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THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND MAYNOOTH

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

**M.Ed. (Research in Practice) 2020-2021**

*How can I enhance my collaborative practice to value the voice of a parent and her child with Down syndrome in the development of a Student Support Plan?*

Claire Wynne

*A Research Dissertation submitted to the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (Research in Practice)*

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Supervised by: Laura Thornton

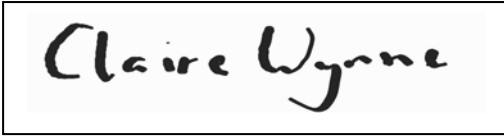
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**List of Abbreviations**

AR	Action Research
BOM	Board of Management
CP	Collaborative Practice
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DSI	Down Syndrome Ireland
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act
GAM	General Allocation Model
IEP	Individualised Education Plan
IFN	Irish Froebel Network
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DS	Down Syndrome
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PDST	Professional Development Services for Teachers
PSC	Primary School Curriculum

SEN	Special Educational Needs
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SET	Special Education Teacher
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SSP	Student Support Plan
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America

**Abstract****‘Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself’**

(Dewey, 1966 as cited in Talebi, 2015:1)

This project was established as an action research journey, enhancing my collaborative practice to value the voice of a parent and her child with Down syndrome in the Student Support Plan. Government legislation and educational policies recognise the parents as the primary educators and central participants in a child’s education. Additionally pupil participation, where possible, is also recommended in planning for a child with Special Educational Needs. This project emphasises the policies and documents that reinforce a collaborative approach to planning, inclusive of all stakeholders intersecting around the needs of the child. Therefore, strategies were developed to establish and nurture meaningful collaborative practice with the parent and child participants in the research. When working with children it is crucial that ethical standards are adhered to at all times and this is particularly heightened when working with a child with Down syndrome. Furthermore, protecting the wellbeing of both the parent and child was a central consideration throughout the study.

Prior to embarking on this study, an overall review of the literature associated with collaboration and the voice of the parent and child, offered an insight into the benefits and constraints found in practice. Notably, there appeared to be a lack of specific procedures in attaining and sustaining this meaningful level of collaboration. Consequently, using a self-study action research approach enabled a deep enquiry into my own practice. This focused on enhancing my understanding and knowledge of a shared and inclusive approach, valuing the voice of the parent and child within my role as a Special Education Teacher. Moreover, the project entailed several interventions that

created opportunities to promote, include and value the voice of the parent and child. Furthermore, it explored the unique perspectives and insights offered by the parent and child when determining targets, strategies and subsequent review, accruing to a dynamic and effective planning document.

Utilising this unique approach to collaborative practice unearthed and solidified my values of care and collaboration within my lived practice, as I connected to the vital parental insights of a child with Down syndrome in addition to the child's own integral input in their learning. The emergent themes from the research identified successful Froebelian approaches evident throughout my collaborative practice. Consequently, the resulting findings increased my own understanding and knowledge of a child-centred Froebelian collaborative practice.

Engaging in self-study action research has determined that a continuous, investigative journey of educational and professional development offers significant and transformative potential, enhancing my practice through the multiple perspectives of others. Using my own living standards of judgement fostered an accountability of my overall research generating my authentic claim to knowledge at the end of the project. This intimate journey of self-study and self-enquiry is now thoroughly outlined beginning with the first chapter, the Introduction.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the rationale behind my self-study Action Research (AR) project, exploring collaborative practice (CP) with a parent and child, in my role as a Special Education Teacher (SET) will be discussed. Firstly, the research question and subsequent aims are outlined. Following this, a synopsis of the research context and background, with a specific insight into my values, is presented. To conclude, the format of the study is presented, providing the reader with a brief summation of each chapter.

### **1.2 Research Question**

Undertaking my self-study AR project was fundamental, as I felt I had succumbed to a certain ‘emotional flatness’ or ‘disinterest in dynamics’ within my practice (Brookfield, 2017:89). In overcoming this observed self, I focused on unearthing and naming my values of *care* and *collaboration*. These inherent values, coupled with my aspirations to develop both personally and professionally, influenced and inspired the following research question cited below:

How can I enhance my CP to value the voice of a parent and her child with Down syndrome (DS) in the development of a Student Support Plan (SSP)?

### **1.3 Research Aims**

My research was designed to investigate an experiential approach to CP, promoting a shared and inclusive SSP, valuing the voice of the parent and child, with my own practice as a self-study practitioner at the centre of the research (Cochran-Smyth & Lytle, 2009). My hope for an exploratory AR project was not solely embedded



in improving my own practice as a SET, but rather in strengthening my professional autonomy and professional commitment, negotiating and negating change within my local context. This equated to shifting the focus from a teacher dominant SSP, to an all-encompassing child-centred document, leading to the following aims stemming from the overall research question:

- To create meaningful collaborative opportunities valuing the voice of the child with DS and the parent in the SSP
- To improve the overall efficacy of the SSP
- To develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a child with DS

As a SET, I have been immersed in the need for inclusive approaches, ensuring optimal and influential learning opportunities, encouraging the self-worth, autonomy, and agency of every child. My beliefs and assumptions, inclusive of my values, laid the foundations for the rationale behind my project, as explored below.

#### **1.4 Research Background**

##### *Assumptions and Beliefs*

Reflecting on my assumptions and beliefs held in practice began with what Lortie (1975) refers to the ‘apprenticeship of observation’, where the behaviours and traditions observed from childhood, encompassed my initial teacher identity, cementing my early beliefs around ‘good teaching’ (as cited in Knowles, 1993:71). A deeper examination revealed that these power imbalances transferred to my early teaching career, under the guise of what Rogoff (1990) called the ‘cognitive apprenticeship’ (as cited in Pollard et al., 2018:142). Brookfield (2017) posits that both these power

relations and assumptions permeate school culture. Additionally, Hooks (1994) suggests that we must ‘return ourselves to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom’ (139). Resulting from this, further examination of the assumptions and beliefs held in practice was found in Foucault’s (1980) ideology of power, highlighting my concerns of a teacher dominant SSP. These concerns resembled the deficit model described vividly by Freire as the ‘banking pedagogy’, believing that teacher knowledge alone could create an effective SSP (as cited in Macrine, 2009: 125). Consequently, omitting critical insights from the parent and the child in a supposed inclusive document was observed. This process of critical reflection, exposing ‘hidden thinkings’ in practice, reinforced my intentions to engage in a self creation process, developing an authentic professional agency, aligning my actions with my identity (Fook & Askeland, 2006a as cited in Fook, 2015:446; Buchanan, 2015).

### *My Values*

Clandinin and Connelly (1996), and Mc Dermot (2002), draw attention to how both ‘narrative and life history approaches to understanding teacher identity can add dimensionality to our understanding of its influences’ (as cited in Delaney, 2015:377). Unravelling my own narrative, both personally and professionally, revealed my core values of care and collaboration that subsequently inspired the research area.

The foundations of my childhood, in a large family with four brothers and one sister, were rooted in outdoor learning, creativity and imaginative play. My mother played an instrumental role in developing this creativity, my love of learning and helping others whilst also encouraging independence in learning. I attribute my caring role to experiencing my mother’s patience and nurture in developing lifelong learning

skills. She supported our differences as siblings whilst also encouraging collaboration as a large family unit. This established my belief in the power of working with others, and sharing knowledge together.

These innate values of care and collaboration symbolise who I am as a teacher, and particularly in my role as a SET. My 'mission' is to value the voice and uniqueness of every child, providing rich learning opportunities, aligned to their particular strengths and interests (Korthagen, 2004). I believe that 'care' is a consistent and fundamental part of my practice, inspiring and supporting agency and autonomy in learning. Similar to Winter (2002), I believe that my values have guided the research trajectory, highlighting its 'emancipatory role' 'in recalling to audibility the voices of the silenced', in a society where encapsulating the voices of the marginalised is notably prevalent (146).

#### *A Living Contradiction*

Di Santo, Timmons and Lenis (2017) call upon opportunities to be given to practitioners 'to voice, explore and critically examine their values and pedagogical approach' (as cited in Smedley and Hoskins, 2020:1211). This opportunity, in addition to Korthagen's (2004) critical consciousness and self-awareness exposed the foundations of what Whitehead (1989) denotes as a 'living contradiction', identifying the discrepancy between my lived and acted values. (44).

Admittedly, as much as I regarded collaboration as a central aspect of my practice, I was not engaging in CP with the parents when developing and implementing the SSP, the participants whom both government legislation and policy define as the primary educator. Reflection revealed that assessments, my own teacher performance and paperwork completion were overshadowing the effectiveness of a child-centred and

collaborative SSP. Therefore, the origins of the project were founded in a ‘cognitive dissonance’, whereby following procedures in place, parents were asked to sign a teacher dominant SSP, excluding the inherent knowledge of the parent (O’Donoghue, 2007 as cited in Cooney, 2016:82).

Interestingly, the turbulence and disruption resulting from school closures, due to the Covid 19 Pandemic in March 2020, prompted an increase in my communication with the parents, creating new experiences from the care provided to the parents and children, beyond the dynamics of the school structure. These new experiences developed my ambition to enhance my CP, using my reflective practice as a ‘vehicle for promoting changed behaviours and practice’ (Boyd & Fales, 1983 as cited in Knowles, 1993: 81). Stenhouse (1975) believed that this change in practice was the essence of a good classroom, ‘one in which things are learned every day which the teacher did not previously know’ (as cited in Cooney, 2016:78). For Palmer (1997) teaching is a mirror to the soul, thus AR was an opportunity to truly access my authentic self and live to my espoused values as recognised in my professional self. A further rationale for my AR is discussed below.

### *Action Research Rationale*

Critical reflection is at the heart of AR, a robust and continuous process, essential for improving the educational outcomes for myself and importantly others. Dewey (1929) described teacher’s engagement in educational research as an ‘unworked mine’ (Cooney, 2016:77). I therefore considered my own enquiry of exploration as a ‘valid, relevant and powerful tool’, supporting my journey of teacher professionalism (Teaching Council, 2012; Cooney, 2016: 78). My AR journey symbolised the trajectory towards generating my own theory of knowledge, defined by Whitehead (1989) as a

living theory. This was a unique explanation for educational influences on my own learning, ‘the learning of others and in the learning of social formations’ (as cited in Cooney, 2016:79). Consequently, conducting my study as an insider researcher allowed me to place myself at the core of the research, living authentically to my values whilst deepening my understandings of the benefits and or limits of CP with a parent and child with DS (Sullivan et al., 2016). Learning through this medium of reflexivity ensured I valued the multiple perspectives of others, inclusive of the participants and my two critical friends. These participants and the research context are now presented below.

### **1.5 Research Participants and Context**

A child with Down syndrome (DS) and their parent were the central participants in the study. The parent is representative of an educated, middle-class socio-economic background. The process of determining these research participants will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

This research project was carried out in a 600+ pupil, all-girls primary school, with a religious ethos, in the east of Ireland. The school aims to provide a broad, balanced education, based on mutual respect and an appreciation of the individual needs of pupils, staff, parents and the wider community. I based my hypothesis for the study on extending and reinforcing these principle aims through CP, in my role as a SET.

### **1.6 Froebelian Pedagogy**

**‘It is all a unity; everything is based on unity, strives towards and comes back to unity’**  
(Froebel, 1827, as cited in Bruce et al., 2019:223)

Although my research set out to enhance my CP with both the parent and child, an unanticipated outcome was the prevalence of Froebelian Philosophy interwoven

throughout my research. As a self-reflective practitioner, I began to recognise, unravel and reconnect the work of Froebel (1782-1852) within my journey of personal learning and learning through others. This new knowledge initiated my ambition to become a Froebelian practitioner, recognisable in my project.

Froebel, renowned as a pioneer of participative pedagogy, was distinguished for the emphasis he placed on the role of the mother as the child's first teacher, regarding education 'as part of a nurturing environment from birth' (Bruce, 2021:4). This resonated with my own lived experiences centred in promoting the voice of the parent, within the educational structure, highlighting their potential contributions as necessary components, creating a tapestry of the child as a 'whole'.

Froebel, influenced by his early mentor Pestalozzi, developed 'The Mother Play and Nursery Songs' (1844) to reflect the importance of the home in a child's development (Bruce, 2021:4). These passionate values grounded in the family unit, were focused on establishing harmonious relationships between the home and school, and thus supporting the child's overall development (Liebschner, 1992). Froebel's personal values were rooted in providing safe, supportive environments with fundamental opportunities for play and creativity, encouraging agency and autonomy in a child's learning (Werth, 2019). These Froebelian values, in addition to what Bruce (2021) describes as a 'fusion of feelings', were integrated a in a child-centred, 'holistic approach to knowledge', as I developed a collaborative SSP built on choice and the voice of the child (Bruce, 2021:113, 3).

Notably, this approach was further recognised in my AR as my role shifted from teacher, to facilitator. This resulted in an enlightening opportunity to observe the shared bonds between parent and child. Froebel believed observation was a powerful tool to

gain knowledge of the child's unique starting point in their learning (Bruce, 2021). Thus, observation in a collaborative capacity was central within the research, improving my understanding of the child and creating a framework for lifelong learning (Bruce, 2021).

These subsequent new insights and knowledge gained is reminiscent of what Lawrence (2002) states; 'let us press forward and realise, through our children, some of the ideals for which the world is striving' (as cited in Bruce, 2021: 22). Therefore it can be iterated that my project has been heavily grounded in Froebel's belief of education as an ongoing process, where 'learning through children' needs to be the focus of educational improvements within the local, political and global frameworks (Liebschner, 1992:139).

Collaborative relationships focused on educational improvements anchored Froebel, as being 'part of a community of like-minded people gave him the ability to be robust in dealing with the issues facing his thinking in the world beyond' (Bruce, 2021:13). Thus, this AR journey, guided by my values, developed my passion to integrate Froebelian philosophy within my own lived and future practice in the hope of creating what Wenger (1998) denotes as 'communities of practice' (as cited in Goodnough, 2010:168).

## **1.7 Thesis Format**

A brief synopsis of each chapter, tracing my journey of self-enquiry undertaken is presented below:

### ***Chapter One***

This chapter describes the rationale and context behind the AR project, identifying the research question and subsequent aims. It also discusses my assumptions, beliefs and core values with an emphasis on the key principles of AR and their impact on educational reform. Moreover, the centrality of Froebelian pedagogy is presented. To conclude, the structure of the thesis is also outlined, guiding the reader through my journey as a self-study practitioner, generating my own living theory of education.

### ***Chapter Two***

This chapter offers a critical examination of the pertinent literature both supportive, and contradictory to the AR study, beginning with an insight into Froebelian pedagogy, followed by an examination of the beginning of the Individual Education Plan (IEP). A critical review of an IEP within a national and international framework, along with its transition to the SSP is also given. An overview of CP and the voice of the parent and the child are then presented. To conclude differentiating for children with DS is explored.

### ***Chapter Three***

This chapter justifies the methodological approach, self-study AR, as a chosen research paradigm. Moreover, my ontological and epistemological values are described. Following this, a rationale of the research method, utilising qualitative data, reflective practice, critical reflection and reflexivity is provided. Additionally, the research model and framework, along with the proposed action plan is presented. Data collection instruments are discussed and the process of data analysis is given. This chapter also identifies the strict ethical guidelines implemented in working with a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Finally, the limitations of the study are addressed.



***Chapter Four***

This chapter provides a robust in-depth analysis of the data. Firstly, the process of coding and thematic analysis is articulated to the reader. This chapter then focuses on four subthemes under the overarching theme of CP. A discussion of these emanating themes coupled with relevant literature, theorises the main findings presented.

***Chapter Five***

The final chapter draws the research to a close, providing evidence of my own new learning and significance for my future practice and the local context. Following this I make my claim to knowledge. Moreover, the reader is provided with a summary of suggested areas for future educational discourse within a global and political framework, beyond the scope of my AR project. Finally, I present my recommendations before concluding the thesis.

**1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined my research question, subsequent aims and the integral influence of my values at the foreground of the AR project. I have explored the personal and professional background that provided the rationale and foundations to the research. Furthermore, an insight into the imperative role of Froebelian Pedagogy identified in my values, the research, and my own unique practice is given. In the next chapter, a crucial review of the literature is offered to the reader.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

An overview of the pedagogical influences of Friedrich Froebel (1840) and their correlating impact evident in education today is provided at the beginning of the chapter. Thereafter, an analysis of the IEP, leading to the new SSP initiative is explored, in addition to implications for children with SEN. A brief insight into past and present legislation, policies and provisions in place both nationally and internationally, will then be given. Furthermore, an insight into CP, inclusive of the voice of both the parent and child will be presented. To conclude, differentiating for children with DS in education will be addressed.

### **2.2 The Influence of Froebel**

The influences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century pedagogue, Friedrich Froebel is evident in child-centred Irish education today, throughout the Primary School Curriculum (PSC) (1999), and Aistear (2009). Froebel's (1840) invested beliefs were in creating harmonious, child-centred learning environments with the child's spiritual, physical and intellectual capabilities central to all learning (Flannery Quinn, 2013). Froebel encouraged CP between parents, school, community and the wider society, rooted in his ideology to 'live with our children' (Flannery Quinn & Greenfield, 2019:166).

Froebel developed this participative, child-centred pedagogy from the value he placed on motherhood, after losing his own mother at a young age (McPherson, 2009 as cited in Werth, 2019:24). However, despite suffering an unhappy childhood, a later move to live with his uncle offered Froebel new experiences and a nurturing environment that saw play as plentiful (Flannery Quinn, 2013). Liebschner (1992) posits that Froebel consequently named the mother as the child's first teacher, believing

that a child's intellectual development began from birth, with the mother facilitating the child's early physical and mental learning through play (as cited in Flannery Quinn, 2013). One could then surmise that if Froebel were alive today, the word 'mother' would translate to 'caregiver', reflective of our modern day society, inclusive of same sex couples, lone parents and any family unit.

