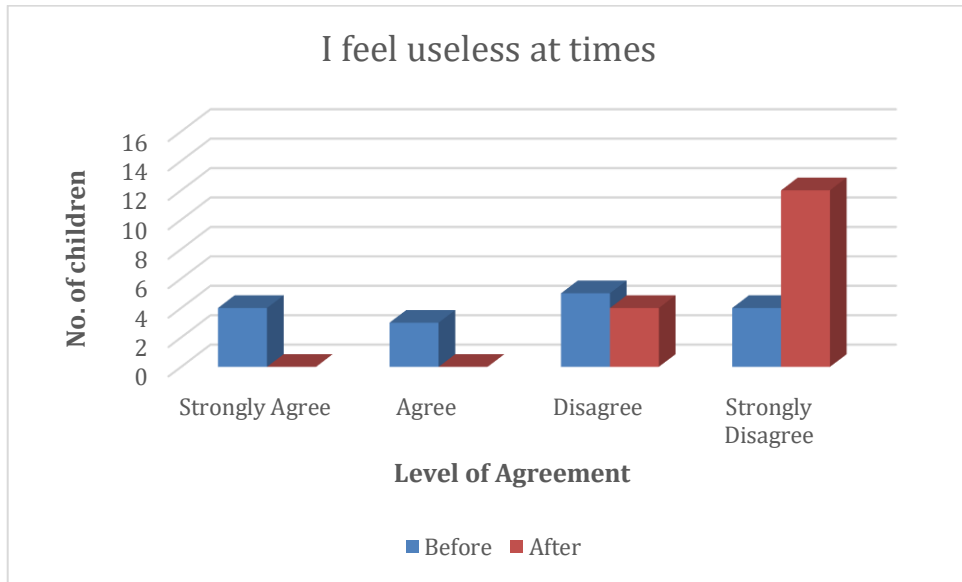


Figure 4.7 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (6)

For Question 6, the statement “I feel useless at times” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. At the end of the study, all of the children disagreed with the statement compared to just half the class agreeing with the statement in the ‘Before’ survey. This change signifies that the children now perceive that they do not feel useless – a positive change and indicative of an improvement in self-esteem.

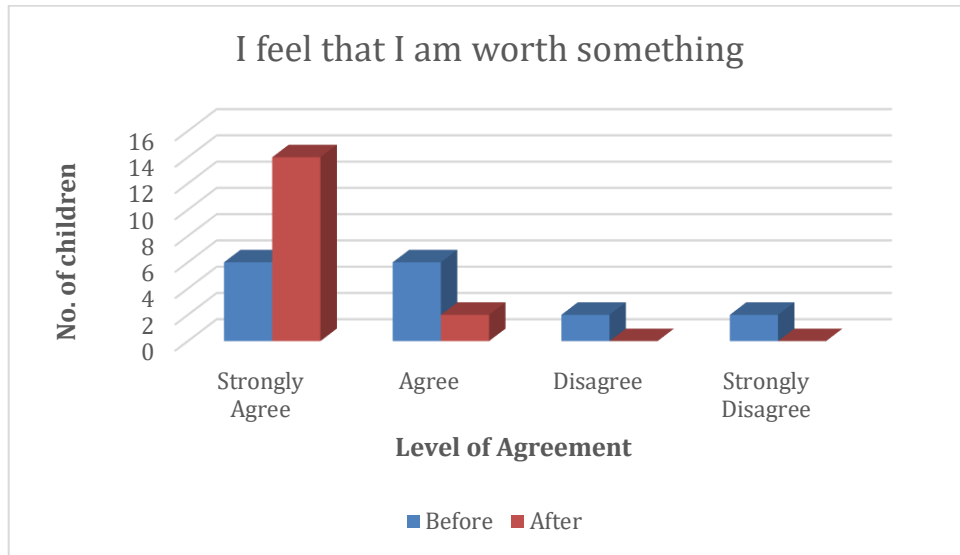


Figure 4.8 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (7)

For Question 7, the statement “I feel that I am worth something” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. This strongly supports the previous question’s results and that the children understood the significance of Questions 6 and 7. This is a positive change and indicative of an improvement in the children’s self-esteem.

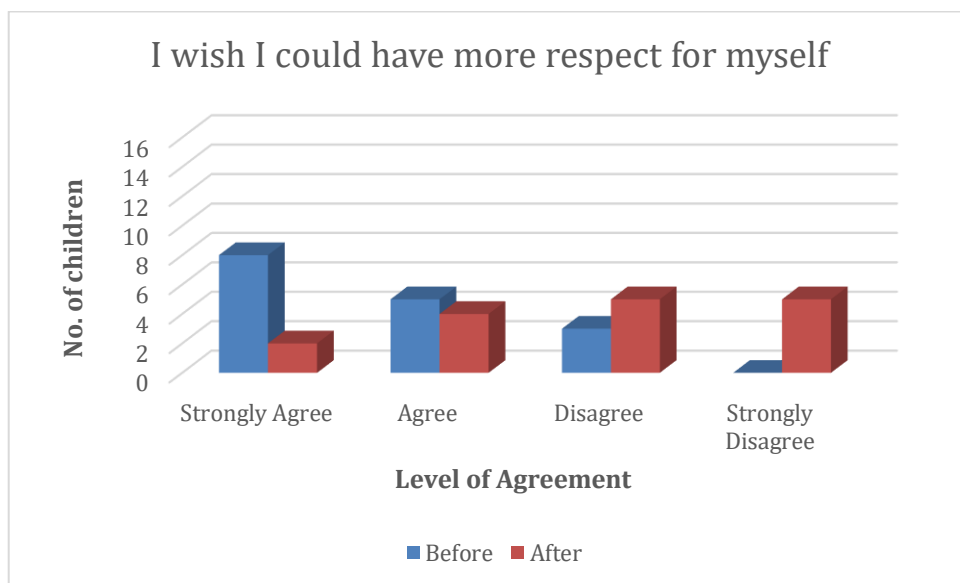


Figure 4.9 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (8)

For Question 8, the statement “I wish I could have more respect for myself” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. In the ‘Before’ survey, the majority of the children wished they could have more respect for themselves. In the ‘After’ survey, the majority perceive that they have respect for themselves, a positive change and indicative of an improvement in the children’s self-esteem.

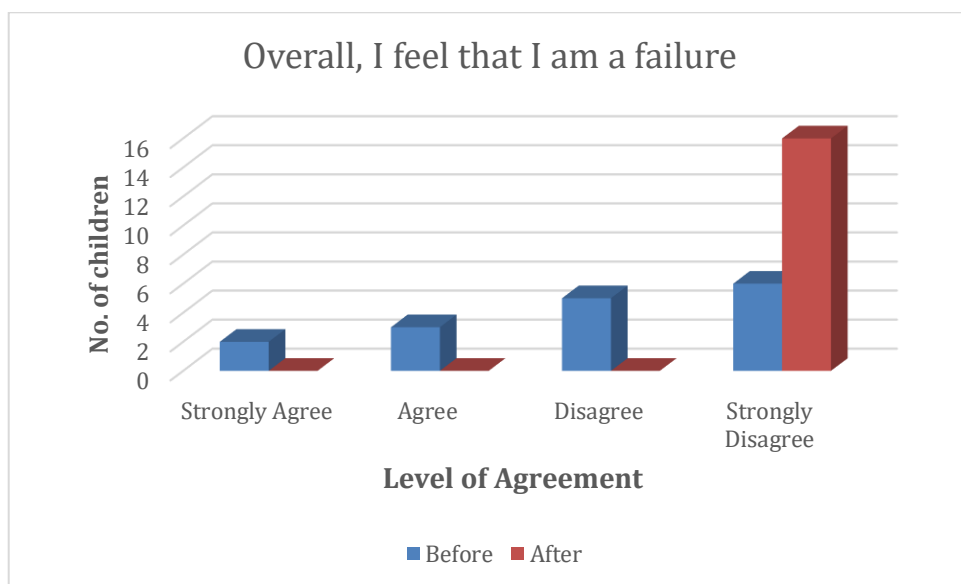


Figure 4.10 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (9)

For Question 9, the statement “Overall, I feel that I am a failure” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. In the ‘After’; survey, every child disagrees with the statement which is a positive change from before and indicative of an improvement in all the children’s self-esteem.



Figure 4.11 – Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Survey Jan-May 2022 (10)

For Question 10, the statement “When I think about myself, I think positive thoughts about myself” was presented to the children for them to respond with their perception on a scale from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”. In the ‘After’ survey, all of the children think positive thoughts of themselves, a positive change and indicative of an improvement in the children’s self-esteem.

In summary, comparing before and after, these results illustrate a noted improvement in self-esteem over the four months of study, having done activities around self-image and emotional regulation and given them the Tools of Resilience from the *Weaving Well-Being* programme. Obviously, other external factors (e.g., parental influence) have not been controlled for this study, however, I believe it is fair to infer that the programme of work carried out with the children had a positive influence.

4.3 Weaving Well-Being Programme

4.3.1 Structure of the programme

As my Action Research took place throughout Term 2, between January and May, I had come to know my class well. I was aware of their needs and what worked best for them, as well as having a good idea of the fact that, as a group, they were relatively low in self-esteem.

I had a timetable in place, so I was able to create specific slots for *Weaving Well-Being*. I carried out the lessons on *Weaving Well-Being* twice weekly, on Tuesday and Thursday. One page from the *Weaving Well-Being* Pupil Book was given as homework every Thursday. This homework was signed by parents at home. The structure of this made it easy for the children to anticipate the lessons and they became very comfortable with when to expect the programme and greatly helped me with my own lesson structure.

Halfway through the term, we reached *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. The events and activities happening in school changed our timetable. Three children asked me why we were not doing *Weaving Well-Being* when we were supposed to, and when we could do it instead. This made it clear that they had become comfortable with the timetable and also that they were looking forward to our next lesson.

Along with the timetabled programme times, I created a lesson structure to follow with the aim of encouraging the children's comfort with the programme, to gradually improve engagement in lessons, especially in the oral aspect of Circle Time.

The structure was as follows:

- Introduction (meditation and looking back at our previous lesson)

- Body (Discussing new Tool of Resilience and activity for it, followed by completing the activity in their *Weaving Well-Being* Pupil Book)
- Conclusion (Circle Time discussion related to the new Tool of Resilience)

4.3.2 *Ability Levels and Understanding (Tracker Children)*

As it became clear throughout my research that my lower ability students in particular needed more oral work to be able to understand the reading and writing that was included in the programme, I also had some lessons that only used Circle Time. This gave opportunities for reflection-in-practice, as I could call the children to the circle when necessary, such as when there was a friendship issue or an opportunity for us to use our Tools of Resilience in the real world.

In order to assess my class and their understanding and application of the *Weaving Well-Being* programme, it was essential to track the children's development throughout the experience. Although I had a small class of sixteen students, my assessment was that this was still too many children to track consistently and ensure that I was able to assess their work and monitor their behaviour to the fullest extent. As a result, I decided to choose three children to focus on. I wanted to see if different academic ability levels affected the children's learning and understanding of well-being which follows the approach I have always used as a teacher and is in line with Rossouw's (2009) research model (observing and reflecting).

I chose a child who always scores in the top three in class tests (Child A), a child who always scores in the bottom three (Child C), and a child who is in the middle of the class ability levels (Child B).

Child A	The higher ability student was able to express herself better as she could write more, understand or process information faster and could put the Tools of Resilience into practice in a more structured manner.
Child B	The middle ability student had excellent oral skills but often lacked quantity and quality in her written tasks. She was able to express, process and explain orally and often through writing. She had occasional breakthroughs relating programme content to own life and characters in class novels. However, it was clear from the start that Child B had generally high self-esteem already, and that this did not improve as substantially as Child A by the end of the programme.
Child C	The lower ability student interacted generally well orally, but often lacked understanding of new words or concepts. She nearly always found it difficult to form more than one or two sentences about new topics, and, also, always found it difficult to think of situations from her own life that applied to the Tools of Resilience. Child C, like Child B, had generally high-esteem already at the start of the programme.

Table 4.3 – Tracker Children

4.3.3 Pupil Book Activities

As part of the *Weaving Well-Being* programme, the children had a Pupil Book that they used during lesson time and once a week for homework. The Pupil Book includes 10 lessons and uses six tools as follow:

1. The Jigsaw of Perspective
2. The Lucky Dip of Distraction
3. The Planning Pen
4. Helpful Thinking Helmet
5. Key of Character Strength
6. Mindfulness Switch

4.3.3.1 Tool 1: The Jigsaw of Perspective

The Programme began with the use of the first tool presented in the Pupil Book: the Jigsaw of Perspective. The purpose of this tool is to give the children a reminder of what they should

be grateful for in their lives. When facing a problem, the children are encouraged to look at the 'bigger picture'.

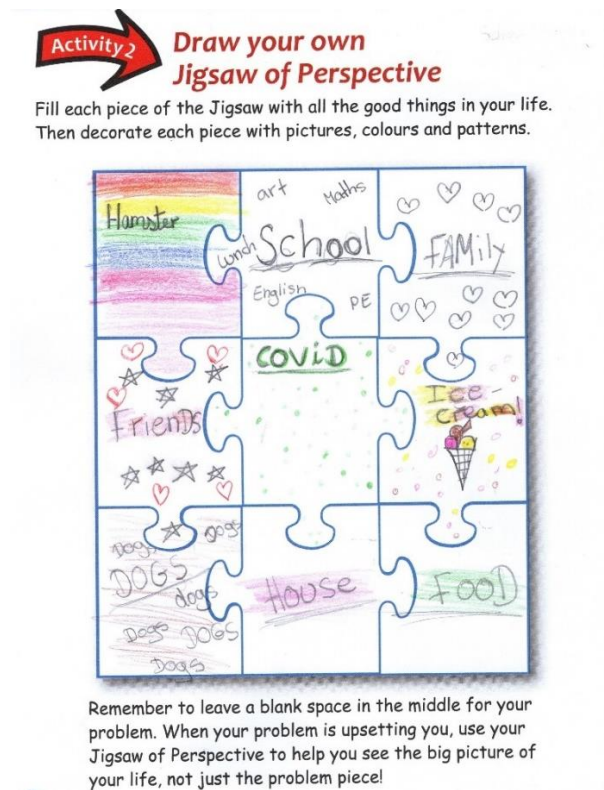


Figure 4.12 – Jigsaw of Perspective activity completed by Child A, Jan 2022

(source: *Weaving Well-Being Tools of Resilience Pupil Book* (Forman and Rock, 2019))

The children were asked to make their own Jigsaw of Perspective, placing the problem they perceive in the centre of the Jigsaw. They then were asked to surround that problem with positives (8 positives) in their lives for which they are grateful. The example in Fig 4. above illustrates how one child completed the Jigsaw. The child clearly understood the activity and was able to complete it.

Through teaching lessons specifically focused on tools of resilience and the vocabulary and terms behind resilience and self-esteem, I started to see children using these terms both during lessons based on my research and outside of lessons. A specific example of this is the

difference a few months has made in a child's emotional regulation and understanding of what we have been discussing in our *Weaving Well-Being* Programme.

My observation at the time (September) was:

“Child C is really struggling with friendships and controlling her emotions at yard time. Today she hit and threw a basketball at another child in the class because she felt they were being unfair with the game they were playing.” (Cumiskey, ‘Teacher Reflective Journal’, 17/9/2021).

Child D	“Child C says she's not playing with us anymore and she's crying over there.”
Ms Cumiskey	“Why do you think she's upset?”
Child D	“She said we weren't being fair, but we were!”
Ms Cumiskey	“Don't worry, I'll talk to her.”
Ms Cumiskey to Child C	“What's wrong? Why don't you want to play with the other girls?”
Child C	“They're being mean and always say I'm out when I'm not! I hate being out!”.
<i>(Child C runs away in a huff.)</i>	

Table 4.4 - Cumiskey, ‘Teacher Reflective Journal’, 17th Sept 2021

There was clear improvement by March as is evidenced by my observation:

“I am seeing the benefit of teaching the tools of resilience. Child C talked to me about being knocked out of the game at yard time and how disappointed she was about that but that she had used her Jigsaw of Perspective and realised that it was just a game and that she had enjoyed the experience of playing and that the game would be over

soon so she could join in again.” (Cumiskey, ‘Teacher Reflective Journal’, 1/3//2022).

This was a significant improvement and it has carried on with this specific child and there have been very few incidents in the yard since starting the programme *Weaving Well-Being*. What has also become apparent is that resilience and self-esteem can be taught. While a person is born with a specific personality and brought up in a specific culture, it is however clear that we can build resilience and self-esteem and that both need to be practiced to develop the child into a confident person. “It is important to note that resilience is not only dynamic, but also contextual and malleable. It is not a ‘trait’ that children do or do not possess.” (Ernst et. al., 2018: 8).

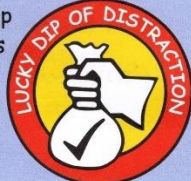
4.3.3.2 Tool 2: Lucky Dip of Distraction

The Lucky Dip of Distraction is used as a healthy exercise to stop a child from worrying about ‘things out of their control’. The activity involved each child filling in a number of options for things to do when she needed a distraction.

Lesson 3

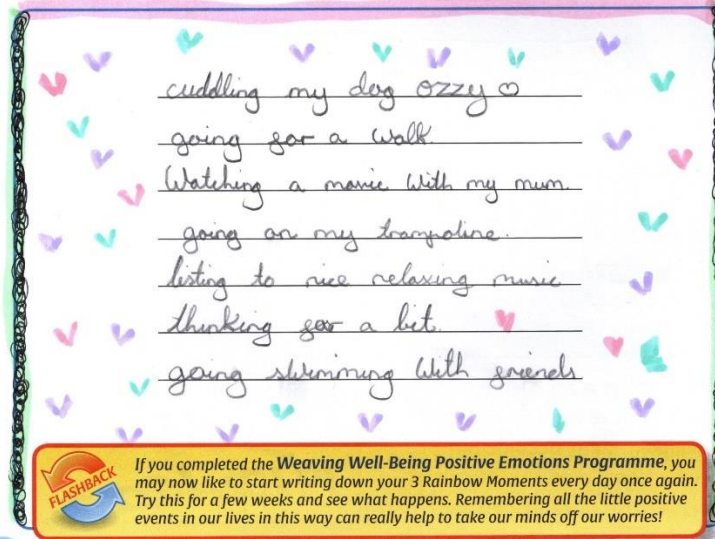
Tool 2- The Lucky Dip of Distraction

We can use **healthy distraction** to help take our minds off problems or worries which we can't do anything about. This can give us a break from our problems for a while. The Lucky Dip of Distraction gives us a ready-made list of activities to choose from.



Activity 1 **My Lucky Dip of Distraction**

Write down some ideas for healthy distraction. Decorate the page. Use them if you need to be distracted from worries or situations which you can't do anything about.



FLASHBACK If you completed the Weaving Well-Being Positive Emotions Programme, you may now like to start writing down your 3 Rainbow Moments every day once again. Try this for a few weeks and see what happens. Remembering all the little positive events in our lives in this way can really help to take our minds off our worries!

8 Weaving Well-Being - Tools of Resilience - Pupil Book © 2019 www.otble - Copying of this page is illegal

Figure 4.13 –Lucky Dip of Distraction activity completed by Child A, Jan 2022

(source: Weaving Well-Being Tools of Resilience Pupil Book (Forman and Rock (2019))

The table below illustrates the differing number of options chosen by the three tracker children at their different levels.