### *The Family*

Gatrell (2014) states that Froebel (1840) established his first kindergarten mirroring the value he notably placed on family life (as cited in Werth, 2019). Froebel believed that a trusting relationship between the parents and teachers was imperative for the successful education of children. This was reflected in his invitation to parents to visit the kindergarten at anytime of the day for games and exercises (as cited in Liebschner, 1992). Thus, collaborative learning and shared experiences are at the core of Froebelian philosophy (Liebschner, 1992). Froebel (1902) enthusiastically promoted this inclusive practice, with the family at the centre of child's development, stating, 'if there is one thing which more than any other demands to be rightly apprehended and reverently cherished it is the life of the family' (as cited in Werth, 2019:27). Whether this level of enthusiasm translates to modern school home partnerships, within the Irish Education system, warrants consideration. In contrast, Scachhi (2019) argues that Froebelian philosophy can be viewed today, where stakeholders are working 'to integrate Froebelian principles with modern practice' (49).

### *Influences*

Both Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1978) followed on from Froebel's beliefs that much of children's initial learning is centred on play (as cited in Falco et al., 2010). Their philosophies have informed current pedagogy of early education in the western

world, underpinned by systems of beliefs, including attention to the whole child, as evident in Aistear (2009), The National Children's Strategy (2000), the PSC (1999) and the White paper on Early Education (1999). These documents express an integrated approach, beginning with the child's unique concerns, abilities and interests, incorporating experiences and play, in addition to meaningful opportunities for collaboration with other children and adults (Hayes, 2007).

### *Observation*

In spending time in Pestalozzi's school in Yverdun, Froebel noted that observation was a powerful tool to interpret and understand the unique learning development of every child (Reifel, 2011; Bruce 2021). Moreover, Froebel held a consistent belief in the role of the adult as observer and facilitator of the child's learning, as he emphasised 'human learning as a lifelong process' (Bruce, 2021:111). Therefore, Froebel's ideology of education can be witnessed in the value he placed on the depth of observational expertise to which a teacher must hold, continuously nurturing and extending the learning from the child's individual starting point (Reifel, 2011). Notably however, this illustrates the failure of common standardised tests to truly assess the unique developmental stage of the child, catering to their present needs and progressing accordingly (Reifel, 2011).

Bruce (1987) confirms this magnitude of observation, placing to 'observe, support and extend', at the heart of teaching (as cited in Bruce, 2021:116). It could then be considered that Froebel's pursuit for an individualised educational approach, inclusive and adaptive to the needs and interests of the child, is threaded through the core principles of the IEP, as explored below.

### **2.3 The beginning of the Individualised Education Plan**

1950s Ireland saw the establishment of separate segregated schooling for pupils who were historically referred to as ‘handicapped’ (Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1979:113). In England, The Warnock Report (1978) suggested moving the focus away from handicaps and disabilities, towards SEN, thus initiating the beginning of inclusive education for children with SEN (Bulletin of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, 1979). In Ireland, an inclusive policy of enrolling children with SEN in mainstream schools was influenced mainly by international developments, changes to the national legislation and ruling by the courts.

#### ***2.3.1 International Developments***

The United States of America (USA) initiated the movement with the Introduction of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which was later identified as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990 (Evans & Lunt, 2002). A decade later in 2006, saw the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) legislate for the rights of all people with disabilities. Resulting recognition of children with disabilities, paved the way for the USA as the first country to state the requirement of an IEP under federal law, for every student in receipt of special education (Catagnus & Hantula, 2011).

At European level, this influenced the development of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which emphasised a rights-based perspective on education. These provisions at International and European level influenced both policy and practice in many countries, including Ireland, in specifying the requirement to meet all children’s social and educational needs (Griffin & Shelvin, 2007 as cited in Doherty et al., 2011).

### ***2.3.2 National Developments***

This progression internationally allowed Ireland to evolve from its 1970s position of children with SEN being taught in special schools and in separate mainstream classes to a more inclusive environment. The Special Education Review Committee (SERC) (1991), the Education Act (1998) and the Education Welfare Act (2000) all recognised the rights of children with SEN to an appropriate, inclusive education in addition to being active participants in their education. Moreover, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 was established as a statutory framework, outlining the duty of schools to adopt a policy of inclusive education for children with SEN stating requirements for the implementation of the IEP (Doherty et al., 2011). In opposition to this, the government attracts widespread criticism among educators as EPSEN is still not fully operational, leaving it up to the goodwill of teachers to put an IEP into place. Arguably, Ireland however has been using IEPs despite not being recognised as a legal requirement (Timothy & Agbenyega, 2018).

### ***2.3.3 Research Internationally and Nationally***

Traditionally the IEP began as an assessment document; questioned by Weinsensfeld (1986) as a 'bureaucratic necessity', identifying the need for a 'dynamic and useful document' that would actually assist educators, children and parents (216, 217). Research over a decade later conducted by Nugent (2002), found that '85% of Irish teachers found the process of IEPs to be useful to them in delivering special educational services' (as cited in Nugent, 2005:6). Opposing this, recent researchers (Rose et al., 2012; Ní Bhroin et al., 2016), claimed that although the IEP was common practice, its approaches were inconsistent and therefore questionable (as cited in Ní

Bhroin et al., 2016). In Sweden, a study by Andreasson et al. (2013) is indicative of Weinsensfeld's (1986) initial concerns, whereby IEP's were used mainly as 'administrative tools' rather than to help meet the actual needs of pupils (as cited in Ní Bhroin et al., 2016:5). This contrasts significantly with the Froebelian principle of a child-centred practice promoting lifelong learning (Bruce, 2021).

#### ***2.3.4 Resulting Outcomes Nationally***

In Ireland, these shortcomings evident were further investigated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (2006), noting several deficits in the allocation of special education teaching resources to schools (Department of Education and Skills (DES), 2017). Resulting from this, the NCSE (2013), created as a result of the EPSEN Act, stated, 'a new model should be developed for the allocation of additional teaching resources to mainstream schools based on the profiled need of each school, without the need for diagnosis of disability' (as cited in DES, 2017:3). This significant shift led to the Continuum of Support Model that came into place in September 2017 (DES, 2017).

The directives in this model replaced the General Allocation Model (GAM) and the English as an Additional Language (EAL) model, basing low incidence disabilities on a schools' educational profile and on, more importantly, the pupil's individual learning needs (NCSE, 2017; Clegg, 2017). Notably, the shift from a medically- based model emphasised the responsibility of schools and teachers to assemble and analyse data in response to the individual SEN of all children (Clegg, 2016). It is seen to promote and recognise the professionalism and expertise of the teacher or arguably it could be seen as a strategy to avert attention from a failed enactment of the EPSEN Agreement.

## 2.4 The Development of the Student Support Plan

The DES insists that the Continuum of Support framework assists schools in identifying and responding to pupils' needs, recognising SEN occurring along a continuum, thus requiring differentiated levels of support depending on identified educational needs (DES, 2017). Correspondingly, the SSP should be a document reflective of the uniqueness and individuality of a child with SEN. For Froebel, this was the essence of a child-centred practice, each child respected and their uniqueness accepted (Smedley & Hoskins, 2020). Conceivably, the SSP should mirror this principle, recognising the child as a whole, inclusive of the cognitive, social and emotional.

A shared approach is essential to an integrated, dialogical and collaborative SSP. This process should involve consultation between the class teacher, SETs, parents, the child and relevant professionals, however, whether or not this CP is implemented throughout schools in Ireland is disputable (Clegg, 2016; NEPS, 2017). The Department of Education in the USA state that the IEP team should consist of the parent(s), the Student (if appropriate), at least one of the child's regular classroom education teachers, at least one of the child's special education teachers, and a qualified representative of the public agency' (US Department of Education, 2017:1 as cited in Elder et al., 2018:118). The structuring of this statement embodies CP, recognising the instrumental role of the parent and child in the process.

In opposition, Ireland still faces the issues addressed by Riddell (2002), Strogilos and Xanthacou (2006) and Tennant (2007), who found evidence of a 'lack of teamwork and collaboration, and of parental and pupil involvement', diminishing the impact of potential positive outcomes resulting from an effective IEP (as cited in Ní



Bhroin et al., 2016: 6). Significantly, this contrasts Froebel's (1885) vision of collaborative and supportive consultation between the home and school resulting in an increased understanding of the values and desires of all stakeholders (Flannery Quinn & Greenfield, 2019).

Additionally, Froebel believed in building on the present needs of the child, with the adult providing 'freedom with guidance' (Bruce, 2021:65). Thus, an argument could be raised favouring Froebel's approach, as although the strengths of the child are emphasised within the SSP, equally as large segment focuses on the needs of the child. Correspondingly, Jones-Smith (2011) and Elder et al. (2018) state the importance of strength based IEP's for children with disabilities, arguing against deficit models whereby only 'surface level attention is given to documenting students' strengths and interests' (as cited in Elder et al., 2018:117). Therefore a suggestion could be that valuing the voice of the parent and child is essential in documenting and fulfilling a strengths based, collaborative SSP.

## **2.5 Collaborative Practice**

According to Lee (1995) the word collaboration can be deciphered as *co*, meaning with or together and *labor* meaning work, thus defining it as working with others or working together (as cited in Landes, 2011:2). CP as part of the SSP encourages all stakeholders to work together, engaging in pedagogical discourse for optimal pupil outcomes. Collaborative dialogue between all stakeholders can lead to an effective SSP, as a diverse insight of information can build the child's overall profile (Chan & Ritchie, 2016).

Freire (1966), a leading advocate of critical pedagogy, stated that dialogue was 'an act of creation' (as cited in Freire, 1996:70). However, he cautioned that a

transmission of knowledge was not reflective of true dialogue, claiming, 'dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants' (as cited in Freire, 1996:70). Arguably, it is uncertain whether the teacher talks and parent listens scenario is still at play in many of our present school structures.

Linden (2016) posits true authentic dialogue as, 'I learn from you and you learn from me' (236). This reciprocal element is further evidence of the foundation of successful CP, whereby with each participant brings their unique educational standpoint, interpreting and understanding the views, insights and beliefs of others as iterated by Froebel (Linden, 2016). Considerably, this illustrates the need for fundamental opportunities for dialogue within an educational setting, in addition to the policies and procedures needed to establish and maintain CP between the home and school.

Additional benefits of collaboration can be found in the overall professionalism and responsiveness of teachers. Kennedy and Shiel (2010) found that through CP teachers' self belief was stronger in the power they possessed to change things in their practice deepening the reality of their understandings, complexities and challenges involved in responsive teaching. Dewey (1902) saw this learning as a process of problem solving in a given environment, a process of uniting meanings from which conclusions evolve (Dewey, 1910, as cited in Landes, 2011).

Commenting on Lee's (1995) aforementioned definition of collaboration, 'working together', one could surmise that in our modern world, particularly within the context on Covid 19' school closures, there is now a significant need to optimise hybrid styles of working together. The USA, appears ahead of schedule as online CP among

educators is already in place, increasing the significant potential of a virtual SSP and CP (Catagnus & Hantula, 2011).

## **2.6 Collaboration and the Voice of the Parent**

In the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA parents have statutory rights associated with their child's assessment process, thus internationally, the significance of the voice of the parent is clear (Yell et al., 2015). Nationally, many authors (Howard et al., 2005; Mitchell, 2008; NCCA, 2009), discuss the impact of the Irish Constitution, recognising the parents as primary educators and central participants in the decision-making about their child with SEN (as cited in Doherty et al., 2011). As aforementioned, a delayed EPSEN, does however, call to attention the rights of parents of children with SEN to be included in the decision making progress regarding their child's education (Doherty et al., 2011). The DES (2017) and the NCSE (2019) describe parental engagement in the development of SSPs as a 'critical factor for pupils with SEN', however clear procedures for establishing and sustaining school home partnerships is not prevalent within the literature (23).

The NCSE (2019) reference the need for CP with parents in ascertaining a child's strengths and interests. Additionally, it is noted that their involvement in review meetings is a valuable opportunity to build a collaborative approach (DES, 2017). Researchers (Chen and Gregory, 2011; Tucker and Schwartz, 2013), provide evidence that an IEP inclusive of the parent contributes to better pupil outcomes (as cited in Kurth et al., 2019).

Contrary to this, recent literature claims an ongoing lack of parental input within IEP team decisions. Kurth et al. (2019) concluded that although parents expressed their concerns and priorities, only two thirds of the time these goals were actually contained

in the IEP. While Hancock et al. (2017) focused on ‘unilateral decisions made by schools rather than shared decisions with families’ (as cited in Kurth et al., 2019:486). Several other researchers (Ditrano and Silverstein, 2006; Danessen, Bakker and Gierveld, 2007) argue that parents are not viewed as equal partners in the IEP process (as cited in Zeitlin & Curcic, 2013). Recently, Elder et al. (2018) raised a similar point, arguing for a redistribution of power that places the child and their family at the core of the decision making process.

This redistribution of power was identified by Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013) and Goodall (2018) who noted the existing power struggles between parents and teachers. Kurth et al. (2019) found that the ‘critical knowledge’ educators possess in making decisions left parents feeling ‘disempowered’ (486). This reinforces the need for effective CP in helping to overcome power imbalances permeating school cultures. Moreover, perhaps the initial focus of CP should be on educators, creating a ‘warm and welcoming atmosphere truly connecting with parents becoming ‘partners in the student’s learning’ (Balli, 2016:150). This is complementary of Froebel’s beliefs with the parent being ‘taken into the teacher’s confidence, just as parents had to trust teachers, for the good of the child’ (Liebschner, 1992:138).

## **2.7 Collaboration and the Voice of the Child**

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC) refers to the rights of students ‘to express their views on every matter which affects them’ (Unicef, 1989 as cited in De Leeuw, 2018:168). Ireland, interestingly, was one of the last countries to ratify this agreement (Leydon, 2019:3). Lundy (2007) points to the fact that professionals may not actually be aware of Article 12 UNCRC and what it embodies, merely seeing collaboration with the child as a desirable element of good

practice. Lundy (2007) further acknowledges the implications of the provisions of the UNCRC in developing at least a movement towards the idea of the voice of the child (Lundy, 2007).

Every child is entitled to an education alongside their right to state the learning outcomes they would like to achieve. In the UK, experts on children's rights articulated their concerns in alignment with the UNCRC believing that there was a lack of consultation with the child in their own education (Lundy, 2007). In Ireland, through the appointment of an Ombudsman for Children in 2003 and a Minister for Children in 2011, the rights of the child to have their voice heard and to participate in decisions that concern them, has now become more prevalent. This welcome transition from historical practices can be seen by Christensen and James (2000), as they outline a new concept of childhood, with every child recognised as a central, active participant in the creation of knowledge in their own lives (as cited in Prunty et al., 2012). This is reflected by the DES (2017) who encourages schools to 'listen to and build on pupils' interests, aspirations and strengths' when planning (24).

Prunty et al. (2012) illustrated that the development of the National Children's strategy – *Our Children Their Lives* (2000) promoted successful inclusion of the child's voice. The above strategy noted the ability of children with a variety of SEN to 'reflect constructively on school life and provide valuable insights that are crucial for decision making relating to educational provision' (35). Furthermore, it was concluded that the responsibility is with educationalists and policy makers to take note and present genuine, authentic opportunities for children to articulate their views and become active participants in their learning. This illustrates the potential benefits of the child's attendance at the SSP meeting, reviewing, monitoring and adapting their own goals. However, Prunty (2010) reported a lack of student participation in IEP practices (as

cited in Prunty et al., 2012). Significantly, Swedeen (2009) claim that effective participation in IEP meetings helps pupils understand that the process is really about them, supporting them in their learning, not about paperwork and meetings. This research indicates the potential for the child's voice to be included in CP and the SSP.

Furthermore, if educators are to listen to the voice of a child with SEN, they are supporting the child's recognition of their own inner potential, instigating strength of agency and autonomy, critical foundations of Froebelian pedagogy (Tovey, 2019). This is reflected in testimonies obtained from young adults with DS, who cited the following: *'Why you decided to take part in Ability Online- I want to Improve my ability to get a job and my Independence'* (Michelle Whelehan, Down Syndrome Ireland (DSI), 2021) *'I would advise someone with Down syndrome to get a job because you will learn new skills and responsibilities and you will achieve.'* (Conor Byrne, DSI, 2021). It appears opportune therefore; that if this is what individuals are hoping to achieve in young adulthood, we need to begin the process in childhood.

The evidence reviewed here clearly indicates the need for all primary schools to encourage autonomy and agency in our young learners, supporting them in their educational journey. Correspondingly, Brynard (2014) concludes that these principles of self advocacy could be taught to learners with DS from a young age, encouraging empowerment and belief in their present and future abilities.

### ***2.7.1 Person- First or Identity-First Language***

In recognition of the voice of the child, a growing debate has ensued regarding the use of person-first or identity-first language. The movement towards person-first language began in 1974 and resulted in changes to our understandings and acceptance of individuals with disabilities (Crocker &Smith, 2019:125). Dunn and Andrews (2015)

say that the use of person-first language slows the responses of the observer, writer, or speaker, thus ‘encouraging greater reflection regarding the meaning of disability in the process’ (258). DSI advocates person-first language, focusing on the individual rather than their diagnosis (DSI, 2020).