Child	Options	Notes
A	7	Could think of 7 distractions and used her distractions when she lost an important item at home
B	5	Could think of 5 distractions but couldn't put them into practice
C	2	Could think of 2 distractions but couldn't put them into practice

Table 4.5 - Number of distractions listed by children

While the children understood the tool and used it, they reported it was not as useful to them as some of the other tools, especially the Jigsaw of Perspective and ANTs, which is discussed later.

4.3.3.3 Tool 3: The Planning Pen

The activity was to make a plan to deal with a situation or problem. It reminds them of the steps required to make a good plan and deal with a situation in a structured way. It is an alternative to the Lucky Dip of Distraction activity.

- Child A - 3 step plan to calm down without authority help.
- Child B - 2 step plan to resolve the situation involving authority figure.
- Child C - 1 step plan to have an authority figure solve the issue.

Observation of this tool in action: Child C was upset within her friend group. She felt that a child was singling her out and making her feel bad. Child A took control of the situation and used the Planning Pen tools to talk Child C through calming herself down. When the situation was resolved, during Circle Time, the event was mentioned. The children then explained how they used the Planning Pen tool to solve the issue. The rest of the class discussed other possible solutions.

Child A	“Miss Cumiskey, there was a bit of a problem at yard time.”
Ms Cumiskey	“Really? The teacher on duty didn’t tell me that. What happened?”
Child A	“We didn’t go to the teacher actually, we fixed it ourselves! (Child C) was really sad because she said her friend was picking on her, and she got really upset. So I used the Planning Pen Tool to help her figure out a plan that worked!”
Ms Cumiskey	“That’s fantastic! How did you do that?”

Child A	“Well, she needed to calm down so we said we’d make that our first step, and then she needed to talk to her friend so we made that the second step. It was really good.”
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Table 4.6 - Cumiskey, 'Teacher Reflective Journal', 15th Feb 2022)

This shows the higher ability child putting a Tool of Resilience into practice and taking control of a situation she encountered to use it. In doing so, she modelled to Child C how she could do this herself the next time it was needed. However, at the beginning of the programme with our self-esteem survey and questionnaire, both surveys showed that Child A was lacking in self-esteem, and often found herself overthinking and worrying. Her self-esteem rose during the study from low to average of the RSES.

In this situation, the children gained significant experience as well as benefits. As a teacher, I learned more about who could potentially be leaders within the class group which, in turn, makes the process of teaching much more effective. The teaching of the steps in a highly structured manner has great benefits to the teacher and to the learning process.

4.3.3.4 Tool 4: The Helpful Thinking Helmet

This tool is about the identification and management of ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts). The children are challenged to check: ‘Is the thought true, is it helpful, is it kind?’ before they start feeling bad. If the answer to any of these questions is ‘no’, the child needs to reassess their thought and change the phrasing of the thought to a positive.

Observation of this tool in action: Child B used ANTs in her comprehension related to *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom*, without any teacher prompting. She explained that Bradley’s negative thoughts were ANTs, and explained that he should check if the thoughts were true, helpful and kind.

An example of a child putting tool into practice:

Child C	“Look, Miss Cumiskey! Can you see what I’ve drawn on my character’s head in this picture?”
Ms Cumiskey	“I can see dots on Bradley’s head. What are those dots for?”
Child C	“Those are his ANTs! When he felt bad in the book, that was really just the ANTs running around, making him feel bad things. He just needed to do what we do: think about if it was true, if it was helpful and if it was nice!”

Table 4.7 - Cumiskey, ‘Teacher Reflective Journal’, 24th March 2022

This experience indicates a child being able to understand and appropriately apply the tool to a situation. This has reinforced the need for me to use explicit teaching of tools and vocabulary to allow the children to usefully ‘label’ experiences and insights. I will use this in future work with the class as it has proved most beneficial.

4.3.3.5 Tool 5: Key of Character Strength

This tool focuses on awareness of the child’s own strengths with two tasks: Task 1: Answer 5 questions in the Pupil Book to link character strengths to difficulties. Task 2: To link 7 characters from novels to key character strengths. Result: Percentage that the children were able to link up.

Child	Task 1	Task 2
A	100% linked and correct	86%
B	40% linked and correct	100%
C	60% of questions answered but without use of abstract nouns i.e., leadership, creativity, humility, bravery	43% and used words correctly

Table 4.8 – Key of character strength

I found that the Circle Time on this (orally) worked extremely well, as all ability levels could manage to express strengths and their uses. The written work in the Pupil Book does not always show this, as the lower ability students were unable to use the vocabulary efficiently. However, Task 2 was more appropriate for all levels because of the various discussions leading up to the activity.

As a teacher, I learned that sometimes it is necessary to move away from ‘the book’ to effectively teach a topic if the children are struggling with comprehension.

4.3.3.6 Tool 6: Parts 1, 2, 3: Mindfulness Switch Part 1: Bee Level

The challenge here was to “switch off your busy mind”. *Bee Level* in the mind is the busy area filled with thoughts. The activity is based on selecting words that explain a busy mind and what it thinks of. The image below illustrates the activity and completion by Child B.

Activity 2

Words related to Bee Level
Remember how busy our minds are at Bee Level?
They are

thinking... .. planning... .. worrying... ..
deciding... .. judging... .. self-talking...

They are also usually in the PAST or the FUTURE.
Write lots of words to do with Bee Level in the hive below.
Use different colours and styles of writing. Then draw lots of bees around it!

Figure 4.14 – Mindfulness Bee Level activity completed by Child B, Mar 2022

(source: *Weaving Well-Being Tools of Resilience Pupil Book* (Forman and Rock (2019))

The activity produced an interesting result.

- Child A - 7 words written.
- Child B - 12 words written.
- Child C - 5 words written.

The task did not resonate as well with Child A. Child B fully understood and connected with the concept. Child C understood the task orally but again found it difficult to write about the

concept. My interpretation is that visual stimuli work better with Child B and she truly engaged with the exercise.

4.3.3.7 Mindfulness Switch Part 2: Flower Level

This exercise is designed to take a break from the busy mind. Separately to the Pupil Book, we completed mindfulness activities: yoga, breathing breaks and mindfulness colouring. I assessed at three separate times for 5 minutes to see how the children were responding to each activity. The percentage of time each child was able to stay focused, calm and relaxed (marked out of 15 minutes originally):

- Child A: 95%
- Child B: 95%
- Child C: 100%

Child C is academically the weakest, which affected her ability to complete other tasks throughout the programme and use the other tools. This Bee and Flower Level Tool worked exceptionally well for her. She proved able to fully focus on the task at hand and could also express afterwards that her mind had changed to the Flower Level, and that she felt good and relaxed.

4.3.3.8 Mindfulness Switch Part 3: Mindfulness

The tool is designed to help the child to learn how to switch their mind from Bee level (busy mind) to Flower level (quiet mind). The children were tasked with rating the following three statements on a scale of 1-3 depending on how important/helpful they felt they were.

The table below displays the level of importance assigned by the children using a traffic light system where 1 is the highest level of importance.

Child	Statement	Rating
A	Feeling happier about your life	2
	Gaining more control over your emotions	1
	Being healthier	3
B	Feeling happier about your life	2
	Gaining more control over your emotions	3
	Being healthier	1
C	Feeling happier about your life	1
	Gaining more control over your emotions	3
	Being healthier	2

Table 4.9 – Children’s rating of statements

As is clear from this data, all three children had quite different views on what they prioritise.

- Child A felt that having more control over her emotions was useful.
- Child B felt it was most important to be healthier.
- Child C wanted to stay happy in life.

This illustrates that Child A classes controlling her emotions as the highest priority which signifies to me a higher level of mature thinking. As a teacher, I find this tool in its three parts highly effective. It assists in calming the class particularly following moments of high activity. I would use this in future classes after subjects like PE, music or drama to bring children to ground effectively before starting lessons again.

4.3.3.9 Final Task for Consideration: Self-Assessment Check-Up

The children gave themselves 'smiley faces' for how they considered various statements and these were recorded across the duration of the study along with my observations.

Child A	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Teacher Observations
I feel like I get along with others most of the time							Always felt confident in this.
I know and use my strengths often							Some increase in use of strengths.
I regularly feel grateful for many things in my life							Always felt confident in this.
I feel that I have ways to cope with disappointments and problems							Noticeable increase in confidence in dealing with issues.
I often feel proud of myself for doing my best							Noticeable increase in pride in self.
I often help others							Always felt confident in this.
I can accept that I am OK just as I am							Noticeable increase in self-acceptance.

Child B	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Teacher Observations
I feel like I get along with others most of the time							Always felt confident in this.
I know and use my strengths often							Noticeable improvement in using strengths.
I regularly feel grateful for many things in my life							Some increase in feeling grateful.
I feel that I have ways to cope with disappointments and problems							Noticeable improvement in coping with disappointments
I often feel proud of myself for doing my best							Always felt confident in this.
I often help others							Some improvement here but generally felt confident.
I can accept that I am OK just as I am							Some increase in acceptance.

Continued over

Child C	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Teacher Observations
I feel like I get along with others most of the time							Always felt confident in this.
I know and use my strengths often							An increase here but still isn't sure of how to recognise and use strengths
I regularly feel grateful for many things in my life							Always felt confident in this.
I feel that I have ways to cope with disappointments and problems							Noticeable improvement here
I often feel proud of myself for doing my best							Some increase in pride in self
I often help others							Always felt confident in this.
I can accept that I am OK just as I am							Huge increase here

Table 4.10 - Self-Assessment Check-Up findings

While some of these sections remained green throughout, others changed significantly over the six months. It was interesting to see that the points that changed most over time were generally the same with all three children. I have tabulated the statements with my teacher observations and notes.