Equally, there has been a recent recognisable shift towards identity-first language within disability groups (Dunn & Andrews, 2015). According to Brueggeman (2013), identity-first language allows the individual to claim their disability, reflecting autonomy, agency and ‘choice over one’s disability destiny’ (as cited in Dunn & Andrews, 2015: 257). Correspondingly, Adam Harris, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of AsIam Ireland, states that *‘autism is not a negative nor something which can be removed or separated in any way from who we are and how we experience the world’*(2021). He furthers this view with the following: *‘For me, intention is always the most important thing about language but I feel identity-first language captures the evolution of the autism equality movement and places it firmly in the broader diversity and inclusion context’* (Harris, 2021). The arguments presented are indicative of the need for schools and educators to consult parents and children to specify their preference of language used.

## **2.8 Differentiating for children with Down Syndrome**

DS is a chromosomal disorder named after the English doctor, Dr John Langdon Down in 1866 and affects one in every live 546 births in Ireland (DSI, 2004:10; Doherty et al., 2011). To date over 90% of SEN pupils are in mainstream schools (Leydon, 2019:2). Notably, research conducted by Buckley et al. (2006) demonstrated that children with DS enhance their academic, social and behavioural skills from being educated in this mainstream environment. Froebel (1837) can therefore be considered as

ahead of his time, a strong advocate of inclusion at a time when schools were usually segregated by religion or class (Tovey, 2019).

Moreover, Both Fidler (2005) and Wishart (2005) recognise the distinctive learning profile of a child with DS, and the resulting need for differentiation in the curriculum (as cited in Doherty et al., 2011:9). Heacox (2011), recognising these individual needs, asserts differentiation as essential in creating a community of learners within our classrooms. Additionally, Tomlinson (2005) claims ‘differentiation must be an extension of a high quality curriculum and not a placement for it’ (263). This illustrates that if we are to build a successful CP framework, recognising the uniqueness of every child should take precedence over the paperwork itself, ensuring the child’s specific individual learning profile is at the forefront of the SSP.

In recent years, higher education institutions are taking on a growing initiative called the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) developed by David. H. Rose (AHEAD, 2017). The basis of UDL is to allow teachers create a curriculum that provides equal opportunities for all learners including students with SEN. The UDL further requires collaboration among all staff to create an inclusive environment respectful of the diversity of each student (AHEAD, 2017). This recognition of the need for collaboration among all stakeholders creating an inclusive environment, is thus relying on the professionalism of all participants. This professionalism at the heart of the SSP, perhaps needs to focus less on the SEN of a child, and rather on implementing a purposeful, child-centred Froebelian pedagogy, adaptive to each individual child (as cited in Smedley & Hoskins, 2020).



## **2.9 Conclusion**

Having examined the literature in this area, there appears to be significant evidence towards CP and the central role of the voice of the child and parent in overcoming barriers to creating an inclusive SSP. Moving forward, issues arising include the adequacy of knowledge and resources for schools and teachers in utilising the new SSP, and whether the shift has created positive outcomes for all educational participants.

In this chapter, the influences of Froebelian pedagogy within our education system were discussed. The beginning of the IEP and the subsequent transition to the SSP was also outlined. Policies and practices were addressed and how this is reflected internationally and nationally. Furthermore, an exploration of CP and the implications for the voice of the parent and child was also given. Finally, a synopsis of differentiating for children with DS was also presented. The next chapter contextualises the methodological approach utilised for this AR project.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In chapter three the research is contextualised, beginning with the rationale behind AR as my chosen methodology. Following this, an insight into the self study approach within the AR framework, and my ontological and epistemological values is provided. Thereafter, an examination of qualitative data, data collection and instruments utilised in my project is outlined. Consideration is also given to the ethical implications, power dynamics, vulnerability and sensitivity of the research. To conclude, informed consent, assent, data analysis, data storage, the validity of the research and the limitations, is further discussed.

### **3.2 Methodological Approach**

I chose to work as an educational researcher in reasoning and clarifying the educational influences within my own learning (Whitehead, 2015). Accordingly, my chosen methodology was founded in the ‘emotional flatness’ and ‘disinterest in dynamics’ observed in my pedagogical practice, as highlighted in Chapter One (Brookfield, 2017: 89). As a result, a positive or interpretative research approach was not appropriate in negating the observed change needed. Thus, AR represented an ‘overriding paradigm for change’, as discussed below (Orland-Barak, 2009:118).

#### ***3.2.1 Action Research Paradigm***

Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) first conceived the phrase ‘action research’, referring to it as a spiral process alternating between action and critical reflection. Lewin’s approach was grounded in planning, acting, observing and reflecting (as cited in Whitehead, 2017). It is therefore seen as a participative and ongoing process, ‘taking action to find

out what is not known and in doing so cause improvements' (Carr and Kemmis, 1986 as cited in McDonagh et al., 2020:135). According to Stenhouse (1975) these improvements as a result of a 'systematic critical inquiry', must then be made public (as cited in Feldman & Minstrell, 2000:5). Schön (1983) uses the term 'reflective practitioner' to describe the sole accountability coupled with an interpretative, critically reflective stance one takes in conducting a critical inquiry. Having sole responsibility as a teacher researcher, bridging the gap between theory and my practice inspired my self-study approach to AR as highlighted next (Mc Donagh et al., 2020).

### ***3.2.2 Self-Study Action Research***

Self-study AR was a means of transformative practice, as I had identified myself as a 'living contradiction' and my teaching a 'nucleus of contradiction', (Whitehead, 2019:6). Thus, my journey represented what Carr and Kemmis (1986) describe as a 'self-reflective enquiry' (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011:345). Mc Donagh et al. (2020) highlight this purposeful focus on 'self', or heart, at the centre of our 'personal, practical, context-driven and collaborative' research approach (142). Self-study AR is therefore regarded as highly contextualised and reflective of one's unique values held (Feldman & Minstrell, 2000). This for Whitehead (2009), is a 'way of life', a journey of unique inner discovery (as cited in Carozzi, 2012:53). My discovery, through AR, was underpinned by my epistemological and ontological values, as explained below (Ozanne & Saatciogly, 2008 as cited in Young et al., 2010).

### ***3.2.3 Ontological and Epistemological Values***

Laidlaw (1996) describes both our ontological and epistemological values as 'living, evolving and transforming' (Whitehead, 2019: 8). Ontology is based on an interpretation of self, inclusive of a theory of being (Mc Niff, 2017). My ontological

value of care gives a soulful meaning and purpose to my life and is recognised in my practice through my daily interactions with children and adults (Whitehead, 2015).

Mc Niff (2017) posits epistemology as the acquisition and interpretation of knowledge. My epistemological value of collaboration is reflected in Habermas's theory of 'communicative action', in my belief that knowledge is a shared action (as cited in Whitehead & Mc Niff, 2006:22). This represents the values and experiences given to me in childhood. As a self-study practitioner, I valued the parent and child as 'valid knowers' and co-researchers, constructing and creating knowledge together through the CP strategies implemented (Hitchcock & Hughes, 2016 as cited in McDonagh et al., 2020:125). These values were further reflected through my collaborative and child-centred Froebelian approaches, in addition to promoting the active role of the parent (Asha, 2015 as cited in Efe et al., 2018).

### **3.3 Research Method**

Having embraced the self-study AR model, I deemed the collection of qualitative data as the most appropriate method in targeting my research question (Johnson et al., 2007 as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). Green (2008) says that 'the methodology follows from the purposes and questions in the research rather than vice versa' (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011:25). Sullivan et al. (2016) corroborates this, and thus the relevant method of data collection, within my local context, is documented below.

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is regarded as using words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2016). Sullivan et al. (2016) define the term 'qualitative' as information that cannot essentially be measured and is rather about observable and innate qualities (85). These

observable and innate qualities as iterated by Polanyi (1958), describe the personal or tacit knowledge that underpinned and formed the foundation of the essential rigour to my data (as cited in Polanyi, 1962). Qualitative data consisted of questionnaires, Two Stars and a Wish, a reflective journal, samples of work, photographs, emails, observations, semi-structured interviews, weekly feedback pages and weekly plans. Bryman and Burgess (1999) say ‘the findings, understandings, and insights that emerge from fieldwork and subsequent analysis are the fruit of qualitative inquiry’ (140).

### ***3.3.2 Reflective Practice and Critical Reflection***

Dewey (1933) credited with the original idea of reflection, refers to it as ‘assessing the grounds of one’s beliefs’ (as cited in Fook, 2015:442). For Schön (1983) reflection is described as an opportunity for a deep, intentional enquiry into self with both reflection *in* and *on* action, fostering creativity in our work (as cited in Schön, 1991). Schön (1991) describes the process of reflection *in* action as reframing the original account through problem solving, creating a new coherent, understandable account of the situation. My unique sustained and intentional practice of critical reflection, included both *in* and *on* action, identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of my teaching assumptions (Brookfield, 2017). For Fook (2015), there is no ‘formulaic’ or ‘prescribed’ way to undertake critical reflection (447). Correspondingly, as the project developed, I viewed it as dynamic, diverse and free flowing, an opportunity to navigate, negotiate and negate real change in my practice.

### ***3.3.3 Reflexivity***

Steiner defines reflexivity as the process of ‘turning back on itself’ (as cited in Fook, 2015:443). This process was used as an exploratory tool, examining ongoing judgements about my own personal learning experiences and providing openness to new

ones, thus ensuring the accountability, validity and credibility of the AR. Reflexivity in practice was a self conscious awareness of not only my own values, feelings, and actions but that of others also, constructing new knowledge and ensuring authentic data meditative of all participants’ experiences (Hall 1996, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). This allowed me to take action on my reflections, linking my work continuously to the parent and child.

### 3.4 Research Model and Framework

Mc Niff and Whitehead’s (2002) model was used to assimilate my research plan (see Figure 3.1:31).

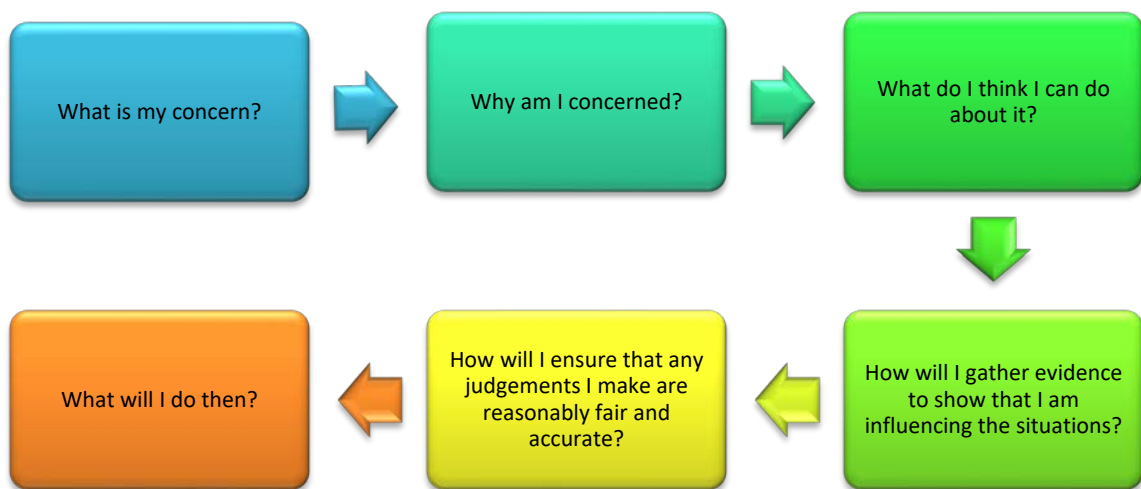


Figure 3.1 Research Model (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002:72)

Covid 19 regulations resulted in a school closure in January 2021. My AR project was subsequently altered to the online educational platform, Seesaw. Therefore, an original Pre-Covid action plan was not feasible (see Appendix 1.). Revision and reflection informed a new action plan outlined below. This took place during one eight week cycle of AR (see Figure 3.2:32).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Initial Data Retrieval</b> <i>December 2020</i>	- Disseminations and completion of information sheets, questionnaires and consent/assent forms for all stakeholders.
<b>Week 1</b> <i>11<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup> January 2021</i>	- Dissemination and completion of updated ethics form, information sheets and consent forms for parent, Principal and BOM - Phone call with parent - Independent tasks to be completed online at home - Reflective journal - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Data collection from Seesaw
<b>Week 2</b> <i>18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021</i>	- Consultation with critical friends - Reflective journal - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Data from Seesaw
<b>Week 3</b> <i>25<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021</i>	- Semi-structured interview with parent via zoom - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Reflective Journal - Data from Seesaw
<b>Week 4</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021</i>	- Consultation with critical friends - Reflective Journal - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Data from Seesaw
<b>Week 5</b> <i>8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021</i>	- Reflective Journal - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Data collection from Seesaw
<b>Midterm Break: 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> February</b>	
<b>Week 6</b> <i>22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021</i>	- Semi-structured interview with Parent via Zoom - Reflective Journal - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Data from Seesaw
<b>Week 7</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> March</i>	- Consultation with critical friends - Reflective Journal - ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ - Data from Seesaw
<b>Week 8</b> <i>8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> of March</i>	- Review of the targets in the SSP - Parent Questionnaire - Child Questionnaires - Consultation with critical friends - Reflective Journal
<b>Mar- Apr 2021</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>

*Figure 3.2 Revised Action Plan*

Due to the unanticipated interventions throughout the research, I decided to implement Whitehead and Mc Niff’s (2006) model of AR (see Figure 3.3:33). This allowed for a flexible and cyclical approach towards my research.



*Figure 3.3 Model of AR (Whitehead & Mc Niff, 2006:9)*

### **3.5 Data Collection**

McNiff and Whitehead (2011) state the importance of knowing what kind of data is to be collected, thus, the data collection undertaken is now described below.

#### ***3.5.1 Research Participants***

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) say the ‘questions of sampling arise directly out of the issue of defining the population on which the research will focus’ (143). Therefore, in teaching two children with DS, a sampling decision was taken based on the level of withdrawal given equating to one extra individual withdrawal period per day. Subsequent agreed child assent and parent consent was sought and approved.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

#### ***3.6.1 Questionnaires***

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) describe open ended questionnaires as when ‘answers are unknown and viewed as exploratory’ (382). The questionnaires in this research were subsequently used to ascertain teacher and parent attitudes to CP and



the SSP. In December, through initial data retrieval, seven SETs, one parent and their child, were all furnished with individual questionnaires (see Appendices 2.).

Final questionnaires were delivered to the parent and child with an audio recording of each of the questions uploaded to Seesaw also (see Appendix 3.). On reflection, wording of the final questionnaire appeared too challenging. Therefore, the language was amended beside the smiley face indicators to yes, no, not really (see Appendix 3.).

### ***3.6.2 Response to Covid 19***

The revised action plan resulting from Covid 19, included interviews via Zoom, email and phone call as additional methods of communication with the parent. Informal data adaptations were made inclusive of reflections based on participation, activities, responses and feedback from the above methods. Planned classroom observations, shared use of a collaborative journal and child teacher dialogue were not feasible (see Appendix 4.).

### ***3.6.3 Semi-Structured Interviews***

Two semi-structured interviews with the parent were conducted via Zoom in week three and six, allowing for a meeting in week six directly after the midterm break. As a SET I was aware that some relevant issues may arise during this break. As sole reflections on conversations with the parent did not feel sufficient as a method of pure data collection, with parental permission, the semi-structured interviews were voice recorded and subsequently transcribed accurately. Accordingly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) say that ‘transcriptions can provide important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview’, consequently amounting to empirical data (537).

Gibbs (2007) emphasises the need to ‘check the accuracy of the transcription, as it is not uncommon for speech to be heard incorrectly or for words to be confused’ (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011:538). Subsequently, the ensuing transcriptions were emailed to the parent, providing essential rigour to the data also. The following template was used as the foundation of each meeting (see Figure 3.4:35).

<i>Semi-Structured Parent Interview</i>
<i>Date :</i>
<i>What worked well and why?</i>
<i>What could we do differently?</i>
<i>Parent suggestions:</i>
<i>Teacher suggestions:</i>

*Figure 3.4 Semi-structured Parent Interview*

### ***3.6.4 Two Stars and a Wish***

‘Two Stars and a Wish’ was employed as an online strategy which valued the voice of the child as an active participant in the decision making process, subsequently informing my weekly planning. Kelly (2007) advocates the use of projection techniques when working with children with DS (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). Correspondingly, I encouraged the child to respond to the ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ in a manner comfortable for her, pictorially, orally or written.

### ***3.6.5 Reflective Journal***

My reflective journal was utilised as a consistent approach to understand and interpret my own practice and others within it (Fook, 2015). I used my journal daily as a specific response to issues informed from the work of the day. Magrini (2011) sees these narrative enquiries as meaning constructors, ways to learn about educational influences evident throughout our practice (as cited in Carozzi, 2012). I implemented

Greene's passion for the 'power of reflection' in openly highlighting obstacles that occurred along my journey, specifically the school closure (as cited in Carozzi, 2012:52). Whitehead (2016) states that these 'real life issues, and the valid stories of our learning, are complex and sometimes chaotic and messy, especially in the creative or organic phases of our enquiries' (Whitehead, 2016:3). With hindsight, I revisited my reflections, where time allowed, for reflection on reflection. This acted as an organic and fluid opportunity to engage in what Grandi (2004) describes as, 'the soundless dialogue of myself with myself in generating a living educational theory' (as cited in Whitehead & Mc Niff, 2006:20).

### ***3.6.6 Collaborative Journal***

As aforementioned, use of a shared collaborative journal was not feasible, however, this journal, along with choice cards, stickers and pictures were given to the parent prior to commencing online. Recording of additional samples of work in the collaborative journal was agreed by the parent and symbolised the child's own learning progress. In implementing a shared approach, my own Weekly feedback was uploaded to Seesaw with an option of adding to the journal (see Appendix 5.).

### ***3.6.7 Observation***

As a self-study practitioner, my completed observations were influenced by Froebel (1826), as he sought teachers to be seen as learners as well as learning about their students (Reifel, 2011). Consequently, utilising videos, audio recordings and photographs via Seesaw, created an opportunity for an alternative form of observation online, enabling discovery and understanding within my practice. These valuable observations of the child's learning, in addition to the shared learning between parent and child, were promptly recorded in my reflective journal (Young et al., 2010).

### 3.6.8 Critical Friends

Popper (1975) posits, ‘we strengthen the objectivity of our explanations through the mutual rational controls of critical discussion’ (as cited in Whitehead, 2015:9). Similarly, Shulman (1999) observed the need for discussion in developing our thinking processes, beginning with an articulation of what we know, sharing this with others and finally internalising this newly formed shaped knowledge (as cited in Glenn et al., 2017). Accordingly, I employed two critical friends, critical friend 1 and 2 who ‘listened, questioned, and suggested improvements and alternatives’ about the quality of my research in relation to evidence produced (Sullivan et al., 2016:102).

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Thematic Analysis was utilised as a systematic approach to analysing the collected data, providing evidence of improvements in my practice and changes in my understandings also (Mc Donagh et al., 2020) (see Figure 3.5:37).

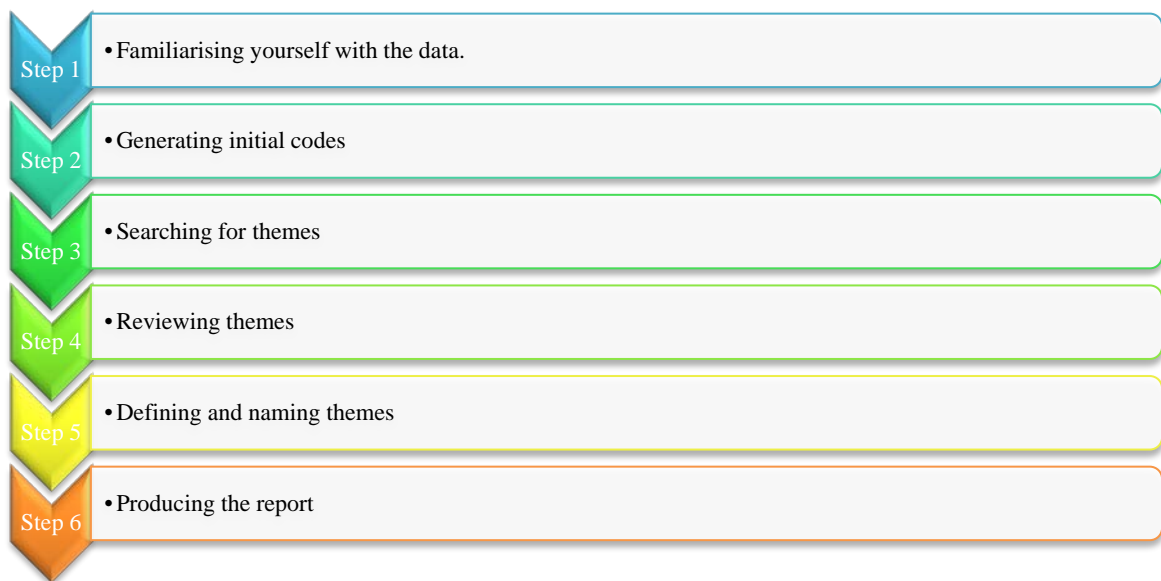


Figure 3.5 Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006:87)

Although Braun and Clarke suggest a colour coding system, due to the substantial amount of rich data collected, I modified this approach, using a numerical system to structure the data. After completing Steps 1, 2 and 3, my initial themes were numbered 1-10 (see Appendix 6.). Following a review of these emergent themes it appeared that some codes were overlapping and merging across the data. Therefore, logically combining and redefining codes proved optimal in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data (Taylor & Usher, 2001 as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006:80). This process resulted in four clear themes, each inclusive of certain criteria (see Figure 3.6:38). The four themes listed below emulated from the overarching theme of CP, as it was consistently apparent in the data archive.

Collaborative Practice				
Codes Combined	New code	Initial Themes	Criteria	Findings
1.	1	Teacher New Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator</li> <li>• Qualities</li> <li>• Insight</li> </ul>	Teacher Interconnectedness
2.6.8	2	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child-centred</li> <li>• Dialogue</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> </ul>	Unity in Planning
3. 4.5.	3	The Voice of the Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responding</li> <li>• Care</li> <li>• Intervention</li> </ul>	Acknowledging the Voice of the Child
7.9.10	4	The Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instinct</li> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Voice</li> </ul>	Parent as First Teacher

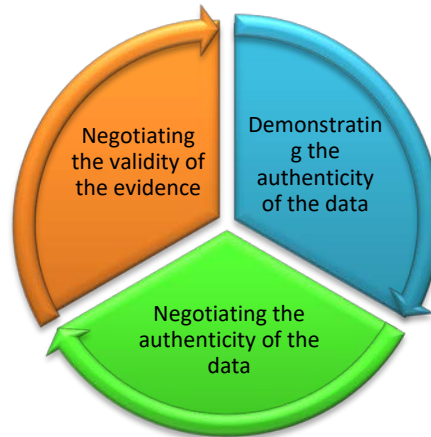
Figure 3.6 Step 5 Defining and Naming Themes

Following this, a subsequent rigorous and thorough re-coding of all the data took place, which ensured the prevalence of these themes, and solidified my findings (Sullivan et al., 2016).

### 3.7.1 Triangulation

Robson and McCartan (2016) observe triangulation as an ‘indispensable tool in research’ and argue that it ‘improves the quality and the accuracy of the findings’ (as cited in McDonagh et al., 2020:148). The multiple perspectives of my two critical

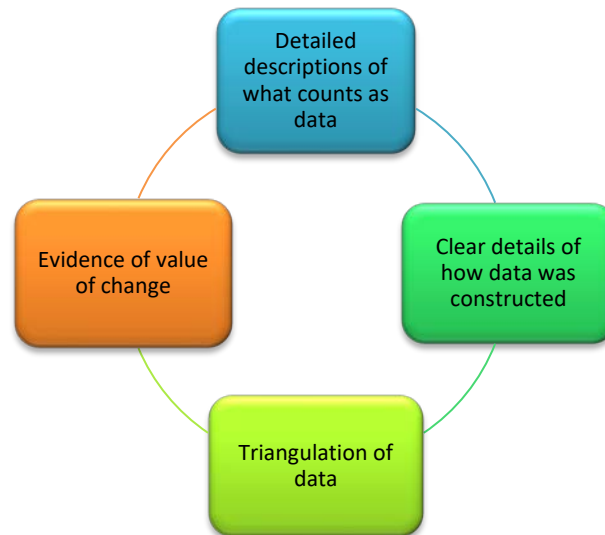
friends was a ‘powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity’ and reliability (Cohen et al., 2018 as cited in McDonagh et al., 2020:148). Discussions with my critical friends were based on Mc Niff and Whitehead’s (2011) method of triangulation (see Figure 3.7:39).



*Figure 3.7 Triangulation (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011:154)*

### **3.7.2 Validity, Legitimacy and Reliability**

Preisslem (2006) seeks to remedy the biases, values and world views of the researcher and refers to qualitative enquiries as ‘non neutral activities’ (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011:225). Therefore, in achieving the validity, legitimacy and reliability to my AR, I chose to apply Brookfield’s (2017) four lenses of critical reflection. The parent and child’s eyes, perceptions of my critical friends, personal experiences and theory were all examined throughout the project (Brookfield, 2017). Moreover, due to the lack of measurements or criteria available for qualitative data, Feldman’s (2003) criteria for establishing the validity and credibility of the data was utilised (See Figure 3.8:40). Feldman (2003) described validity as ‘the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific topic that the research is attempting’ (26).



*Figure 3.8 Validity and Credibility (Feldman, 2003:26)*

Whitehead and Mc Niff (2006) describe validity and legitimacy as interrelated concepts referring to validity as ‘establishing the truth or trustworthiness of a claim to knowledge’ (97). Additionally, critical reflection, and my explicit ‘life-affirming’ values provided the illustrative principles and specific standards of judgement that further evaluated the validity and comprehensibility of my claim to knowledge (Whitehead, 2017:2).

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Feldman and Minstrell (2000) highlight the profound effect that teachers can have on children’s lives and therefore ‘the results of their action research must be justifiably ethical’ (Feldman & Minstrell, 2000:7). Therefore, ethical approval was required and granted from the Research and Ethics Committee of the Froebel Department, Maynooth University, the Board of Management (BOM), Principal and Parent (see Appendix 7.). Ethically, I was also concerned as the parent commented that her child was upset upon noticing a difficulty in understanding her own voice on

recordings. I decided to contact DSI for advice and the strategies suggested were relayed to the parent and included in my planning.

### ***3.8.1 Power Dynamics***

Lewin (1947) encourages the researcher to acknowledge problems of power that may be interlaced in the research process (as cited in Mc Donagh et al., 2020). In opposing this, meaningful opportunities to promote the child and parent as valued co-researchers, was completed. Moreover, Shaw et al. (2011) and Williams (2011) state that a child's involvement can enhance the overall quality of the research (as cited in Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), 2012).

### ***3.8.2 Informed Consent and Assent***

Diener and Crandall (1978) define informed consent as 'the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of the facts likely to influence their decisions' (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011:78). Subsequently, permission was sought from the gatekeepers involved, including my Principal and BOM (see Appendices 8.9.10.). Informed consent from the parent, critical friends, class teachers, SNA and SETs was achieved in written format (see Appendices 11.12.). Solbakk et al. (2020) state the significance of ethics in a pandemic and the need to always return to the 'core values and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' with human rights and dignity at the forefront (16). Therefore, the BOM, Principal and Parent were furnished with an updated ethics statement and consent forms in January 2021 (see Appendix 13.).

Fine and Sandstrom (1988) state, that 'children should be told as much as possible' about the research process, even if full understanding is not achieved (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011:79). Thus, informed assent was completed through use of a child



friendly statement containing my photograph, and a meaningful explanation about the project (see Appendices 14.15.). Additionally, in working with a child with DS, I minimised any potential risk in having an SNA present in completing the child assent form, providing a legitimate opportunity for the child to decide whether or not to take part (DCYA, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). I also consulted Whyte's (2006) 'Research for Children with Disabilities' as a specific document in working with children with SEN.

### ***3.8.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity***

Cohen et al. (2011) state that the information given by participants should not reveal their identity; therefore, questionnaires were completed anonymously with the principle of anonymity also applied, removing any identifying information. In respecting the parent, and the relationship I have with the child, it was decided that the parent would choose a suitable pseudonym, for both herself and her child. Maria (parent) and Angeline (child) were chosen. Notably, in recognition of the rising debate regarding Person-First and Identity-First Language, the parent was asked their own preference on this matter. The parent chose for the position of 'child with DS' to be used in the research.

The principle of confidentiality applied protected the privacy of all participants. I was both professionally and personally obliged to safeguard any sensitive or intimate information shared by participants guaranteeing the confidentiality of my project (Cohen et al., 2011). A weekly statement was sent to the parent as a reminder that correspondence via Seesaw and email may be used in the data collection process.

### ***3.8.4 Sensitivity***

Due to the nature of my research, I followed Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), considering all elements of the

research design, safeguarding the child and their parent (Cohen et al., 2018). I maintained a respectful, supportive attitude to both the child and parent, whilst also being sensitive to extra demands that may have placed on them (DCYA, 2012). Correspondingly, I chose not to complete a second cycle of AR, finishing the project before the return to the school environment. This respected the extra demands of home/school learning on the parent and child, and instead focused on supporting the child's transition back to school.

### ***3.8.5 Vulnerability***

Whyte (2006) specifies the need to protect and promote the rights of the child, in particular a child with disabilities, further highlighting my value of care in the AR. Fitzgerald (2012) defines the importance of ensuring the 'involvement and participation of children in research projects is safe, respectful, meaningful and beneficial' (1). Therefore, an authentic level of choice, through 'Two Stars and a Wish' provided the child with control and involvement in meaningful decision making (Whyte, 2006).

### ***3.8.6 Data storage***

Data was obtained lawfully and fairly from all participants and has been kept on a password-encrypted USB, protecting all identities (Maynooth University, 2019). Any data which named individuals, institutions or organisations was only available to me and was kept secure throughout my AR (Maynooth University Research Integrity Policy, 2016). I followed the General Data Protection Regulations and the New Data Protection Bill 2018, and the confidential data gathered will now be stored for a minimum of ten years (Maynooth University, 2019).

### **3.8.7 Limitations**

Cohen et al. (2011) bring attention to the personal bias that may occur when the researcher is selecting and ordering the rich data collected. A limitation of my project could therefore be found in my reliance on qualitative data alone. However, triangulation of my data through my critical friends strengthened the validity, reliability and credibility of my study.

Significantly, critical reflection posited a potential cultural bias that may have existed within the study, and therefore further exploration of CP within a diverse school setting is an area worthy of further study. Moreover, a further limitation observed was the lack of feasibility for face to face interviews, classroom observations and child-teacher dialogue resulting from Covid 19 regulations. These approaches would have been optimum. Additionally, a second cycle of AR may also have been preferred, in offering a comparison between CP online and within the school structure.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

The above chapter has outlined my chosen research paradigm of self-study AR, inclusive of my ontological and epistemological values. An observation of critical reflection, reflective practice and reflexivity was established. Significant research methods used throughout the project were also discussed. Pertinent issues of vulnerability, ethical considerations, power dynamics, sensitivity, data storage, informed consent and assent were further examined. Finally, the limitations of my research were addressed. The subsequent chapter details my examination of the data and presentation of findings.

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the emergent themes from one cycle of AR. A rigorous analysis of the data determined the predictive validity of my project. For Cook (2009), the obligation is on researchers ‘to capture the very essence of what is under scrutiny’ (287). Therefore, the fundamental aim of: *enhancing my CP to value the voice of a parent and her child with DS in the development of a SSP*, underpinned the data analysis.

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis was chosen as a ‘method in its own right’, further to that data management was performed as an extensive and continuous process (78). Resulting from this, CP was deemed as the central emergent theme. Further stringent immersion in the data elicited four successive sub-themes: Unity in Planning, Parent as First Teacher, Acknowledging the Voice of the Child, and Teacher Interconnectedness. These will be discussed following the explanation of the coding process presented below.

### 4.2 Coding the Data

Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis, all data obtained was coded in relation to my specific research framework. Saldana (2016) illustrates a code in qualitative inquiry as ‘a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data’ (3). The numerical coding applied reduced the quantity of empirical material, making it ‘readily accessible for analysis, while at the same time increasing the quality of the analysis and findings’ (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:3). Coding, however, did not cater for the experiential knowing that Cook (2009) describes,

‘knowing through empathy and resonance that is almost impossible to put into words’ (281). Reflexive dialogue and exercising my ‘researcher judgement’ ensured a deliberate consistency to my active choices, forming a rich, coherent account, illustrating ‘the bedrock’ of the following analysis underpinned by my personal values (Braun & Clarke, 2006:87).

### 4.3 Findings

#### 4.3.1 Introduction

In maintaining confidentiality, yet acknowledging the central participation of my co-researchers, the parent will be referred to using their chosen pseudonym of Maria, and the child’s as Angeline. Data from two semi-structured interviews, Seesaw, emails, weekly plans, weekly feedback pages, Two Stars and a Wish, SSP and questionnaires were all analysed. Consequently, the main foci of my data analysis stemmed from the overall theme of CP. This umbrella term unearthed four subsequent sub themes. Qualitative descriptive findings from the project will now be critically examined (see Figure 4.1:46).



*Figure 4.1 Qualitative Descriptive Findings*

### 4.3.2 Unity in Planning

During the pre-data analysis phase, the parent and child were asked to complete an amended SSP (see Appendix 16.). Together they identified three targets and suitable strategies to be implemented during the project. Strengths and interests were also included. This information was typed up and placed at the front of a collaborative journal (see Figure 4.2:47).



Figure 4.2 Collaborative Journal

In envisaging a collaborative approach, all subsequent lessons, activities, and resources were designed from the targets and strategies specified. Therefore, the first step to improving my CP was to create an equal understanding of shared goals valuing the voice of the parent and child. Balli (2016) postulates, ‘if educators take into account the parents’ opinions into the development of the IEP, this enhances ‘feelings of collaboration between parents and educators’ (151).

In addition to the SSP, the parent completed a pre-data analysis questionnaire. These open ended questions were designed to determine the central factors of effective CP in relation to the SSP. Valuable feedback suggested my perceived concerns relating to CP and the SSP were evident. The parent stated that they had collaborated in the SSP

process; however, this was teacher dependent *'Overall yes but in my opinion this is highly dependent on teacher preparing the Plan'* (Parent Questionnaire, 08.12.21). This appeared to be corroborated in the pre data questionnaire completed by seven SET's. Here, results conveyed that five out of seven teachers did not consult parents prior to developing or implementing the SSP. Parental concerns were thus validated regarding the consistency of procedures in place.

Contrasting this, all SETs believed that parents could provide a clear insight of the child's strengths and interests. This innate knowledge that the home provides was also acknowledged and reinforced by the parent. *'As a parent you know what your child likes/dislikes which is invaluable in encouraging learning'* (Parent Questionnaire, 10.03.21). Furthermore, assessing the parent's responses was crucial in formulating approaches towards improving my CP. *'Targets that are set-these need to be very specific and measurable'* (Parent Questionnaire: 08.12.21).