Statement	Observations and notes
I know and use my strengths often,	The children's ability to recognise and name their strengths and qualities has greatly improved. They now feel more comfortable discussing their strengths.
I feel that I have ways to cope with disappointments and problems	The various tools taught have been successful in developing the children's resilience. The children now feel more comfortable in knowing how to deal with problems and disappointments.
I can accept that I am OK just as I am.	The children are now better at self-acceptance.

Table 4.11 – Statements, observations and notes

In each of the Tools used, it is noticeable that Child A completed the written activities more effectively than Child B or Child C. She understood the Tool and activity better and could put the Tool into practice in real life.

By May, there was a clear increase in engagement by all the children in the class. Children who did not engage at the start of the programme in Circle Time had now begun to offer opinions and insights. Below is an example of an observation from my Journal regarding a child who previously did not engage in Circle Time but who began to engage after implementation of the lessons.

Ms Cumiskey	“Child G gave a great example today during Circle Time. This was the first time she engaged without me prompting her. This gives me such confidence in realising that the Programme is really benefiting students”.
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Table 4.12 - Cumiskey, Reflective Journal, 29th May 2022

Children who had already engaged in January now began using the specific vocabulary that had been explicitly taught in the *Weaving Well-Being* programme.

4.4 Use of a Cross-Curricular Approach

As recommended by Hayes (2010), teaching through a cross-curricular approach gives a more rounded view to subjects as opposed to a siloed or bounded approach to subject teaching which can lead to children struggling to make connections between subjects.

Due to this, as well as explicit *Weaving Well-Being* lessons, I taught well-being through English, the Arts and SESE. This meant that while I had two scheduled *Weaving Well-Being* lessons in the week, I also had extra time to work on the topics of resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem.

It was interesting to see what activities the children chose as their favourites. I carried out a survey enquiring about the children's favourite activity. The chart that follows shows how the favourite activities were cross-curricular activities like the music video and novels and it shows how the *Weaving Well-Being* programme was not one of their favourites.

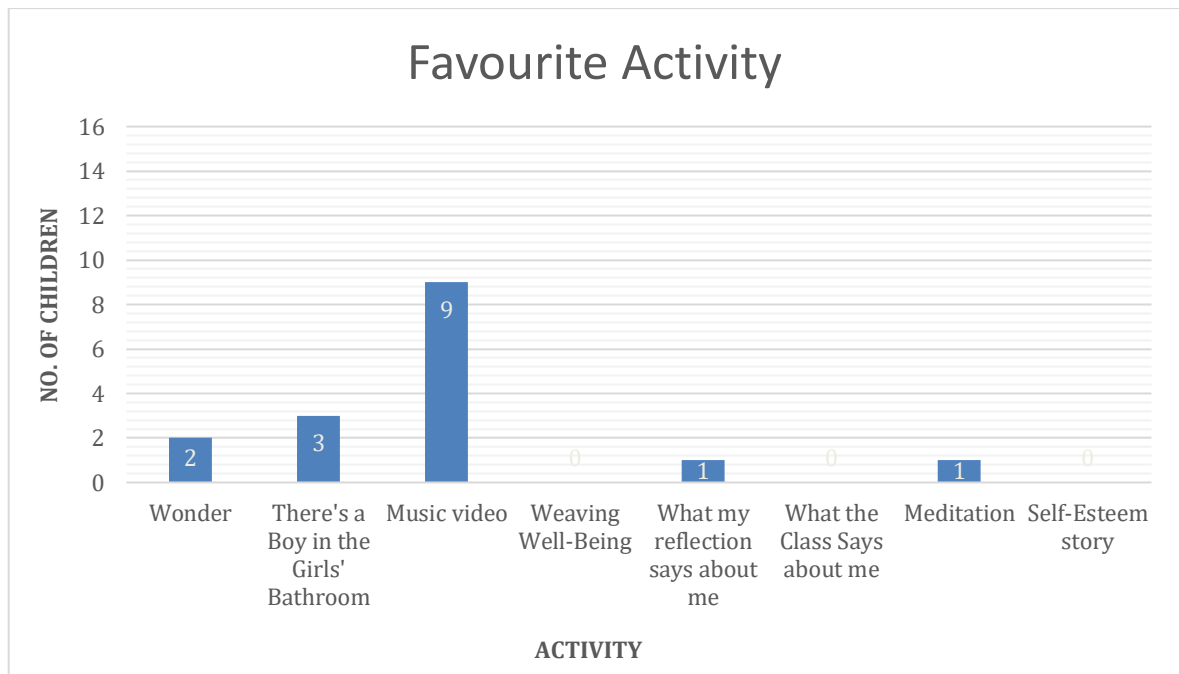


Figure 4.15 – Children's favourite activity throughout Research project

Even given this, it is clear that the Programme was very effective in developing the children's resilience. As I have noted before, the cross-curricular approach means that the teacher is presenting subjects that the children enjoy more which leads to better engagement in lessons. "There is overwhelming evidence that students learn more effectively, including their academic subjects, if they are happy in their work, believe in themselves, their teachers and feel school is supporting them." (Weare, 2000). However, as a teacher, I really appreciated the value of the Programme as it provided me with an excellent structure to work off, and with the vocabulary and tools needed to teach the children about self-esteem and resilience.

4.4.1 *Novels*

I used two class novels for supporting well-being through our English lessons. These novels were *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* by Louis Sachar and *Wonder* by RJ Palacio. I organised activities based specifically around the characters, with the aim of using the Tools of Resilience and applying them to characters rather than ourselves, in order to externalise them. The key themes explored were self-image, emotional regulation and relationships. The children completed character studies to develop empathy, linked characters to themselves to identify personal traits and strengths, and applied tools to the characters so that there was a separation between themselves and the tools.

I found that the latter was a genuine success, as there were occasions when the children felt embarrassed to use the tools for themselves. Removing this embarrassment is a major step in freeing the child to engage fully in the classroom and it gave them the opportunity to apply tools to a situation that they never have experienced in their lives before.

4.4.2 *SESE Project Work*

As well as employing these novels, I used project work in SESE. An activity that I found was particularly successful in developing well-being was our project on famous role models. The children were instructed to research and choose a famous person who experienced difficulties in life and who reminded them of themselves.

A child who has always found academics difficult chose Walt Disney, who dropped out of school when he was in High School.

Child D	“Walt Disney left school because he found it too hard, but he still did so well. He got so famous and rich and he got to do art and movies and he loved that!”
Ms Cumiskey	“That’s amazing! Do you think you’d like to work in art or with movies?”
Child D	“Definitely, but I didn’t know I could do that if I wasn’t good at school stuff. I think I might be good at it now even though I think tests are hard.”

Table 4.13 - Cumiskey, ‘Teacher Reflective Journal’, 16th March 2022.

This interaction suggests that the child’s outlook on their future took a positive turn. It gave the child confidence in herself and her abilities, thereby promoting her self-esteem and confidence.

4.4.3 Integration of Weaving Well-Being Programme into Art lessons

Finally, I integrated the *Weaving Well-Being* programme into our Art lessons. This had significant benefits for children, particularly those who used English as an additional language. These children found it difficult to express themselves through writing as well as orally at times. Through use of artwork, I was able to see what they were trying to express, and I was able to assess their understanding of resilience, self-confidence and self-esteem. I was also able to track their development of these topics and the changes in how they viewed themselves by the end of the programme. An example of this was in the *How My Reflection Sees Me* activity illustrated below.

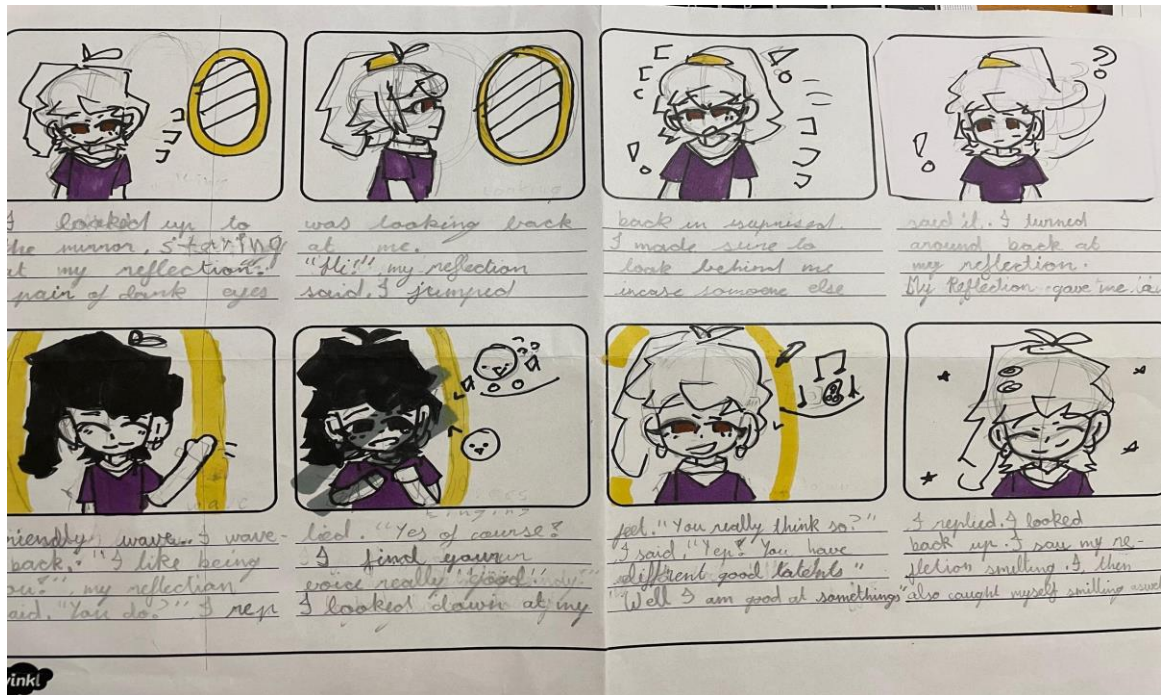


Figure 4.16 – What my reflection says about me (example)

An English as an Additional Language (EAL) student in my class used some writing alongside a comic strip to show all of what she perceived to be her own strengths. If this was solely through writing, a significant amount of the student's thoughts may have been excluded from her piece.

In addition to the usefulness of this activity for an EAL student specifically, I value this activity because it encouraged the children to use positive self-talk and to appreciate their talents when, as I mentioned earlier, they struggled with talent identification at the beginning of the year.

Many children at the beginning of the year expressed embarrassment when it came to praising their own talents publicly. Some of the following phrases taken from the image above illustrate the changes that had occurred for this child over the study period.

“‘I like being you’ my reflection said”.
“You have different good talents”.
She then responds to her reflection “Well I’m good at some things”.
In her last line, the student writes “I looked back up. I saw my reflection smiling. I then also caught myself smiling aswell”.

Table 4.14 - What my reflection says about me (examples)

In particular, in referencing the literature on positive self-talk, this resonates with the experience gained elsewhere (Sherman and Cohen, 2006; Tesser, 2000). It is clear from experience that positive self-talk benefits children’s self-esteem.

4.5 Changes to School Life

4.5.1 Observation of Changes in Class Behaviour

We spent two weeks on positive self-talk, meditation and controlling and “stamping out bad thoughts” (known in the *Weaving Well-Being* programme as ANTs).

The following piece of work focused on positive self-image.

At the beginning of the year, the children felt very self-conscious discussing their talents and the things they liked about themselves but through discussion in Circle Time and through the creation of *How my reflection sees me* and *How my class sees me* artwork (see image below), the children gradually developed the ability to give themselves positive descriptive words with the assistance of the comments of the ‘reflection’ and other children.



Figure 4.17 – ‘How my class sees me’ artwork (example)

I have also noticed a change since January in that the children are now including everyone in their games, and sorting out their own problems. I can now put them in pairs and small groups and they get on well with each other.

Through covering the *Weaving Well-Being* programme and all the activities we did from January 2022, the children were exposed to discussion of what a friend is, an emphasis on positive self-talk, interacting with others, including them, showing respect, and generally being kind and caring to others. We have discussed these topics through Circle Time, art and drama activities and discussions of our two class novels.

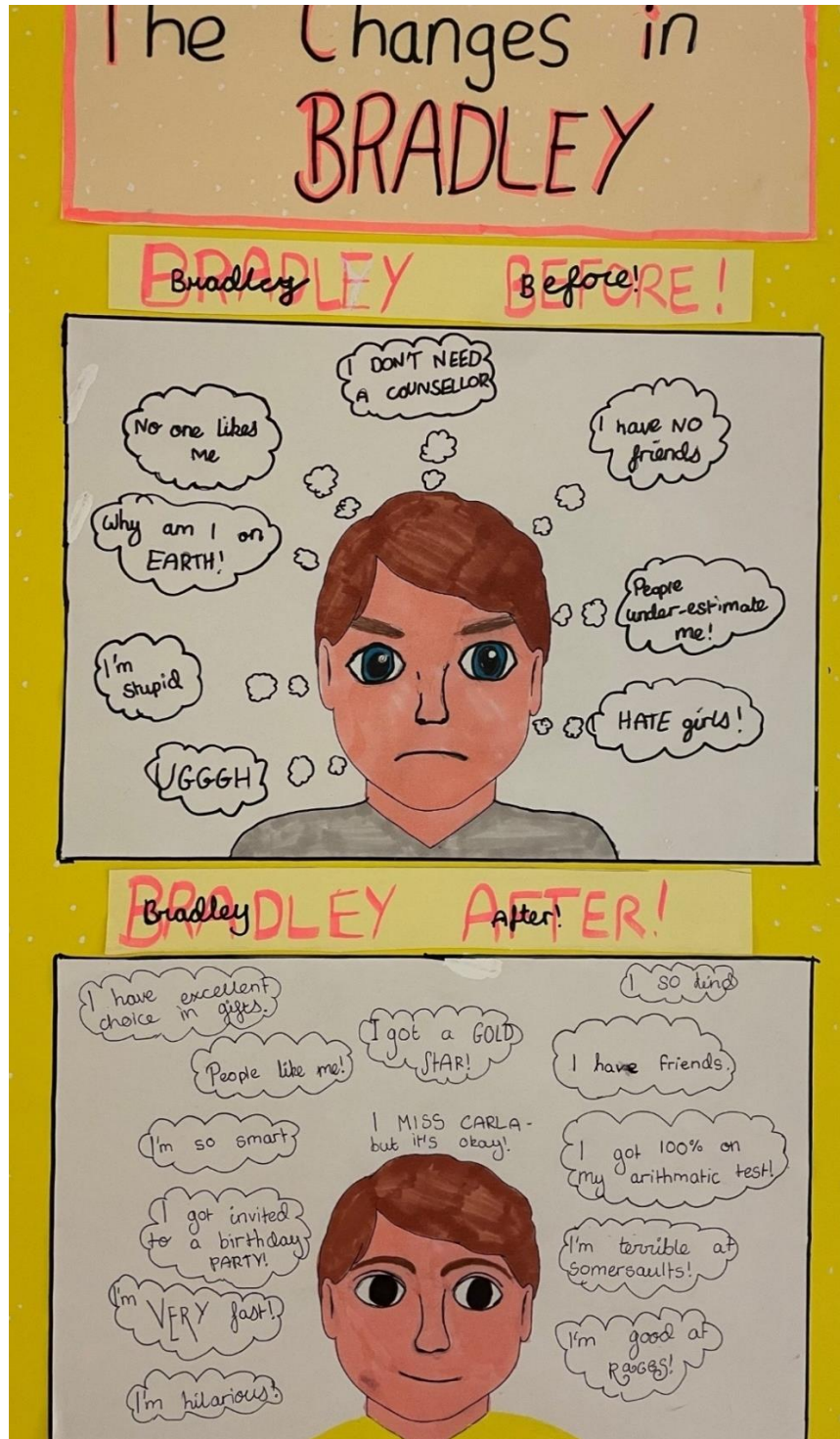


Figure 4.18 – Changes perceived in main novel characters by children

In particular, I believe that the reading of the two class novels had a very deep effect on the class. The children related well to the main characters in the novels and it opened up discussions and gave the children many examples of behaviour to discuss and act out. The children then spent a considerable amount of time discussing the changes in the two main characters and this is illustrated in their images.

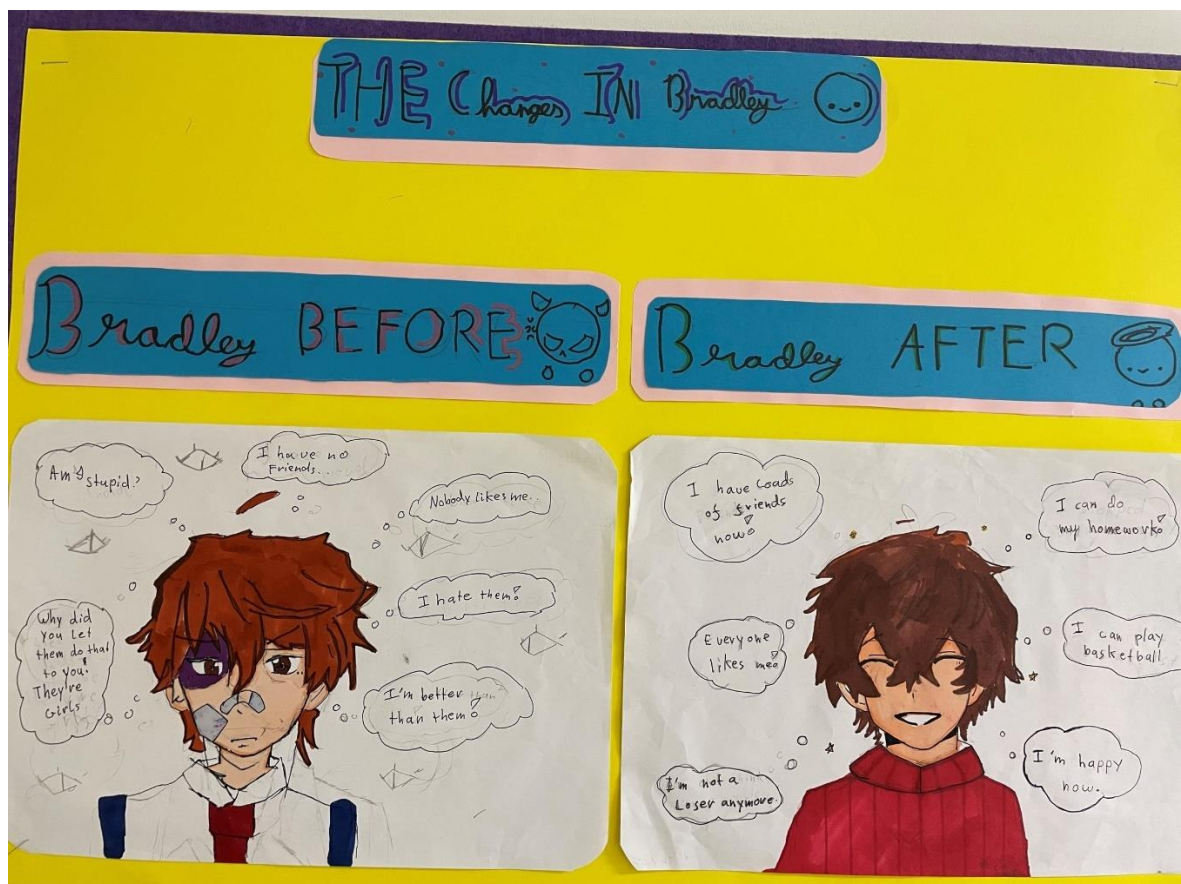


Figure 4.18 – Changes perceived in main novel characters by children (contd.)