Emails, two semi-structured interviews and the online platform of Seesaw were the main methods of communication used to review and reflect chosen targets. This process of evaluation was specified by the parent as a specific means to improve my CP. *'For the specific targets set to give more regular updates on status of outcomes'*. (Parent Questionnaire, 08.12.20). As the project unfolded, my value of care incentivised, as I realised that a greater teaching responsibility now rested with the parent. Thus, utilising Seesaw was imperative for daily informal communication regarding activities, engagement, motivation, and an understanding of Angeline's overall progress. It must be cautioned however, that this level of parental engagement may not be common place in all parent teacher partnerships.

Maria wrote: *Angeline did really well today. I think she has a good handle on the sessions 1-6*

Claire wrote: *Great I have added in sessions 7 and 8 for next week too.*

(Data from Seesaw, 22.01.21)

In acknowledging these greater demands, plans were developed accordingly. In week two, I decided to send a Weekly plan to Maria, responding to the shift in roles (see Appendix 17.). A Weekly feedback page and a short video/ voice recording for Angeline were also sent, demonstrating an inclusive approach. In addition to day to day communication via Seesaw and email, two semi-structured interviews, consisting of three specific questions were conducted. This allowed for a collaborative review of targets, strategies and subsequent amendments to be made to the SSP.

#### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Prior to the interview, the parent was emailed three focus questions, providing optimal time and space before engaging in a dialogical space. These interviews symbolised in-depth discussions, focusing on Angeline's strengths, needs, and current practice. The parent relayed specific information that would have been unknown otherwise to me as her teacher. This proved vital in developing my understanding of Angeline as a learner and subsequently informing my practice. *'I notice that I am far more engaged with my planning. I feel guilty for past practice, where I put my own needs for performance before the present needs of the child'* (My Reflective Journal, 15.01.21).

A notable factor of CP was the mutual respect that appeared between parent and teacher where ideas, opinions, questions and feedback were all expressed. Baum and



McMurray- Schwarz (2004) state that when collaboration is meaningful and effective, both parties are working together to accomplish common goals, recognising each other's contribution towards the child's development. Keeping the individuality of the child at the core of all shared dialogue encouraged an approachable, honest forum where targets were openly reviewed. My data provides evidence of negotiating and identifying solutions, facilitating Angeline's learning needs.

*Maria: Yes, maybe I need to have a think of the language around it.*

*Claire: Do you know what? I think for the recordings even if I change the wording of it, for example the girl with the cast on, what do you think might of happened her? I am sure that that would make it more applicable for Angeline.*

*Maria: Yes that might actually help.*

(Semi-structured Interview 1, 26.01.21)

### *Shared Dialogue*

The data conveyed problem solving through this shared dialogue as a central aspect to CP focusing on the effectiveness of strategies in implementing chosen targets (see Appendix 18.). Noddings (1992) describes part of learning in dialogue as 'interpersonal reasoning- the capacity to communicate, share decision making, arrive at compromises, and support each other in solving everyday problems' (53). Planning together appeared to increase the efficacy of the SSP.

- *To develop the skill of Inference (Use of language what makes you think, how do we know etc. ) (Language change 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021) ☺*

(Data from SSP)

Newton (2010) discusses the success and validity of semi-structured interviews resting on ‘the extent to which the respondent’s opinions are truly reflected; the interview’s ‘voice’, communicating *their* perspective’ (4). This was noted in the second interview transcription, as a deeper level of dialogue displays the parent reflecting upon challenges facing Angeline. ‘*When the likes of that is being done in the classroom it must be very disheartening for her not to know what is going on. I think if that was me sitting in a classroom and someone was talking Mandarin Chinese which I don’t speak two words of, what it must be like five days a week*’ (Semi-structured interview 2, 23.02.21).

Discussing issues concerning the pressures and rigidity of schooling for Angeline, poignantly encouraged a critical awareness of my own approach to the demands and expectations placed on a child with SEN within my practice ‘*I can see why choice for Angeline is so important, being child led means she can set the pace at any given time of the day, it is not an opt out*’ (My Reflective Journal, 24.02.21). Furthermore, the data suggests a strengthening of CP, transferring from day to day educational matters towards an intimate insight of the social, emotional implications for a child with SEN within the school setting. The realities of Froebel’s philosophy, the school to be an extension of the home, brings a new awareness to my understanding of the role of the family within my teaching, thus proving the value of reflexivity in practice. Tovey (2013) argues, ‘Froebel’s notion of parents, carers and educators working in ‘harmony’ sees the family as important actors in children’s learning, assisting in promoting children’s autonomy and self-esteem’ (as cited in Flannery Quinn & Greenfield, 2019:168).

*Values*

Establishing a narrative of collected data identified my values of care and CP through open and honest communication. Online spaces proved fundamental opportunities for the sharing of knowledge where the parent appeared comfortable asking for resources and in addressing any concerns. *'I think I said in the comment, if the programme had some kind of little videos to go with it as well'* (Semi-Structured Zoom Meeting 2, 23/02/21). The data shows my commitment to answering and following through on any questions or feedback given by the parent. *'Angeline found this video both mesmerising and hilarious!!'* (Data from Seesaw, 25.02.21).

CP also extended to outside agencies. Maria commented that Angeline *'doesn't like her own voice'* on playback (Semi- structured interview 1, 26.01.21). Following consultation with DSI the strategies suggested, practising difficult words and breaking up texts and stories, were included in my planned activities. My critical friends commented that this was proactive and evidence of my values lived in practice. Moreover, dialogue with my critical friends, also revealed an increase in my motivation and self-efficacy, utilising the SSP as a working document. *'This is the first time I am truly focused on the SSP, seeing its true potential'* (My Reflective Journal, 03.02.21). As equal stakeholders, I emailed a child friendly copy of the SSP in week six of the project to the parent and child (see Appendix 19.). This decision is indicative of Maria's preference for review of targets as outlined in her end line questionnaire. *'I think every 6 weeks is probably a good benchmark'* (Maria, 08.03.21).

The data gathered validates that the parent was regarded as a co constructor of knowledge throughout my project. *'Yes- my input has been taken on board and the Support plan has reflected this'* (End line parent questionnaire, 08.03.21). Freire (2000), called for this divergence from systematic education, conducting educational projects *with* rather than *for* others. Furthermore, data gathered suggests valuing the voice of the

parent, forged stronger connections, strengthening the overall efficacy of the SSP. Also witnessing and viewing the school as an extension of the home was integrated with the next prevalent, unanticipated Froebelian theme; Parent as First Teacher.

#### **4.3.3 Parent as First Teacher**

This clear theme was interwoven widely throughout the data, and as aforementioned reflects the parent's own dedication to the collaborative nature of my research. The natural, nurturing and instinctive role of the parent is a central Froebelian principle (Liebschner, 2006). The depth of my own learning in understanding the observed Froebelian influences was reflected upon in my journal on several occasions. *'I feel that the depth of knowledge Maria has about Angeline and her capabilities is incredible and I am only beginning to see the extent of the value of parental input'* (Reflective Journal, 11.01.21). Responding to this, each Weekly plan included a reference to Froebelian pedagogy, as I attempted to explore the extent of his principles within CP (see Appendix 20.).

The pre data questionnaire demonstrated the specific responsibility of the parent in defining their child's individual strengths and needs, whilst also advocating for the inclusion of the voice of their child. *'Student- student needs to feel part of the plan to engage'* (Parent Questionnaire, 08.12.20.) The data vocalises the parent as naturally assiduous in their 'child-initiated and child directed' learning (Bruce, 2011 as cited in Smedley and Hoskins, 2020:1202). This alludes to the instinctive role of the mother, emphasised by Froebel (1899), to nurture the unique needs of the child, 'providing the necessary means for rightly following that which is understood' (Froebel, 1899 as cited in Werth, 2019:23). *'We have been reading these at night time so I've tied them in here for understanding'* (Maria, Data from Seesaw, 19.01.21).

The data also highlighted the significance of shared interactions in the home with Maria ‘attuned to the distinctive nature’ of Angeline’s ‘learning and development’ (Tovey, 2013 as cited in Smedley & Hoskins, 2020; 1209). This combined with Froebel’s concept of Freedom with Guidance was shown in the parent’s observational skills building on ‘what they see, sensitively and educatively’ providing the child with agency and autonomy in their learning (Bruce, 2021:73). Importantly, the data proposes my own distinctive learning resulting from this unique bond.

*‘Today in Angeline’s video of the conversation starter I saw something very magical. Maria was like a born teacher scaffolding Angeline’s learning, evoking greater excitement in her. I never get the opportunity to see these precious moments unfold. The position of observer is new terrain’*

(My Reflective Journal, 14.01.21)

Froebel’s slow pedagogy was captured with the parent giving space for further exploration of Angeline’s thoughts, ideas and self activity. ‘As we’re revising *The Dreamcatcher* story Angeline wanted to make one’ (Data from Seesaw, 21.01.21). This gives sufficient consideration to the role of the parent, honouring and embracing the child’s inner instinct and fostering lifelong learning (Strauch-Nelson, 2012:63). Opportunities for play and discovery in learning were continuously provided to reinforce concepts in creative ways. ‘We played it out with some dolls’ (Maria, Data from Seesaw, 27.02.21). Both Konner (2010) and Slywester (2005) confirm that ‘play helps develop and maintain our brain’s ability to problem-solve in a wide variety of real or imagined situations’ (as cited in Strauch-Nelson, 2012:65). Additionally, although art and creative activities were suggested in my Weekly plan, it was Maria who intuitively

encouraged play, art, drawing, painting, cooking, baking and games as central day to day activities strengthening the family bonds.



Maria wrote: *‘Angeline made the fairy buns and decorated them with Daisy. She was very particular with the decorating which is funny as she won’t even eat them’*

(Data from Seesaw, 21.01.21)

The spirit of Parent as First Teacher shines a light on the relevance of Froebelian philosophies today and the central role of the caregiver. The final questionnaire provided empirical evidence of the parent’s awareness of their unique ability to influence their child’s educational outcomes as Maria stated: *‘During this particular period of home schooling my input has been even more important as I have firsthand knowledge as to what is working and what is not!’* (End line Parent Questionnaire, 10.03.21).

#### ***4.3.4 Acknowledging the Voice of the Child***

##### *Pre-data Analysis*

Pre- data questionnaires showed that four out of seven SET’s limited the addition of the voice of the child to the completion of the ‘My thoughts about School

Checklist’. It was unclear whether the resulting information informed the SETs subsequent planning. Six out of seven SETs believed that children could voice their likes and dislikes in learning, however, the results were suggestive of a greater need to value the voice of the child. *‘I haven’t in the past included the child’* (SET Questionnaire, DEC 2020). This further clarified my concerns in relation to my practice within the local context.

In wanting to improve my CP valuing the voice of the child, two questionnaires were completed both at the beginning and end of the project. The data gathered estimates the child’s awareness of their needs within the learning environment. In one response given the child reveals that ‘schoolwork’ is hard, contrasting this, the child also refers to feeling happy when doing work. This articulates a weakness in the questionnaire, suggesting the need for further analysis pertaining to the specific needs, interests and experiences of the child.




<p><b>The things I find hard are:</b> Schoolwork</p>
<p><b>I am happy in class when:</b> Doing work</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(My Thoughts about School Checklist, 03.12.20)</p>

Moreover, the following data indicates the child’s attentiveness to their own capabilities as a learner and is reminiscent of the need for purposeful differentiation in practice.

<p><b>Teachers in school can help me by:</b> By doing promise that we could do hard work</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(My Thoughts about School Checklist, 03.12.20)</p>
---

*Choice*

Pre-data analysis completed by Angeline cited ‘I agree’ with the following statement. This result, however, could be indicative of the child’s eagerness to please the teacher.

I choose my activities.	✓			
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(Child Questionnaire, Dec, 2020)

With choice as a prerequisite of practice, choice learning cards were given the week prior to commencing the project (see Figure 4.3:57).

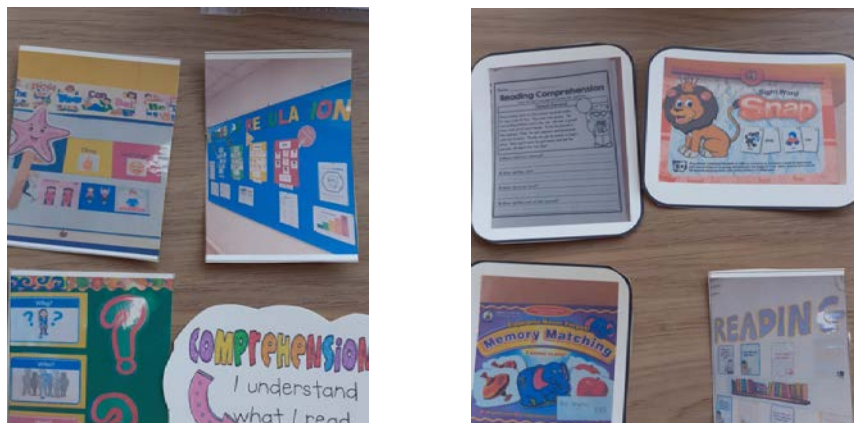


Figure 4.3 Choice Cards

The collaborative journal was used in the home and documented Angeline’s own journey to achieving her learning outcomes. Barbie stickers were also given to encourage self observation of success in learning (see Figure 4.4:58).





Figure 4.4 Barbie Stickers

The journal appears to portray the child’s voice as central in planning, developing connections between targets and creativity in learning (see Figure 4.5:58).

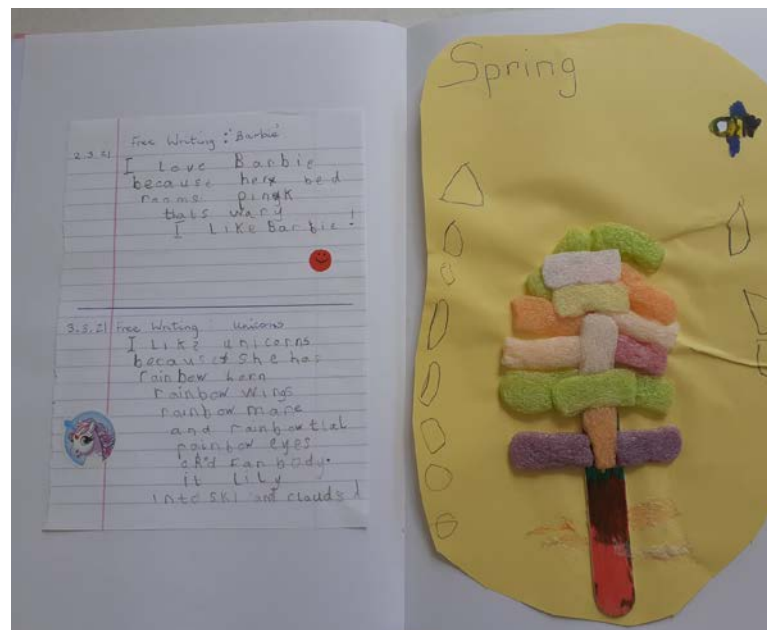


Figure 4.5 Collaborative Journal

A criterion of my project was to value Angeline’s voice as an active participant in her own learning and SSP (Christenson & James, 2000 as cited in Prunty et al., 2012). Discussing the targets and strategies decided upon in the pre-data phase was therefore essential. Resulting from this, Angeline chose her favourite recipes and fairytales. These were then interwoven in learning activities throughout my project (see Figure 4.6:59).

Froebel regarded valuing a child’s interests as an essential and effective means for learning (as cited in Liebschner, 2006).


Collaboration Valuing the Voice of the Child		
Angeline	Teacher	Angeline
<p><b>Fairytales:</b></p> <p>Goldilocks and the Three Bears</p> <p>Little Red Riding Hood</p> <p>Rapunzel</p> <p>Hansel and Gretel</p>	<p><b>Weekly Plan 4: (01.02.21)</b></p> <p>Recall: Fairytale: Hansel and Gretel. Make a Gretel craft using a toilet roll. You can also make a little skirt and wrap it around the toilet roll too. (Only an idea as Angeline seems to be enjoying the crafts).</p>	<p><b>Data from Seesaw (22.02.21)</b></p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> Here is our attempt at Gretel! Looking a bit worse for wear - I'm blaming the trip into the forest!</p>

Figure 4.6 The Voice of the Child

‘Two Stars and a Wish’ was completed weekly, as a planned strategy to value the voice of the child (see Figure 4.7:59).



Figure 4.7 Two Stars and a Wish

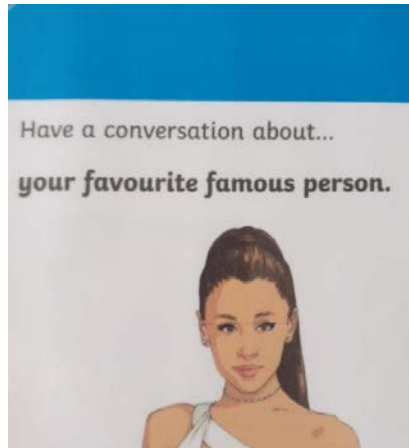
The data conveys this as an opportunity for the child to reflect on their own learning whilst deciding future learning activities. Brookfield (2017) identifies the significance of this approach stating that, ‘the only way we know if students are learning what we intend for them to learn is by checking in with them’ (65). The analysed data demonstrates that these ‘wishes’ were implemented creatively in practice and remained a continued focus for meaningful engagement in the SSP (see Appendix 21.). Furthermore, smiley faces were used to create a child friendly document, whilst promoting Angeline’s active participation in the process. However, it is unknown whether this information was subsequently relayed to Angeline.