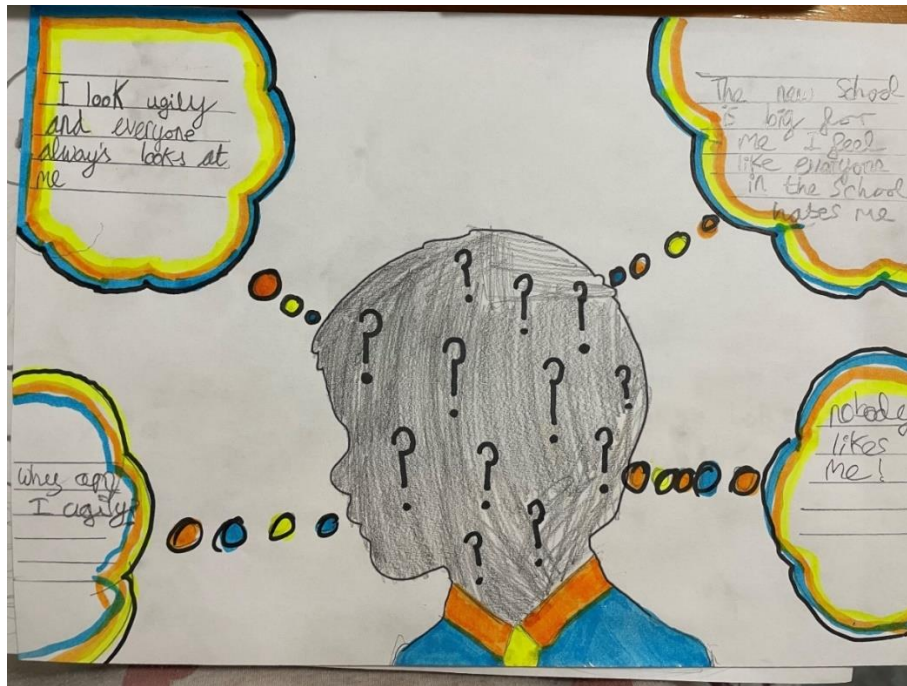


Figure 4.18 – Changes perceived in main novel characters by children (contd.)

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented my findings from research over a period from January to May 2022.

I have discussed the importance of a Cross-Curricular Approach. Through using this approach, the children were more engaged in the various activities and more time could be allocated to the broad subject of SPHE. The use of a Cross-Curricular Approach has proven

extremely beneficial in supporting me as a teacher with these children as it has allowed for more time to be allocated to well-being during the week, and also made SPHE more interesting and relatable because the children could access the theme of resilience and self-esteem through different subjects.

There was a clearly identified need for explicit teaching of well-being vocabulary and Tools of Resilience. This meant that the children now had the means to express themselves and, because of the Tools, developed emotional regulation leading to better class behaviour, particularly at yard time. The explicit teaching of well-being vocabulary provided a sound basis for teaching the children about resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence as it enabled them to take part in a genuine conversation with me as teacher about these key concepts, activities and outcomes.

I used the *Weaving Well-Being* programme and Pupil Book which supported the work that we did in our SPHE lessons. Each chapter presented a new tool, building a useful portfolio. Through observing the children outside specific SPHE lessons, I observed many tools being used by the children informally and in multiple ways.

I found it beneficial to track three children of differing academic levels through the programme. This gave a better overall picture of the progress of the group, particularly with the *Weaving Well-Being* Programme. It was interesting to note that a child with a higher level of academic ability who could engage better with the programme, presented initially with lower self-esteem and improved significantly by the end of my research.

My overall findings were that the Tools of Resilience were exceptionally helpful, allowing the children to apply them to situations or problems that they originally had not got the capacity to deal with. This assisted me greatly as a teacher by providing a programme with

in-depth resources that I could apply to my SPHE lessons when previously I would not have felt comfortable teaching the Tools of Resilience to my class. It provided me with vocabulary and techniques and talked me through how to approach situations and problems with Fourth Class children.

In the future, I will use the class novels approach that I tested throughout this study due to the clear improvement in empathy witnessed through reading and discussion of the books. This is a key tool I will use in conjunction with the Cross-Curricular Approach.

In the final chapter, I will explore the possibility of sharing my newfound knowledge with my colleagues in my school, as well as my critical friends, who are also Irish primary school teachers.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 My Action Research Question

My Action Research question is ‘How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?’

5.2 Background

From the literature, I learned the reasons and benefits for building resilience and self-esteem in children and the importance of teaching resilience and self-esteem in a school setting. Self-esteem is deeply connected and dependent on self-concept, self-efficacy and self-confidence. There is a clear relationship between resilience and the development of self-esteem, and many benefits to the child of building resilience and self-esteem including improving physical and mental health. It is important that, at an early age, strong attachments are developed as a foundation for the possibility of high self-esteem. I researched the benefits of cross-curricular approaches and integration in teaching and the benefits of both in developing self-esteem including through the Arts. Music, drama and art have a key role to play in cross-curricular integration.

5.3 Methodology

Regarding the Cross-Curricular Approach, I used the subjects English, Music, Drama, Art and History to enable me to increase the amount of time spent on well-being during the week and to raise the children’s interest in the subject matter. The *Weaving Well-Being* programme provided the resources required to teach the Tools of Resilience and vocabulary behind resilience and self-esteem. From this, I expanded my lessons to include novels, artwork,

music, and history project work. I carried out two in-class surveys at the beginning and end of my data collection to determine the children's pre-research project knowledge of vocabulary and to assess the children's self-esteem prior to beginning the period of class activities. I also used teacher observations and a Reflective Journal to assess and track the children's progress throughout the project.

5.4 Conclusions

My key findings are how effective a Cross-Curricular Approach can be, improvement in behaviour, attendance and social skills as a result of learning to effectively implement the Tools of Resilience, and the benefits of learning to regulate emotions and work as a team and within the class, especially regarding relating back to oneself as an individual. An interesting finding was that children who perform better academically were rated lowest on the self-esteem scale to begin with and had the highest rate of improvement in self-esteem over the project.

An interesting observation is that (while this was not directly a part of the study) I noted an improvement in attendance between Term 1 and Term 2 along with an improvement in the children's behaviour resulting in less incidents in the yard and less phone calls from parents about these issues. The children presented with improved social skills and more resilience in dealing with friends. Better handling of yard situations involving conflict by the children themselves using tools and more consistent attendance, fed into the growth of a deeply positive class culture, a sense of 'team' and increased class stability, all highly beneficial to me as a teacher and enabling me to involve the children more and to establish a model for other classes I will have in future years.

5.5 Recommendations

The most significant benefit from this study is that I now have a model for teaching resilience and self-esteem in the classroom. I intend to expand this into a whole school framework by presenting my findings to my colleagues and Principal, and providing them with the structured resources to teach this at different class levels. The main challenge I had was having to conform to the regular timetable of a busy school while carrying out a very different programme with my class. If I were to expand this project, I would take into account the longer-term effects of the application of these methods, and building on the idea of expanding this across my school. I would be very interested in studying how the use of these methods across the eight-year Primary School cycle and the implementation of this by other teachers would work. As this is an ambitious project, I will assess how this could be done in a stepwise fashion by working with other teachers teaching the same level.

5.6 Final Reflections

On reflecting on this year of study, I believe I have grown significantly as a professional, and am living more to my values as a teacher. The action of carrying out the project within my own classroom has had an undeniably positive effect on the children and on myself. I have realised the benefits of reflection-in-practice and reflection-on -practice and the benefit of constant reflective observation and recording of observation. This project has given me the opportunity to spend time on researching and putting into practice a methodology for development of resilience and self-esteem which I have always aspired to do. It has also demonstrated to me the importance of well-being in the classroom and the positive effect well-being has on learning.

I now have a programme that I can re-use with future years; an effective programme to use (*Weaving Well-Being*), a structure for lessons and experience of cross-curricular teaching in well-being. I have personally learned much on resilience and self-esteem from the study, from the tools and vocabulary associated with these areas to the benefits of developing them in the classroom. I now feel I am living more truly to my values specifically my values on inclusion, respect and working towards being the best we can be. I intend to use this structure in future years and at different levels to develop the various areas of well-being with my classes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission to Conduct Research Study (Board of Management)



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

1/12/2021

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Principal and Board of Management,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study in my fourth class here. I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University, and am in the process of writing my Master's thesis. The study is entitled: *How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?*

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by using a thematic approach throughout the curriculum over the next few months. Some examples of research are as follows:

- I will read a class novel with my class based around self-image and self-esteem
- I will create a music video with my class
- I will teach lessons in SPHE that approach the terms self-esteem, self-image and self-confidence and have circle time discussions based around this.

The research will not affect the children's learning as all research will be carried out during their designated daily lessons and I will also use the same approach I use normally while teaching. I intend to gather data in the form of recorded audio, photographs, samples of written work and artwork, questionnaires and surveys within class time.

I intend to conduct my research on the whole class. I will gather individual student work but I will collate the work of several children in the class rather than identify any child. If children decide not to take part, they can engage in the activities if they wish and not be included in the data gathering. The child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I will write at the end of the research. The participants will be allowed to withdraw from the research process at any stage.

Before research begins, I will provide information to the parents and children in my class making sure to explain my research question, giving opportunities to ask questions, and the means in which data will be collected and how anonymity will be maintained.

All information will be confidential, and information will be destroyed in a stated timeframe in accordance with the University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until ethical approval is granted by the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education.

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 elaine.cumiskey@gmail.com.

Yours faithfully,

Elaine Cumiskey

Appendix B: Information Sheet (Parents and Guardians)



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood Education**

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

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 teacher. This project will involve an analysis of the teacher's own practice. Data will be generated using observation, reflective notes, children's written work, artwork, and questionnaires. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

What is the research question?

How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?

What sorts of methods will be used?

Teacher observations, a daily teacher journal, recorded audio, photographs, samples of written work and artwork, questionnaires and surveys within class time.

Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by Elaine Cumiskey 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 my 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: Elaine Cumiskey

elaine.cumiskey.2022@mumail.ie

Appendix C: Ethics Approval for Master of Education



Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education Master of Education (Research in practice) (MEd)

Ethics Approval for Master of Education (Research in Practice)
(Please read the notes in the course handbook before completing this form)

Student name:	Elaine Cumiskey
Student Number:	12273074
Supervisor:	Triona Stokes
Programme:	Masters of Education (Med)
Thesis title:	Research in Practice
Research Question(s):	<i>How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?</i>
Intended start date of data collection:	17/1/2022
Professional Ethical Codes or Guidelines used:	Maynooth University Ethical Guidelines

1(a) Research Participants: Who will be involved in this research?

Participants/group (*tick all that apply*)

Early years / pre-school	
Primary school students	✓
Secondary school students	
Young people (aged 16 – 18 years)	
Adults	

Provide a brief description of the individuals and their proposed role in your research below
[Max 50 words]

I will be gathering data from the students in my class. I am teaching 4th class and the students in my class are all girls between nine and ten years old. I intend to gather data from the students in my class as part of, and in response to, music and drama lessons.

1(b) Recruitment and Participation/sampling approach: *How will these participants become involved in your research? What type of sampling is involved? Please describe the formal and informal recruitment processes? Please describe the type of participation and level of engagement of participants? Are there gatekeepers and what is their part of sampling process? [Max 100 words]*

I intend to gather data in the form of recorded audio, photographs, samples of written work, and surveys within class time to use as evidence in my Action Research Project. I will request permission in writing for gathering data from the Principal and Board of Management of my school. I will provide information to the parents and children in my class making sure to explain my research question, the means in which data will be collected and how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. Timelines and research requirements will be made explicit, the means of storing data (Google Drive, hardcopy in journal etc.) will be included in the information provided to the parents and school. I will provide consent forms to the parents and children involved explaining that the children can choose to opt-out at any time (prior to the anonymisation of data, without comment or question). As my class is quite small, I intend to conduct my research on the whole class. I will gather individual student work but I will collate the work of several children in the class rather than identify any child. If children decide not to take part, they can engage in the activities if they wish and not be included in the data gathering.

2. Summary of Planned Research *(please indicate anonymised location type, purpose and aims of research, research questions and design, methods to be used and time frame, process of analysis) [250 words]*

I am working in South Dublin in a small convent girls' school. I intend to gather data from my 4th class students. I am the class teacher and I will gather data during school lessons. My research question is, *How does using a cross-curricular approach improve my understanding and development of resilience and self-esteem in my students and, through this, improve my own teaching?*

I will be creating a music video with my class of 10 year old girls over a period of six to eight weeks (Jan-Mar 2022). I am interested in using this experience to assess the impact on self-esteem of the students as a means of improving my own teaching methods. My proposed means of collecting data are through questionnaire before/after (anonymous), drawing of self-image, word web /class and individual notes from my journal. My proposed process of analysis is to tabulate questionnaire outcomes before and after and compare. Assess these in line with the weekly imagery and word webs gathered over the period as well as my personal journal. Draw conclusions.

3. Ethical Issues: *Please outline the main ethical issues which may arise while undertaking this research. Outline the nature of consent and assent about participants. (You should discuss these concerns and outline the responses/supports you will provide in the boxes below)*

The principal issues are to do with anonymity, protection of work gathered, stored and presented. I will ensure that all participants are anonymised. I will provide information to the parents and children in my class making sure to explain my research question, the means in which data will be collected and how anonymity will be maintained. Timelines, means of storing data etc. will be included in the information provided. Data will be stored on a password protected Google Drive and all hardcopies will be kept in a locked cabinet in my classroom. I will provide consent forms explaining that the children can choose to opt-out at any time.

4. Vulnerability: *(minimising risk, discomfort, coping with unforeseen outcomes, can any aspect of the research give rise to any form of harm to participants, including the researcher?)* [Max 100 words]

As my research will take place during the normal school day and mainly during music and drama lessons, the risk of harm, discomfort or unforeseen outcomes will be minimal. It will be very important to anonymise all participants involved and to follow GDPR, school and departmental ethical guidelines to protect all involved. It will also be very important to store the data collected in a safe and private place (see above) and to destroy it at the end of the process. When working with my critical friends, I will make sure to discuss my students' work with respect and sensitivity.

5. Outline the potential for increased risk to participants considering changing circumstances in the school environment because of immediate closure or threat to privacy or anonymity. Consider implications for a change or changes in methodological tools (virtual formats). [Max 50 words]

Hopefully at this point we are not facing any more school closures due to COVID-19, however, my school uses Google Classroom and there is a very efficient online teleconferencing/video facility within the classroom forum that only the children signed up to the classroom can access. Also, there is a means of collecting the students' work securely online on the same forum. There is a private page for each student that only the teacher can access and this could be used to gather data in the event of a closure.

6. Power dynamics *(between researcher-participants, amongst participants, insider-research, reflexivity, gatekeepers, working with your colleagues, working with students, etc):* [Max 100 words]

I do not foresee many changes to power dynamics as I will continue to work as normal as a teacher with students in my classroom. I will be careful not to influence the research and my journal will be used to reflect on my role and to consider my influence on the overall research.

7. Informed consent and assent *(for participants - and guardians where appropriate. Please also note any other approvals that may be required from other bodies (i.e. Board of Management.):* [Max 100 words]

I will request permission in writing for gathering data from the Principal and Board of Management of my school. I will provide information to the parents and children in my class making sure to explain my research question, giving opportunities to ask questions, and the means in which data will be collected and how anonymity will be maintained. Timelines, means of storing data etc. As above, research requirements and data storage means will be included in the information provided to the parents and school. I will provide consent forms to the parents and children involved explaining that the children can choose to opt-out at any time and those who decide not to partake will be catered for by exclusion from the study.

8. Consider if consent of participants may need to include a list of any new scenarios/situations that may be required for data collection activity in light of school closures or short-term illness of school members (teachers/SNA) and how this may impact the research. Outline below; [max 50 words]

I will include a section on the consent form that states that data collection may be gathered online on Google Classroom particularly in the event of a school closure or sickness.

9. Sensitivity (*topics that may be potentially sensitive, intrusive or stressful, have you considered what to do in relation to dealing with the aftermath of a sensitive disclosure? how do you intend to deal with unexpected outcomes?*) [Max 100 words]

I will follow the normal school rules and the child protection policy for our school. I will refer to the liaison and deputy liaison in our school if a sensitive disclosure were to happen. Any concerns about the research can be raised with the Principal.

10. Data storage (*where will the findings be stored; will they be potentially published in future? And by whom?*) [Max 100 words]

Findings will be stored in Google Drive (computer files) or in a hardcopy folder locked in my school desk. I have no current intention to publish findings.

(Tick as appropriate)

Ensure you have read University Ethics guidelines for Human Research and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) related documentation to address the above questions on data.

Attachments

Please attach, where available and applicable, information letters, consent forms and other materials that will be used to inform potential participants about this research.

'I confirm that to the best of my knowledge this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of undertaking this research. If any of the conditions of this proposed research change, I confirm that I will re-negotiate ethical clearance with my supervisor.'

Approved	
Approved with recommendations (see below)	
Referred to applicant	
Referred to Department Research and Ethics Committee	

Declaration (*Please sign and date*)

Supervisor use only:

Date Considered: _____

Recommendations:

Signature of supervisor: _____

Department use only: (only where applicable)

Date Considered: _____

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee	
Approved with recommendations (see below)	
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	
Referred to Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee	

(Tick as appropriate)

Recommendations:

Signature of Dept. Ethics Committee Chair: _____

Approved by Froebel Department Research and Ethics committee	
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	

(Tick that apply)

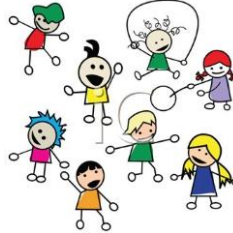
Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee use only *(only where applicable)*

Date Considered: _____

Signed:

FSS Research Ethics Committee nominee

Appendix D: Child's Consent Form



Dear

I am trying to find out how to improve children's self-esteem in primary school. I would like to find out more about this. I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in school and to write down some notes about you. I would also like to use some of your schoolwork to use in my project.

Would you be ok with that? Pick a box

 Yes No

I have asked your Mum 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.

Appendix E: Parental Consent Form



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
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.

Parent / Guardian Signature _____

Parent / Guardian Signature _____

Date: _____

Name of Child _____

Child's signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Child's Assent to Participate



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education**

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

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: _____



Appendix G: Declaration by Researcher



**Maynooth University Froebel Department of
Primary and Early Childhood
Education**

**Roinn Froebel Don Bhun- agus
Luath- Oideachas
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: Elaine Cumiskey

Date: 11/1/22

Appendix H: Self-Esteem Terms Questionnaire

Self-Esteem Questionnaire

What do you think the word 'self-esteem' means?

Can you give an example of 'self-esteem'?

What do you think the word 'resilience' means?

Can you give an example of 'resilience'?

What do you think the word 'self-confidence' means?

Can you give an example of 'self-confidence'?