### *Connections*

Due to the lack of child teacher dialogue and face to face interactions, teacher videos were recorded frequently to provide encouragement and motivation in learning. In week two, the continuation of ‘Conversation Starter’ cards were utilised in my attempts to increase my knowledge through the voice of the child (see Appendix 22). As a result of this decision, the unique nature of the child, through their imagination, likes and dislikes, fostered a greater connection between the home and my practice. As aforementioned, Froebel pioneered this approach as ‘learning through children’ (as cited in Liebschner, 1992:139).

My data also measured that positive responses were offered for all of Angeline’s learning activities and comments. ‘Giving children messages of respect, love, approval, and encouragement enables them to develop a positive sense of who they are and a feeling that they have an important contribution to make wherever they are’ (NCCA, 2004:25). When the learning was observed as difficult for Angeline the feedback remained positive and focused on the effort applied. Froebel encouraged these bonds of

trust between the child and adult built on respect (Bruce, 2021). The authentic feedback observed in my data, demonstrates my ambition to strengthen the rapport between teacher and child whilst scaffolding future learning.



Maria wrote (Angeline’s voice): *I like Halsey and Annemarie. They sing and they have the best singing voice. They are good at singing. I can't wait to meet them in person*

Claire (audio recording): *Wow Angeline. I love good singers too. So I must look these people up. Would you like to meet them in person? That is amazing. Would you go to their concert?*

(Data from Seesaw, 10.02.21)

*Child-Centred Organic Interventions*

Although the intended focus, valuing the voice of the child, was reflected in ‘Two Stars and a Wish’, a fortuitous outcome of child-centred practice established fifteen organic interventions (See Figure 4.8:61/62 & see Appendix 24.).




<b>1 (11.01.21)</b> <i>Weekly Plan</i>	<b>2 (14.01.21)</b> <i>Weekly Feedback page</i>	<b>3 (14.01.21)</b> <i>Conversation Starters</i>	<b>4 (21.01.21)</b> <i>Working Memory Video increasing the number</i>	<b>5 (21.01.21)</b> <i>Weekly Art activity</i>
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<b>6 (21.01.21)</b> <i>Mind teasers activity</i>	<b>7 (26.01.21)</b> <i>Language change for Inference</i>	<b>8 (26.01.21)</b> <i>Multiple Choice answers in Comprehensions</i>	<b>9 (26.01.21)</b> <i>Independent Sentence Writing</i>	<b>10 (09.02.21)</b> <i>Increase in Language Activities</i>
<b>11 (09.02.21)</b> <i>Pronoun he /she activities</i>	<b>12 (12.02.21)</b> <i>Emailing SSP</i>	<b>13 (23.02.21)</b> <i>Independent Story Writing</i>	<b>14 (24.02.21)</b> <i>Videos for Body Language</i>	<b>15 (25.02.21)</b> <i>Returning to school</i>

Figure 4.8 Organic Interventions

Using Whitehead and Mc Niff’s (2006) model of AR situated these interventions within my own practice. Therefore, the SSP evolved to a vital working document, implemented in conjunction with the child’s present needs. Brookfield (2017) says, ‘this is the essence of student- centred teaching: knowing how your students experience learning so you can build bridges that take them from where they are now to a new destination’ (62). Critical friend 1 commented that the various learning curves and interventions taking place, symbolised the child ‘*showing me her potential, and that this in itself is hearing Angeline’s voice*’ (22.01.21). Moreover, the organic interventions adopted what Grainger et al. (2005) suggest, is a ‘learner centred focus, whereby we respond to children’s feelings, engaging their interests whilst maintaining their identity and autonomy’ (as cited in Kennedy & Shiel, 2010:377).

These interventions, combined with my own reflections, proved essential in achieving change and understanding of my practice. ‘*Angeline is providing me so many opportunities to see her true potential, to let her lead the learning, awakening myself and my teaching*’ (My Reflective Journal, 13.01.21). Opposing this, although I believed I was providing Angeline choice in learning, in her end line questionnaire, her response concluded: ‘not really’ to the following, ‘I choose my activities’.

I choose my activities.		✓ 	
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(End line Child Questionnaire, 08.03.21)

This suggests that online learning prevented my full capacity to cater for choice in learning. Notably, Brookfield (2017) posits it is ‘just as important to know when your assumptions are broadly confirmed as it is to know when they’re in error’ (62). *‘I think I need to ask Angeline for her ideas to include more choice in her learning’* (My Reflective Journal, 10.03.21).

Contrasting this, Maria commented the following in relation to Angeline’s contribution to the SSP: *‘Yes- my child is asked what they like and don’t like doing and on a weekly basis has got to let us know what work/topics they like doing. On a day to day basis they get to choose what activity they want to do first etc.’* (End line parent questionnaire 08.03.21). My aim to develop my CP valuing the voice of the child instigated a transformative shift in my understanding and practice as a SET. Froebel emphasised the criticality of acknowledging the voice of the child in learning, adjusting to their pace and fostering active inquiry in learning. In this process, he viewed the adult as facilitator. This personal, transformative journey will now be explored.

#### **4.3.5 Teacher Interconnectedness**

Self-study AR was an intentional and systematic inquiry into my practice (Cochran-Smyth & Lytle, 2009). Thus, through critical data analysis, the threads of evidence indicating my own learning were substantial. The affective aspect of AR is revealed in the depths to which my reflections became richer, nuanced and informative. For Carozzi (2012), during self-enquiry we become an ‘intimate actor of an inner discovery’, a journey to be treated as ‘deeply sacred’ (Carozzi, 2012:38). Early evidence

of this self-enquiry displays my need to control the path of the project. *'I am noticing that accepting the move to my project online is challenging for me as I can be a perfectionist'* (My Reflective Journal, 12.01.21). Cook (2009) describes the process of navigating and negotiating this mess in research as 'tense and uncomfortable' (284). However, initial worries relating to the 'mess' of AR transformed into a personal, enlightening experience.

Kemmis, Mc Taggart and Nixon, (2014) suggest that we need to be cognisant of the intended and unintended consequences of research. The data identified this unexpected effect in the significant shift from my role as teacher, *'to that of a facilitator'* (My Reflective Journal, 19.01.21). This revelation appeared in the midst of my active ambition to develop my knowledge of all Froebelian pedagogy, displayed in my Weekly Plans. As a facilitator, I became a privileged spectator with a 'stereoscopic view' to the shared learning taking place between parent and child, situating the school as an extension of home life (Kemmis, 2009).

I learned the value of stepping back, observing and interpreting the values of others, thus, influencing my own ontological and epistemological values. As my project developed, I saw how the aforementioned organic interventions unfolded from collaboration valuing the voice of others. *'I think Maria's suggestion not to give structure to Angeline's writing at this point is reflective of Froebel's Freedom with Guidance and creativity is exactly what Angeline needs'* (My Reflective Journal, 03.03.21). Through the interconnectedness of collegial collaborative practice, I developed a 'flow' within my practice. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defines flow as, 'a state of being completely in here-and-now, optimally connecting the demands of the situation with ones' capacities' (as cited in Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009:6). In aligning my values of care and CP, I tuned into the needs of the child and parent developing what

Whitehead (2009) describes as, 'energy flowing values' emulating from within (89). *'I am wondering if teaching online is actually bringing my values to the forefront more. Living to my innate values is creating a surge of energy to focus on the wellbeing on Angeline and Maria'* (My Reflective Journal, 15.01.21).

### *Connecting the Inner and Outer*

In connecting to my inner world, the wider implications of my practice became central to my thinking. This occurred due to the evident disparities in society magnified amidst the Covid- 19 Pandemic (Sequeira & Dacey, 2020). Numerous entries in my reflective journal portray my inner turmoil and disgust at the lack of fairness for children with SEN arising from school closures. *'Where is the child's voice in this???* *I'm just so furious'* (My Reflective Journal, 20.01.21). In addition to this, I was awakened to the literature of Giroux, Kincheloe, Buchanan, Greene, Apple, Hope and McLaren and several others, connecting theory to my real life practice. Brookfield (2017) says, 'finding a theorist who makes explicitly something you've been sensing or who states publicly what you've suspected privately but felt unable to express' can be 'wonderfully affirming' (73).

The data is indicative of my journey to observing the multifaceted nature of everyday accounts, each possessing ethical, moral and political dimensions, relevant to my 'identity' and 'mission' within my practice (Korthagen, 2004). During my project, I felt my identity and mission became regenerated in my practice, as I saw firsthand the significance of valuing the voice of a child with SEN in our society. Establishing these connections, inclusive of current literature, developed my core understanding of the lived realities of 'critical pedagogy' within my own practice. *'This is something I now*



*feel so passionate about now, the criticality of listening to the voices of the parents and children with SEN and truly understanding their lived world'* (04.03.21).

My ambition to negotiate and negate change for my future practice was compounded in one of Maria's final emails, as she commented; *'We can learn so much from difference in all its shapes and forms. We are making progress but there are still many hurdles to jump - we need to be changing the systems to fit the child not the child to fit the system! We'll get there some day!'* (Email,12.03.21). Greene's (1995) power of imagination is evident in my aspirations to combine my values of care and CP, 'to make possible the pursuit for a fuller humanity' (Freire, 2000:47).

#### **4.3.6 Summary of Data Analysis**

Although Covid 19 created a vicissitude in my original plan, the evidence emanating from the data portrayed the reality of my generative theory of practice resulting from CP. Marcuse (1965) describes 'democratic discussions', where the intent is to 'honour and respect each learner's voice by valuing all contributions' (as cited in Brookfield, 2017: 74). Application of Brookfield's lenses (2017) was essential in unveiling and honouring the voice of the child and parent throughout the data analysis.

The data gathered through pre and post questionnaires, Seesaw, emails, weekly plans and feedback pages, semi-structured interviews, Two Stars and a Wish all symbolise the voice of the child and parent at the heart of CP. Whitehead and Mc Niff (2006) suggest that by providing descriptions and explanations of the research, practitioners can develop a distinctive living educational theory. It can perhaps now be said, that the principles of effective CP, improving the overall efficacy of the SSP, are rooted in transplanting Froebelian philosophy to my own modern practice. This concept will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In concluding this thesis, I will now contextualise the findings of my AR project in relation to the research question and aims outlined in Chapter One. Firstly, an overview of the research and the possibility of a cycle two are offered. As Tuckett (2005) states, engaging with the literature can enhance the analysis by sensitising us to the ‘subtle features of the data’ (as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006:87). Therefore, a summary of the overall findings will be inclusive of relevant literature.

Following this, I will state my own claim to knowledge and outline how purposeful critical reflection will impact my future practice. In addition to this, I will outline the dissemination of my research and the implication of future learning for the local and wider community. Finally, I will conclude with the implications of the within a global and political framework and discuss the resulting recommendations. Froebel’s participative pedagogy is interwoven throughout this discussion, merging past and present traditions.

### **5.2 Overview of Research**

My research focused on the following: ‘How can I enhance my CP to value the voice of a parent and her child with DS in the development of a SSP?’ The subsequent intervention aimed to provide opportunities to engage in CP with both the child and parent, promoting their contribution to the SSP. Combining these approaches with my own lived values of care and collaboration took prominence throughout the research, and thus the research achieved the following objectives:

- Enhancing my CP to value the voice of the parent and child
- Living to my values through CP

- Creating a dynamic and useful SSP that incorporated the strengths and interests of the child

Although this study sought to enhance my CP, the following emerged as an unanticipated outcome:

- Integrating Froebelian approaches within my values and practice

One cycle of research began with the parent identifying their child's strengths and interests, and three targets along with supportive strategies were suggested for the intervention. Two SSP reviews, via semi-structured interviews on Zoom, took place in week three and week six. Valuing the voice of the child, providing agency in learning was achieved through the use of 'Two Stars and a Wish', a strategy implemented weekly. The unforeseen school closure prevented face to face dialogue with the child, so I decided to optimise online CP through weekly feedback pages and short videos to the child, emphasising my values of care and collaboration.

Utilising varied approaches to CP through email, Seesaw, Zoom and the strategies aforementioned, amounted to a rich and substantial qualitative data. Therefore, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was applied to make sense of the data, in addition to the reliability, validity and credibility ensured by my two critical friends throughout all stages of my AR project.

### **5.3 Possibility of Cycle 2 of AR**

Noddings (1992) says, 'there is no recipe-like method for establishing relations of trust and care', adding that caring is a 'capacity (or set of capacities) that requires cultivation and time' (114). Establishing a relationship of trust and care with the parent and child, infused with my own values, ensured my adherence to all ethical standards and the commitments expressed to protect their overall well being. This resulted in my

decision to only complete one cycle of AR. Reflecting on the level of parental dedication to CP, in addition to the disruption caused by Covid 19, I felt my loyalties were best placed in supporting Angeline with a smooth transition to the school environment post project completion.

Notably however, I observed that a second cycle of AR may have been optimal, conducting a further eight weeks within the school setting, offering a contrasting approach to online CP. A cycle two would have extended to all stakeholders involved in supporting the child, inclusive of the class teacher, SNA and one other SET. DSI recommends this collaborative approach inclusive of all stakeholders, essential in supporting the child's needs. Moreover, CP in cycle two would have consisted of face to face dialogue with the child and classroom observation, providing additional opportunities for a greater inclusion of the voice of the child. However, despite the observed limitations of my AR, the findings underpinning this project have yielded substantial benefits to my own learning and hopefully the learning of others. An overview of these findings is now presented below.

#### **5.4 Summary of Findings**

##### *Unity in Planning*

As aforementioned in the literature review, current legislation and policies encourage CP between parents, school, community and society. Froebel's pedagogy is reflected in these documents through the value he placed on developing harmonious relationships between the child, school and family (Liebschner, 1992). Froebel believed that the knowledge the child receives in the home, can be integrated with their learning in the school environment, therefore building effective home school partnerships,

supporting the child socially, emotionally and educationally (Kambouri-Danos et al., 2018).

The research findings demonstrated that effective CP stemmed from the collective behaviour of the parent and teacher beyond the linear of the school structure, characterised by mutual respect, readiness to negotiate and a united sense of purpose (Pirchio, 2013). This form of partnership, as outlined by Pugh and De'Ath (1989), focused on sharing of information, skills, decision-making, responsibility and accountability (as cited in Daly &Forster, 2009). These shared values and commitments notably intersected around the needs of the child, valuing and accepting their uniqueness. My AR project also found that including the parent in the planning process, as an equal stakeholder, target-setting collaboratively, modifying and reflecting, highlighted the significant potential for positive outcomes arising from a dynamic and useful SSP (NCSE, 2019:9). This further emphasises the importance of involving the parents or caregiver in the process 'instead of just signing the document' (Balli, 2016:151).

Additionally, the data revealed that dialogue and communication were key foundations to co-constructing knowledge and navigating change. For Freire (1970), 'without dialogue there is no communication and without communication there can be no true education' (as cited in Glenn et al., 2017:15). Keyes, (2000) posits, 'in effective partnerships, parents and teachers educate each other during open two-way communication with each point of view enlightening the other' reflected in the semi-structured interviews (112). Correspondingly, Balli (2016) states, 'if educators take into account the parents' opinions into the development of the IEP', feelings of collaboration between parents and educators can be enhanced, as found in my AR project (151).

CP with the parent, valuing their voice in the decision making process, offered a range of new perspectives, deepening my understanding of the complexities associated in supporting children with SEN. DeLong (2019) expressed this as an ‘authentic reality of learning within relationships’ (3). Similarly, Sohn and Wang (2006) found that parent’s involvement in their children’s education was ‘beneficial to students and parents as well as the educator’ (as cited in Öztürk, 2013:13). It can now be concluded that effective planning partnerships are built on meaningful dialogue and communication, a shared commitment to building the child’s overall profile, ultimately creating a valuable SSP (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010).

#### *Parent as First Teacher*

The data clearly identified the central role of the parent, instinctively catering to the child’s educational needs, ‘the first point of reference for the child’s interactions with the world, communicating meaning and knowledge’, highlighting the significance of the parent as the primary educator (Kambouri-Danos et al., 2018:1). Observing the innate pedagogy of the parent through activities such as yoga, baking, reading, play and creativity, correlated with Froebel’s’ vision for a ‘holistic engagement nourishing the child’s physical body, mind and senses developing the child’s ‘powers of expression’ (Strauch-Nelson, 2012:63). For Froebel, these participative activities were the foundation ‘blocks of joyful and effective methodology’, described as, ‘a basic tenet of his educational philosophy’ (Strauch-Nelson, 2012:63).

Recognising the parent as first teacher provides opportunities for the child to develop original experiences, connecting their inner and outer worlds. Tovey (2013) describes this Froebelian approach with the adult attuned to the child’s individual stage of learning as recognised in the findings through the organic interventions that took

place (as cited in Smedley and Hoskins, 2020). Therefore, it can now be said that promoting the innate knowledge of the parent as first teacher, through CP in the SSP leads to positive pupil outcomes. Moreover, Balli (2016) evaluated this integral role of the parent as ‘irreplaceable’ in achieving a successful, inclusive approach for children with SEN (148).

Furthermore, a key finding was the level of knowledge expressed by the parent, evident in the teacher parent professional dialogue. Hornby (1995) noted that parents are the main sources of information, specifying the responsibility upon educators to engage and facilitate parents by ‘keeping regular contact through telephone calls, home-visits, home-school notebooks’ and now perhaps, modern forms of liaison represented in the data through email, Seesaw and Zoom (as cited in Balli, 2016:150). My research demonstrates that a Froebelian approach, emphasising the parent as first teacher, provides a deeper insight into the uniqueness of the child, creating an SSP that is representative of the child’s whole tapestry, physical, emotional, spiritual, social and academic outcomes (NEPS, 2017).

#### *Acknowledgement of the Voice of the Child*

Historically, as noted in Chapter 2, the views of children with SEN have been disregarded as ‘education is done to them’ (Cunningham, 2020:2). This narrative indicates that valuing the voice of the child through CP improved my understanding of the child as a unique learner, accruing to a focused SSP. Cunningham (2020) outlines the ability of the child ‘to voice their own views, thoughts and feelings’, recognising that their unique perspectives and experiences should be considered when determining policy and practice which affect them’, therefore noteworthy for a child-centred SSP (Cunningham, 2020:1).

My research evidence demonstrated that organic interventions resulted from a conscious consideration of the interests and present needs of the child. For Froebel this was a favoured methodology, building ‘content upwards from the child’ (Strauch-Nelson, 2012:63). Dewey’s (1966) philosophy reflects the responsibility of the teacher to define each child’s unique capacity whilst encouraging them as a reflective learner, achieved in my research through ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ (as cited in Talebi, 2015). Froebel (1887) believed ‘teachers should be led by the child to those things the child finds naturally interesting and joyful’ (Von Marenholtz-Bulow, 1877 as cited in Strauch-Nelson, 2012:63).

The data reflected how my own values became manifested in Froebel’s ‘deep and abiding respect for the individuality of the child’, therefore, enhancing my CP through the strategies implemented (Strauch-Nelson, 2012:64). Furthermore, initiating a child-centred document inclusive of all stakeholders, results in the creation of what Froebel described as developing trusting relationships for the good of the child (Liebschner, 2006).

#### *Teacher Interconnectedness*

My research found that autonomous approaches I implemented as a facilitator, focused on building on the child’s present needs. However, as an active facilitator, I learned that this goes beyond a passive role, and should be focused on a central Froebelian principle, ‘creating a balance between giving children autonomy in their learning and in adults directing the learning’ (Smedley & Hoskins, 2020: 1207). As a facilitator, and an observer of the shared bonds between parent and child, my journal was essential in ameliorating change within my practice.



This continuous, critical reflective practice, a journey of self-enquiry, initiated opportunities for reflexivity in practice, situating my identity as ‘further moulded and negotiated; by my own inner dialogue’ (Glenn et al., 2017:15). Correspondingly, Chan and Ritchie (2016) specify the need for teachers to respond to and interrogate their practices ‘in particular, those in relation to fostering genuine, dialogical relationships with parents’ (300). Moreover, reflexivity afforded a genuine space to deepen my understanding of critical pedagogy, which proved instrumental in recognising the strength of my core values in advocating for the rights of all children.

These findings could be used as a catalyst for educators to engage in continuous reflective practice with core values at the centre as a means of professional development, diverging from courses that offer ‘solution’ based generic approaches. Having outlined the findings emanating from my own rigorous AR journey, I can thus make my own claim to knowledge as described below.

### **5.5 My Claim to Knowledge**

As presented in Chapter One, the aim of enhancing my own CP, valuing the voice of a parent and her child in the SSP, became integral to my self-study AR project; Enhancing my own CP practice to value the voice of a parent and her child in the SSP. Completion of this research has thus established my own ‘living theory’ of education, highlighting my lived values of care and collaboration through a Froebelian framework (Whitehead 1989, 2011, 2012 as cited in Whitehead & Huxtable, 2013:221). Evaluating and scrutinising my own practice and experiences, I have aimed to create this living theory that is ‘applicable to practice’, through meaningful, authentic opportunities, valuing the voice of the parent and child whilst promoting their participation in the SSP (Fook, 2015:446).

The research aims were achieved through this regular engagement with the parent and child alongside consistent reflective practice with a critical lens. The first criterion in undertaking my AR was to value the parent as an equal participant in the SSP promoting their continuous contribution and involvement. The second criterion was affording the child weekly opportunities for choice in learning, encouraging agency and reflective learning. The third criterion was to engage in professional dialogue with my two critical friends, ensuring reliability, validity and credibility to the research. The final criterion was to engage in consistent reflective practice through my journal, nurturing and developing my CP with the parent and child, providing an authentic and valid account. These principles of judgement enacted, are the foundations of my claim to knowledge (Whitehead, 2017).

I claim that a Froebelian framework deepened my knowledge of the importance of the family unit in developing a child-centred practice. Furthermore, through reflective practice, I found that while CP with a child with DS was the initial foundation of my study, this developed and evolved, broadening to all children, further cognisant of my core values. I have been further influenced by the UDL (2017), as discussed in Chapter Two, envisaging a curriculum that provides equal opportunities for all learners whilst giving the teacher greater flexibility to cater for all individual learners, not just children with SEN. Thus, this ensures the formation of an inclusive environment respectful of the diversity of all learners (AHEAD, 2017). Establishing these connections between theory and practice has unearthed the transformative powers of critical reflection, as explored further below.

## 5.6 Critical Reflection in Practice

I was awakened to the transformative powers of AR as my journey of reflective practice became nuanced and informative, deepening my awareness of critical pedagogy in ‘fluidising historical and cultural boundaries’ (Whitehead, 2013:2). Critical reflection provided a stereoscopic view of my lived practice, situating my internal thoughts within my external sayings and actions, therefore connecting my internal and external worlds. Beginning my research, I regarded my authentic and professional self as separate entities, disregarding the role of my internal self, rather focusing on my performance in society (Palmer, 1997). Reflection unearthed that this desire for teacher performance resulted in a disconnection to my identity and mission as defined by Korthagen’s (2004), in addition to the flatness in my practice referred to in Chapter One (Brookfield, 2017). For Korthagen, (2001) reflection is an opportunity for this deep learning, supporting the development of a ‘growth competence’, giving us the ‘ability to continuously develop professionally on the basis of internally directed learning’ (as cited in Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009:2)

Consequently, meta-reflection has validated my espoused values and illuminated my identity and mission, encouraging an authentic self recognisable in my professional self, viewing my identity as therefore malleable (Palmer 1997; Gee, 2000). Recognising the fluidity of my identity has inspired my aspirations of continuous development and growth, holding a level of imagination in negating and negotiating the changes I hope to make in my future practice (Greene, 2011). Greene (2011) says, ‘to call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise’ (19).

The central findings of my AR project can be used as a catalyst in demonstrating Schön's, (1983) reflection on action, as a 'professional artistry', acknowledging the professional knowledge we possess as teacher researchers (as cited in Fook, 2015:442). As a teacher researcher, I stepped away from what Korthagen and Vasalos (2009) describe as 'detached thinking' diverging to a 'presence, awareness and mindfulness', bringing my whole self to my lived practice (2). This was recognised by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as 'flow', being completely present whilst 'optimally connecting the demands of the situation with ones' capacities' ( as cited in Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009:6).

Perhaps if teachers were encouraged to adopt open minds, open hearts and an open will, then our personal strengths and insights could create secure and authentic relationships, bridging the gaps between our work and our environment (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009). Reflective practice acted as this foundation to the apex of my own learning, which is discussed next.

### **5.7 Significance of my Learning for Future Practice**

Reason and Bradbury (2001a) posit AR as, 'an emergent, evolutionary and educational process, engaging with 'self, persons and communities that needs to be sustained for a significant period of time' (as cited in Herr & Anderson, 2005:58). This consolidates my vision of continuing my current practice, living to my core values in the 'pursuit of worthwhile human purposes' (Reason & Bradbury, 2013 as cited in Glenn et al., 2017:113). These worthwhile purposes are rooted in my aspirations to establish what Wenger (1998) describes as a 'community of practice', bringing together colleagues and parents with shared concerns and values intersecting around the child's needs (as cited in Goodnough, 2010:168).

My ideal of a community of practice is interwoven with Froebelian philosophy, where a shared trust and confidence between parent and teacher encompasses ‘the good of the child’ (Liebschner, 1992:138). This approach to CP must be monitored, ensuring supportive practices for all stakeholders, creating a tapestry of knowledge in the SSP that influences and enhances the intellectual development of the child (Liebschner, 1992:138). Flannery Quinn and Greenfield (2019) consider it a ‘professional responsibility to work in partnership with families, developing an understanding of their values and desires and also community values’, evident in the successful partnership found in my AR project (169).

Furthermore, I aim to continue to provide meaningful opportunities for self-directed activity, gaining knowledge from the child through observation and dialogue, central to building respectful and positive child-led CP (Tovey, 2013). Correspondingly, Huxtable (2016) emphasises the importance of values in these actions, integrating the personal, professional and political within my educational practice, giving ‘meaning and purpose to my work and life’ (1).

#### *Implications for Future Practice*

In September 2021, I envisage disseminating both parent and child friendly questionnaires to all children I will be teaching, gaining a critical insight into their strengths, interests and goals as iterated from the child and their family unit. This new approach will be shared with my colleagues also. Following the questionnaires, a phone call or face to face/Zoom meeting may prove optimal in discussing targets and strategies for the first term. Shpancer (1997) and Mashburn et al. (2011) state that establishing this supportive CP between the home and school can provide opportunities for a ‘bi-directional exchange of information that helps align parents’ and teachers’ goals’,

proving essential for an effective SSP (as cited in Pirchio, 2013: 152). Additionally, nurturing this relationship at the beginning of the year assists in overcoming my previous concerns, whereby the parent's initial contact with the SSP consisted of a signature, as noted in Chapter One.

Furthermore, having now experienced the benefits of an online learning platform, I propose a continued use of Seesaw as an effective communication tool, transferring information, and consolidating concepts and strengthening connections between the home and school. NEPS (2017) emphasise this connectivity and shared dialogue as an integrated and collaborative problem solving approach.

## **5.8 Dissemination of my Research**

Following Stenhouse's (1975) definition of AR as a 'systematic critical inquiry made public', my findings will therefore be presented via Zoom or face to face staff meeting in September 2021 (as cited in Feldman & Minstrell, 2000:5). Following this, an in-depth presentation will also be given to the Principal, SEN co-ordinator and SET colleagues. My research topic has also been emailed to the Education Officer for DSI outlining its purpose and findings whilst expressing interest in sharing this in a suitable capacity within their community. Additionally, a review of the main findings of my research will be presented for publication in the InTouch magazine for INTO members. Finally, I am hoping to avail of any opportunities to communicate my research within the newly established Irish Froebel Network (IFN).

### ***5.8.1 Implications for the Local Context***

It is imperative to note that the findings presented above are based on the premise of my own research, where I now identify collaboration as key in the SSP. Therefore, dissemination of my research at this local level could potentially yield

significant benefits for the learning of others, encouraging supportive CP with parents and children when developing and implementing the SSP. Notably however, Broomhead (2018) emphasises the need for a top down approach, when developing 'effective home-school partnerships between parents of children with SEN', reinforcing the need to discuss my research with my Principal (442).

In presenting how Froebelian approaches were interlaced in building an inclusive SSP, I hope to inspire colleagues to listen, support and value the voice of the parent and child, engaging in true child-centred practice, accepting the uniqueness of all pupils in our school setting. Several researchers (Rivalland & Nuttall, 2010; De Gioia, 2013; Hedges & Cooper, 2014) concur, that when teachers develop their understanding of the child's unique experiences, 'a continuity of understandings and expectations between home and school', this can effectively foster 'a child's enthusiasm for learning' (as cited in Chan & Ritchie, 2016: 291).

It also appears fundamental that collegiality processes among staff and particularly the SEN setting, can create a level of connectedness and shared experiences, deepening 'understandings of the reality, complexity and challenges involved in responsive teaching', establishing a 'collective responsibility' to our lived practices (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010:378,379). Agbenyega and Klibthong, (2015) found that learning together through shared values and expertise, developing skills and understandings, underpins effective teaching (59). Hooks (1994) says, 'it is crucial that critical thinkers who want to change our teaching practices talk to one another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and create a space for intervention' (129). Accordingly, a whole school approach, celebrating shared knowledge, appears optimal for future adaptations within the local context.

*Critical Pedagogy and a Shared Vision*

Often deemed outdated, the sentiments offered by Nodding's (1992) are central in encouraging awareness within my school of the principles of critical pedagogy embedded in an inclusive learning environment. In discussing my own journey of reflective practice, I aspire to 'induce a reflective examination' in the lives of others, through relaying the positive impact reflection has had on my teaching (Noddings, 1992: 136). Challenging performance based practices is not observed as an easy feat in building a community of practice. Reinforcing Kelchtermans (2018) concept; 'teaching cannot simply be reduced to the instrumental issue of combining the most effective means to achieve pre-defined goals' rather the focus should lie in the ethical commitment, personal judgement, deliberate choices and intentional actions that teaching requires (234). Recognising this challenge as an element of change agency, I realise that the sincerity expressed does not 'guarantee the purity' of my own practice (Brookfield, 2017:1).

***5.8.2 Implications for the Wider Community***

Barnes et al. (2021), discuss the impact of Covid 19 on educational practice, and evaluate the effective online pedagogy that educators engaged in. In correlation with their research, the online spaces utilised in my AR project created several opportunities for CP with the parent and child, albeit acknowledging face to face as the preferred, optimal method. Moreover, Barnes et al. (2021) suggest that 'educators need to be given agency to develop confidence in adopting different ways of working and interacting with both colleagues and learners, while, ultimately, being mindful of the impact of the forced change on the wellbeing of students and educators alike' (2). In contrast, my AR



project demonstrates that educators alone cannot create change, that agency for the parent and child is also imperative.

As addressed in Chapter Two, a shift towards online CP when implementing the IEP in America was noted by Catagnus and Hantula (2011). Additionally, Selwyn et al. (2011) found that ‘digital technologies have increasingly been used by schools to support parental engagement in their children’s education’ (as cited in Head, 2020:595). Combining previous research and my own findings offers the possibility for a dual and contemporary hybrid practice that facilitates the growing demands both on parents and teachers, whilst optimising Froebelian principles reflected in the values placed on equitable family and community links (Bruce, 2021).

## **5.9 Future Research within a Global and Political Framework**

### *Review and Progression*

Biesta (2019) states that educational research should more so cause problems, as opposed to solving them. Applying this concept to my own research exposes the principle of disturbance, noting the depth of influences that were beyond the scope of my AR project. Subsequently, unravelling the deeper layers of my project, questions now arise as to whether an unintentional bias existed, as I acknowledge the sole parent participant as representative of an educated, middle-class socioeconomic background.

This influence however, is not disputing the validity of my research rather defining that AR is not generalisable, and is a report within a given context. With this, Winter (2002) says, an AR report focuses on ‘an account of a specific situation that gets sufficiently close to its underlying structure to enable others to see potential similarities with other situations’ (144). Alternatively, I chose to focus on the potential for ‘difference’, within my CP, examining the nuances that may have occurred had the AR

been conducted with another parent or group of parents, further noting parental involvement as ambiguous, complex and multidimensional.

Research by Vincent et al. (2010), found that although parents all wanted their children to learn and develop, many of the participants' lives 'were pervaded by fragilities and constraints, arising from depression, debt and poverty, social isolation, stressful personal relationships, juggling the demands of employment with family responsibilities, poor living conditions and threatening surroundings' (128). In acknowledging these lived situations and a culturally disparate school setting, questions now arise if my own and other teacher's personal and professional beliefs about diversity impede, alter or affect CP with parents (Leavy, 2005). Similarly, I suggest we take into consideration the skills and dispositions necessary, alongside the provisions available, for the development of supportive, sustainable and successful CP.

#### *Teacher Qualities and Professional Development*

My research project suggests that certain dispositions observed in teachers can initiate and perhaps sustain effective CP. Tickle (1999) refers to qualities of empathy, compassion, love and flexibility as essential qualities for teachers, 'qualities seldom appearing in the official lists of important basic teaching competencies' (as cited in Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009:7). Moreover, researchers (Seligman, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2007) also specify the importance of people's personal strengths, such as creativity, courage, perseverance, kindness and fairness (as cited in Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009). Korthagen & Vasalos (2009) note that people can 'use their personal qualities to optimally act in the world' incurring actions that are 'effective and personally fulfilling' (6).

My project demonstrated my values lived in practice but also qualities observed, such as openness, approachability and trust. Broomhead (2018) says, that these ‘concepts of approachability and trust are essential foundations on which to build positive relationships, for which educational practitioners must strive’ (447). Therefore, it appears optimal that these proposed qualities interwoven with one’s inherent values are central in merging Froebelian principles with effective CP. In contrast, I question whether qualities alone are enough, if our demographic influences as teachers influence our behaviour and beliefs around CP, and whether a comprehensive approach to an appreciation of diversity is yet presented by our Education Departments (Grant & Seccada, 1990; Mc Diarmid & Price, 1993; Grant 1994; Pohan, 1996 as cited in Leavy, 2005). Additionally, this research underscores the necessity for a flexible approach that integrates Froebelian philosophy centring on unity in diversity, developing an awareness of the diversity in classrooms, families, schools, regions, and national contexts (Volante, 2018).

### *Resulting Recommendations*

Emanating from the discussion above, it appears essential that the voices within our modern diverse society should be integrated in the professional development of both preservice and in-service teachers, in creating sustainable CP. It is proposed that professional development focuses on transforming the turbulence of our educational practice to a system of perturbation and connectivity (Doyle, 2021). Fundamentally, integrating this Complexity Theory could allow us to learn and respond to our current educational practices, in reproducing and reorienting the collective competencies necessary in establishing and nourishing effective home-school partnerships.