Appendix I: Adapted Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Overall, I am happy with myself.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
At times I think I am no good at all.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am able to do things as well as most other people.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel useless at times.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel that I am worth something.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I wish I could have more respect for myself.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Overall, I feel that I am a failure.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When I think about myself, I think positive thoughts about myself.			
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Appendix J: Weaving Well-Being Tools



Lesson 1: What is Resilience?

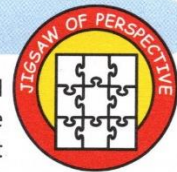
In this lesson, children learn what resilience is and why it is so important. They learn that negative feelings are completely normal and necessary, but that it is important not to get stuck in them. They also learn that we are all resilient and that there are ways we can build our resilience.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the importance of resilience. Reinforce the concept that disappointments, upsets and failures are all part of life, we really can't avoid them! Give examples of when you showed resilience in the past and encourage your child to think of lots of examples of when he/she showed resilience. Discuss famous resilient people you admire and also friends and family. Discuss situations in the future where your child might need resilience.

Lesson 2: The Jigsaw of Perspective

In this lesson children learn that, although they may sometimes feel overwhelmed by small disappointments, they can help themselves recover by using the *Jigsaw of Perspective*. The children create their *Jigsaw of Perspective* by drawing or writing all the good things about their lives on a blank jigsaw. They leave the middle piece blank, and write 'My Problem' on it. When they lack perspective about a worry, their jigsaw provides a visual reminder of all the things that are still good in their lives. This helps each child to see the big picture of their lives, not just the problems. Deliberately thinking of, and appreciating, the positive aspects of life has been shown to help foster resilience.

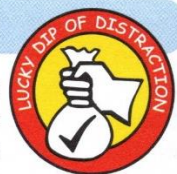
How to support your child: Encourage your child to use their *Jigsaw of Perspective* any time they need to establish a sense of proportion or perspective on a problem or disappointment. This tool is especially helpful for small disappointments, e.g. losing a match, breaking a toy or having a dispute with a friend. The children can be encouraged to think of their friendships or family relationships as a jigsaw with lots of different pieces; a conflict or dispute is only one part of it. This should help them to get into a constructive frame of mind and come to terms with a disappointment or solve a conflict.



Lesson 3: The Lucky Dip of Distraction

In this lesson, children are introduced to the idea of healthy distraction, which can stop them from worrying or becoming anxious about things they have **no control over**. They create their own *Lucky Dip of Distraction*, which they can be encouraged to use to help take their minds off anxieties. This should help to prevent rumination, a mental habit which has links to the development of depression.

How to support your child: Encourage your child to use the *Lucky Dip of Distraction* when they are over-thinking or worried about something that they can't do anything about. They can look at their list and choose one of their enjoyable activities from it.



Lesson 4: The Planning Pen

In this lesson, the children are introduced to their *Planning Pen*. It reminds them of the steps required to make a helpful plan, the basis of problem-focused coping. Problem-solving involves identifying the problem, making an action plan, seeking advice and working through the problem one step at a time.





Weaving Well-Being

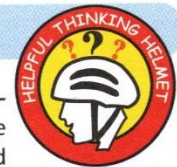
THE MORE YOU WEAVE... THE BETTER YOU FEEL!



This is an alternative to the **Lucky Dip of Distraction** - children can be encouraged to think about whether or not they can do something about a problem or worry. It also encourages them to consider what to do if their plan fails - they learn that failure is part of the learning process. The **Planning Pen** reminds the children to ask themselves three questions when faced with a problem: 1. *Who should I talk to about this problem?* 2. *What should I do first?* 3. *What will I do if my plan fails?*

How to support your child: The first question is really important as it allows your child to become aware of their circle of support. Discuss the value of talking about problems to get help instead of bottling things up. The last question is also vital, in that it allows the children to think of the possibility of failure, and learn that this is a completely normal part of the problem-solving process. You can discuss examples of people you admire who did not succeed first time. Children can be encouraged to think of failure as feedback and use it to decide what to do differently next time.

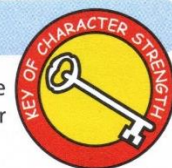
Lesson 5: Helpful Thinking Helmet



In this lesson, children are introduced to the concept of **Automatic Negative Thoughts - A.N.T.s**. They are encouraged to observe their thoughts and realise that their thoughts are often inaccurate - this is especially true of **Automatic Negative Thoughts**. By accepting and acting on **A.N.T.s**, a spiral of negative thoughts and feelings can begin. The **Helpful Thinking Helmet** encourages children to challenge their **A.N.T.s** by asking three questions: 1. *Is this thought true? (Can I be sure it is true?)* 2. *Is this thought helpful? (Is accepting this thought going to help me solve the problem or feel better?)* 3. *Is this thought kind? (kind to myself and/or others?)*. If the answer is no to **some** or **all** of these questions, the child is encouraged to replace the thought with a more accurate and helpful one. They are not simply swapping a negative for a positive thought - that may be unrealistic. Instead, the child is encouraged to be more accurate, e.g. instead of replacing 'I can't' with 'I can', try replacing it with 'I can try'.

How to support your child: Help your child to become aware of his/ her **A.N.T.s**. Encourage them to ask themselves the three questions before they accept a negative thought. It is crucial for children to develop this skill at an early age, as research shows that patterns of pessimistic thought can become very well developed and hard to change by the time they become teenagers.

Lesson 6: Key of Character Strength



Identifying and using individual **Character Strengths** is one of the major pillars of Positive Psychology. Twenty four character strengths have been identified. These are listed in your child's Pupil Book.

Identifying and developing individual character strengths has been linked to positive outcomes, such as thriving and healthy development. In this lesson, children are introduced to all of the **Character Strengths**, and they think about their own top five strengths. They are then encouraged to use their **Key of Character Strength** to unlock and use their character strengths whenever they may need them.

How to support your child: For homework this week, help your child to identify and record their own top five strengths. This can provide an immediate boost to their self-esteem, as they can now be encouraged to think of their strengths as opposed to their weaknesses or difficulties. You can encourage your child to draw on and use their strengths frequently, and reinforce the idea that the more they use them, the stronger they become. An online survey is available to measure these strengths in 10-17 year old children - the VIA Youth Survey (www.viacharacter.org). An adult survey is also available online at VIA Character. You may wish to try this to identify your own top strengths. If your child is 10 or over they may like to take the online test; please do this after you have allowed your child to discuss and identify their own strengths - it may be interesting to compare the results!



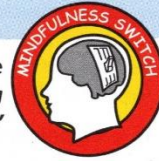
Weaving Well-Being

THE MORE YOU WEAVE... THE BETTER YOU FEEL!



Lessons 7-8-9: Mindfulness Switch

These lessons introduce children to the powerful concept of mindfulness. Mindfulness can be thought of as a particular form of meditation. It can be defined as **'Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way - on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally'** (Jon Kabat-Zinn).



Research shows that regular mindfulness practice brings many benefits, including: Greater life satisfaction, Higher levels of emotional regulation, Higher self-esteem, Longer and healthier life: Decreased anxiety, depression and irritability.

The tool we use to teach children about mindfulness is the **Mindfulness Switch**. As this is a complex and vital skill, it is spread over three lessons. The first two lessons explain the concept of mindfulness to the children through use of imagery - they learn that there are two levels of the mind:

'*Bee Level*' is used to describe the active, busy level of the mind, which is concerned with thinking and planning.

'*Flower Level*' is used to describe the 'being' level of the mind which mindfulness is associated with - this level of the mind is described as sensing, non-judging, accepting etc. Children learn that at 'Flower Level' our attention is always in the here and *now*.

The third lesson on Mindfulness introduces the **Mindfulness Switch Tool of Resilience**. This tool shows children how to switch from 'Bee Level' to 'Flower Level' by concentrating on their breathing and connecting to their bodies. The script for this activity is included in the children's Pupil Book.

How to support your child: Discuss the differences between the two levels of the mind with your child. Follow the script in your child's Pupil Book daily to allow your child to practise short, simple mindfulness sessions. As well as giving time daily for **formal** mindfulness practice, mindfulness can be **informally** used throughout the day. This means bringing our attention to what we are doing in the present.

New research on stress: As part of the **Mindfulness Switch** lessons, the children learn that there are good aspects of stress. This is in line with new research which suggests that a certain amount of stress is completely normal and an inevitable part of everyday life. We can interpret stress as feedback, linked to our values, goals and what we care most about. Stress can be seen as an energising force which we should not try to completely avoid, or interpret as a problem.

Lesson 10: N.A.B.B. (Name, Accept, Breathe, Body)

N.A.B.B. is not a **Tool of Resilience**; it is a self-calming technique designed to help children calm down when they are overwhelmed by a strong emotion (amygdala hijack). The letters stand for **Name, Accept, Breathe, Body**.

How to support your child: Discuss what your child has learned about an amygdala hijack. Encourage them to use the **N.A.B.B.** strategy when they need to. If they are overwhelmed, they may need time to go through this technique before they are able to choose an appropriate **Tool of Resilience**. Now that your child is familiar with all the tools you can encourage them to use their tools in everyday situations. It is important to note that these tools are designed to help children to cope with ordinary disappointments and setbacks, not major traumas or challenges. It's also important to give children time and space to feel, name and accept their difficult emotions, before they are encouraged to use an appropriate tool to gently move on, and not become stuck in that feeling for an inappropriate amount of time.

The goal is to equip your child with resilience skills and strategies which they can use now and throughout their lives.

More information on the **Weaving Well-Being** programme can be found at www.otb.ie/WWB

For ideas on how to support your child if they seem anxious, see this article – **Ideas for Supporting an Anxious Child** – <https://www.otb.ie/27051-2>



Weaving Well-Being by Fiona Forman & Mick Rock - Tools of Resilience SPHE Programme - Parent Guide ©2019 www.otb.ie

Source: *Weaving Well-Being Tools of Resilience Pupil Book (Forman & Rock, 2019)*