## 5.10 Conclusion

This project was interlaced with doubts similar to what Cook (2009) refers to; whether the research conducted was worthwhile or whether I was doing it properly (278). Although my project is indicative rather than conclusive of the benefits of Froebelian approaches to CP in the SSP, my own significant learning as a Froebelian practitioner has been worthwhile for myself and the children I teach. The evidence gathered suggests that frequent communication between parent and teacher strengthened the efficacy of the SSP as a successful dynamic, working document. Evidence also suggests that valuing the voice of the child and parent accrued to an effective child-centred practice, further emphasising them as key agents or stakeholders in the development and implementation of the SSP.

Additionally, in adopting ‘cognitive modesty’, I recognise that my project is both ‘incomplete and disunified, presenting a tentative set of possibilities, rather than an achieved and final understanding’ (Winter, 2002:151). I did not set out to portray a victory narrative, but rather to reveal the authenticity of a transformative practice, guided by my inherent ontological and epistemological values in my journey as a Living Theory Researcher (Whitehead, 1987 as cited in Whitehead & Mc Niff, 2006).

*‘Man is developed and cultured toward the fulfilment of his destiny and mission, and is to be valued, even in boyhood, not only by what he receives and absorbs from without, but much more by what he puts out and unfolds from himself’*

(Froebel, 1887 as cited in Strauch-Nelson, 2012:63)

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**List of Appendices**

**Appendix 1. Pre-Covid Action Plan**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Initial Data Retrieval</b> <i>December 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dissemination and completion of all information sheets, consent/assent forms and questionnaires</li> <li>- Parent and child completed template consisting of strengths, interests and targets for Term 2 of the SSP</li> </ul>
<b>Week 1:</b> <i>11<sup>th</sup> –15<sup>th</sup> January 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of the collaborative journal</li> <li>- Reflective journal</li> <li>- Child/ teacher dialogue: ‘Two Stars and a Wish’- observation notes recorded.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2:</b> <i>18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child / teacher dialogue</li> <li>- Consultation with critical friend</li> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Use of collaborative journal</li> <li>- Reflective journal</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3:</b> <i>25<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child / teacher dialogue</li> <li>- Reflective Journal- critical reflections</li> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Semi-structured interview with parent via zoom</li> <li>- Interview transcribed and emailed to the parent</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4:</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child / teacher dialogue</li> <li>- Use of collaborative journal</li> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Consultation with critical friend</li> <li>- Reflective Journal</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5:</b> <i>8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child / teacher dialogue</li> <li>- Use of collaborative journal</li> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Reflective Journal</li> </ul>
<i>Midterm Break: 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> February</i>	
<b>Week 6:</b> <i>22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child/ teacher dialogue</li> <li>- Use of collaborative journal</li> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Semi-structured interview with parent via zoom</li> <li>- Interview transcribed and emailed to the parent</li> <li>- Reflective Journal</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7:</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> March</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child/teacher dialogue</li> <li>- Consultation with critical friend</li> <li>- Use of collaborative journal</li> <li>- Observations</li> <li>- Reflective Journal</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8:</b> <i>8<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> of March</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of the targets in the SSP(Comments recorded from teacher, parent and child in the collaborative journal)</li> <li>- Parent Questionnaire</li> <li>- Child Questionnaire</li> <li>- Consultation with critical friends</li> <li>- Reflective Journal</li> </ul>
<b>Mar- Apr 2021</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>

## Appendix 2. Initial Data Retrieval Questionnaire

### Pre-data Analysis Parent Questionnaire



**Maynooth University**

National University of Ireland Maynooth

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

### Parent Questionnaire

<p>1. Who do you think should be involved in developing a Student Support Plan? Why?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>2. Are you invited to share information about your child's strengths, interests or possible targets you would like them to reach? Yes or No</p> <hr/>
<p>3. Do you feel your voice as parent has been included in developing or implementing your child's Student Support Plan? Please explain.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>4. What areas of a Student Support Plan are most important to you?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



<p><b>5. Has your child ever had an input into their Student Support Plan? If yes, please explain further.</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>6. How do you feel your child could contribute to their Student Support Plan?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>7. How often are you contacted throughout the school year regarding targets?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>8. Do you have any concerns about the Student Support Plan? Please explain.</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>9. What do you feel should be the main outcomes of an effective Student Support Plan?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>10. How do you feel I could improve the collaborative practice of a Student Support Plan?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.</p> <p>Claire Wynne</p> <hr/> <p><b>1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020</b></p>

**Pre-data Analysis Special Education Teacher Questionnaire**



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Special Education Teacher Questionnaire**

<p><b>1. How many years have you been teaching?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>2. How many years have you been a Special Education Teacher?</b></p> <hr/>
<p><b>3. Do you consult parents before developing a Student Support Plan? Why? Why not?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>4. Do you feel that the voice of the parent should be included in a Student Support Plan? Please explain.</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>5. How often would you consult parents during the school year about pupil targets?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>6. Do you feel there are any benefits from parental input? Please explain you answer</b></p>

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>7. Do you include the voice of the pupil before developing a Student Support Plan? If so, in what way?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>8. Do you feel that the voice of the pupil should be included in a Student Support Plan? Please explain.</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>All answers are anonymous.</b></p> <p><b>Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.</b></p> <p><b>Claire Wynne</b></p> <hr/>
<p><b>Date: 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020</b></p>

**Pre-data Analysis Child Questionnaire 1**



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

"My Thoughts about School" Checklist			
Name:	Age:	Class:	Date:
The things I like best at school are:			
The things I don't like about school are:			
The things that I am good at are:			
The things I find hard are:			
I am happy in class when:			
I am happy during break and lunch times when:			
My friends are:			
I need help with:			
Teachers in school can help me by:			
My teacher would describe me as:			
My parents would describe me as:			
My friends would describe me as:			

<b>The following questions can be asked if children have an emotional and behavioural difficulty in school.</b>
<b>Adults I get on best with in school are:</b>
<b>I get into trouble in school when:</b>
<b>The things I do that make my teacher feel unhappy are:</b>
<b>The things my teacher does that make me feel unhappy are:</b>
<b>I make my teacher happy when:</b>
<b>The things my teacher does that make me feel happy are:</b>
<b>The class rules are:</b>
<b>If someone breaks the rules:</b>
<b>Rewards I like best are:</b>
<b>The things that I need to change are:</b>

**Pre- data Analysis Child Questionnaire 2**



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

## Pupil Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions by ticking the smiley face of your choice.



= I agree.



= Sometimes I agree and sometimes I do not.



= I do not agree

1.	I enjoy coming to school.			
2.	I decide what I learn in school.			
3.	Teachers help me to learn.			
4.	My teacher listens to me.			
5.	I like the work my teacher plans for me.			
6.	I choose my activities.			

**Appendix 3. End line Questionnaires**



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Parent Questionnaire (End of Research Project)**

<p><b>1. Have you been invited to share information about your child’s strengths, interests or possible targets you would like them to reach? Yes or No</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>2. Do you feel your voice as parent has been included in developing and implementing your child’s Student Support Plan? Please explain.</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>3. Has your child contributed to their Student Support Plan? If yes, please explain further.</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>4. Do you feel that collaborative practice can improve the effectiveness of a Student Support Plan?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>5. How often would you like to be consulted in relation to the Student Support Plan?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>

**6. Do you have any further concerns about the Student Support Plan? Please explain.**

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Claire Wynne \_\_\_\_\_ 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2021

**Student contact details:**



**End Line Child Questionnaire 1**



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

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

"My Thoughts about Online Learning" Checklist			
Name: Angeline	Age: 10	Class:	Date: 10.03.21
The things I like best about online learning:			
The things I don't like about online learning:			
The things that I am good at are:			
The things I find hard are:			
I am happy online when:			
I am happy at my break times at home when:			
My friends are:			
I need help with:			
Teachers can help me by:			
My parents can help me by:			
My teacher would describe me as:			
My parents would describe me as:			

<b>My friends would describe me as:</b>
<b>The following questions can be asked if children have an emotional and behavioural difficulty in school.</b>
<b>Adults I get on best with in school are: (Not applicable)</b>
<b>I get into trouble in school when:</b>
<b>The things I do that make my teacher feel unhappy are:</b>
<b>The things my teacher does that make me feel unhappy are:</b>
<b>I make my teacher happy when:</b>
<b>The things my teacher does that make me feel happy are:</b>
<b>The class rules are:</b>
<b>If someone breaks the rules:</b>
<b>Rewards I like best are:</b>
<b>The things that I need to change are:</b>

**End Line Child Questionnaire 2**



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

## Pupil Questionnaire

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions by ticking the smiley face of your choice.



= Yes



= Not really



= No

1.	I enjoy online learning.			
2.	I decide what I learn.			
3.	Teacher helps me to learn.			
4.	My teacher listens to me.			
5.	I like the work my teacher plans for me.			
6.	I choose my activities.			

## **Appendix 4. Planned Interventions**

### **Observation**

As a self-study practitioner, my observations were influenced by Froebel (1826). He sought teachers to be seen as learners as well as learning about their students. These observations were completed consciously with an astute awareness for the understanding, learning and interests of the child in scaffolding new learning opportunities. Reifel (2011) believes the teacher can then ‘discover new things to see and new ways to understand children’ through sensitive observation and constant reflection (65). All valuable observations that occurred were recorded in my notebook and later critically analysed in my reflective journal. This system ensured the reliability of my observations. Observations were also inclusive of less predictable incidents, allowing access to my own personal knowledge in observing things that I may have unconsciously missed (Cohen et al., 2011). Young et al. (2010) say that this detailed and prompt recording of our personal observations, experiences and thoughts of classroom events is critical for facilitating our own personal learning (8).

### **Child-Teacher Dialogue**

Meaningful opportunities, inclusive of the voice of the child, were central throughout my project. I viewed conversations as an anecdote-telling mechanism to enhancing my normal practice (Feldman & Minstrell, 2000). Bohm et al. (1991) describe accessing the core of dialogue as a process of suspending our ‘opinions, thoughts, assumptions and impulses’ (as cited in Cayer, 1997:48). ‘Two Stars and a Wish’ was the stimulus used for initiating dialogue. This weekly discourse was viewed optimal in providing a space for exploration, in listening not only to the child but to my own inner reactions also. Moreover, dialogue was opportune in ‘promoting the

exchange of knowledge, generating new understandings' and as a means of continuing my 'critical inquiry process' (Feldman & Minstrell, 2000:18).

Kelly (2007) advocates the use of projection techniques when working with children with DS (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, I encouraged the child to respond to the 'Two Stars and a Wish' in a manner comfortable for her, pictorially or written. Swain et al. (1998) say the onus is on the researcher to bring about benefits when working with marginalised groups (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). This approach was therefore used as a strategy in promoting positive reflections for the child.

### **Collaborative Journal**

The collaborative journal was a shared opportunity inclusive of the voice of the child and their parent. Their unique standpoint was imperative in treating them as co-researchers. Linden (2016) says that through dialogical collaboration, one can then interpret and understand the views, insights and beliefs of another (236). Hooks (1994) believes that dialogue is a simple means with which to cross boundaries and barriers that may exist in my practice (130). The collaborative journal was thus inspired as an opening for new possibilities (Hooks, 1994). Bohm (1996) in his exploration of dialogue saw it as a journey that should be taken together 'through a medium of words' (as cited in Linden, 2016:234). In addition to the written word, photographs, drawings and samples of work were also used in keeping with an essential child friendly approach.

## Appendix 5. Weekly Feedback Page

Week 4

Well done Angeline on all of your amazing work this week. I really miss seeing you in school so your little videos delight me every day. Your reading and story of Hansel and Gretel were excellent. The free writing you did was amazing. I loved reading your sentences. I think you might write a book when you are older!

I hope you have a lovely weekend.

Claire

This is a picture of two swans I took out on my walk. I thought you might like it. I think one of the swans is camera shy 😊



**Appendix 6. Reviewing Themes**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Initial Emerging Themes</b>
1.	<i>Teacher New Learning</i>
2.	<i>Teacher focus on the SSP</i>
3.	<i>Teacher Positive Response</i>
4.	<i>Teacher Care</i>
5.	<i>Teacher responding to the voice of the child</i>
6.	<i>Shared approach to collaborative practice</i>
7.	<i>Parental Knowledge of Education</i>
8.	<i>Parental focus on the SSP</i>
9.	<i>Parent giving the child a voice</i>
10.	<i>Parental Insight</i>

**Appendix 7. Ethics Approval**



**Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education  
Master of Education (Research in practice) (M.Ed.)**

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

<b>Student name:</b>	
<b>Student Number:</b>	
<b>Supervisor:</b>	
<b>Programme:</b>	
<b>Thesis title:</b>	
<b>Research Question(s):</b>	
<b>Intended start date of data collection:</b>	
<b>Professional Ethical Codes or Guidelines used:</b>	

**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]:

**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]*

**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]*

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 resource/supports you will provide in the boxes below).

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]

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]

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

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]

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]

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]

Data storage (where will the findings be stored; will they be published? And by whom?)[Max 100 words]

**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.**

**Declaration**(Please sign and date)

‘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.

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

**Supervisor use only:**

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

Approved	
Approved with recommendations (see below)	
Referred to applicant	
Referred to applicant (changes to be approved by supervisor)	

(Tick as appropriate)

Recommendations:

Signature of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Department use only:</b> <i>(only where applicable)</i>	
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)	
<u>Recommendations:</u>	
Signature of Dept. Ethics Committee Chair: _____	

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

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

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

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

FFS Research Ethics Committee nominee

## Appendix 8. Letter to the Principal and Board of Management



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

30/09/20

Dear Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management,

I have recently commenced a Masters of Education: Research in Practice with Maynooth University. The Masters programme focuses on Action Research into my own practice. I am hoping to focus my research in the area of Down syndrome. As part of this, I am looking for permission to gather data in my daily work. I am looking forward to the benefits of this research for my own teaching and learning, the pupils, my colleagues and wider school community. I am happy to answer any questions regarding my research throughout the year too.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Wynne

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## Appendix 9. Information Sheet: BOM and Principal



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

1<sup>st</sup> Of December 2020

### Information Sheet

#### Board of Management and Principal

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

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at 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, questionnaires, audio recordings, interview transcripts etc. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### What are the research questions?

- How do I ensure the voice of the parents and the pupil are included in implementing a Student Support Plan?
- Can collaborative planning between parents and special education teacher improve efficacy and motivation in a pupil with Down syndrome?
- How can I develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a pupil with Down syndrome?

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

- Records of meetings, observation, questionnaires, reflective journal, surveys, interview transcripts, amended Student Support Plans, pupil testing, lesson plans, samples of pupils' work, notes from parents, a collaborative journal, audio recordings, feedback from colleagues and critical friends, notes from conferencing between pupil and teacher.

**Who else will be involved?**

The study will be carried out by myself 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 in permitting me to undertake this study in my classroom. I will be collaborating with parents and a pupil in achieving targets on the Student Support Plan. The Student Support Plan will only contain necessary information for my research and all sensitive information will be excluded. I would like to engage in fortnightly meetings either face to face, by phone call or by email with the parents involved. I will engage in a collaborative planning meeting on a Friday with the pupil involved in my research. I will be keeping a collaborative journal with parents and pupil. I hope to collect some initial data through interview or questionnaire with parents. I will also hold a meeting with class teacher, parent and pupil in to discuss planned targets for the Student Support Plan. I would like to give questionnaires to all Special Education Teachers and the Special Educational Needs co-ordinator too.

In all cases any data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. 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.

**Further Information:**

In the event of any unforeseen circumstance or school closure, communication will move to phone call, email and online platforms through Aladdin Connect, Google Drive and/or Seesaw.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further queries regarding my research.

Thank you,

Claire Wynne

---

**Student contact details:**

**Student phone number:**

**Appendix 10. Informed Consent: Board of Management and Principal**



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Board of Management Consent Form**

Claire Wynne, a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University, has permission to conduct an action research project with the pupil and parents in her class. I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I understand that the schools, teacher's, special needs assistants', parent's and pupil's names or any other identifying information will not be used in any aspect of this study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of the Board of Management

School's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Claire Wynne



**Informed Consent Principal**



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Principal Consent Form**

Claire Wynne, a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University, has permission to conduct an action research project with the pupil and parents in her class. I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I understand that the schools, teacher's, special needs assistants', parent's and pupil's names or any other identifying information will not be used in any aspect of this study.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

School's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Claire Wynne

## Appendix 11. Participants Information Sheets and Letters



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

1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I am a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University. As part of my degree I am doing a research project. The focus of my research is based on improving my own collaborative practice in facilitating the voice of the pupil and parent when implementing a Student Support Plan for a pupil with Down syndrome. The research involved is about developing my own practice further.

In order to do this, I intend to carry out research in the classroom by observing the pupil and engaging with them and their learning. On a Friday, I will plan with the pupil the following week's activities. I will record outcomes of our weekly engagements and store the information on an encrypted USB. Any notes in written format will be kept in a folder and secured in a locked filing cabinet.

I would like to engage in a fortnightly meeting with you either via phone call or email. This will be short and structured in outlining successful strategies, concepts to be developed further or any other matters arising in our implementation of the Student Support Plan. I will send you a copy via email of the necessary outcomes discussed during the meeting also.

I would like to keep a collaborative journal with you and your child. This may include photographs of activities, feedback from me, pupil, parent or teacher. It will also outline the targets addressed in the Student Support Plan that we hope to achieve together. I will create an amended version of the Student Support Plan and only necessary information for my research will be included.

The data will be collected using observations of my teaching and pupil feedback, records of comments made during weekly planning with pupil, pupil work, pupil testing, my own reflective journal, an amended Student Support Plan, a collaborative parent/pupil/teacher journal, audio recordings, interview transcripts, records of fortnightly meeting outcomes, sample and photographs of work.

Your name, your child's name and the name of the school will not be included in the thesis that I write at the end of my research. Both you and your child have the right to withdraw from the research process at any stage. All information will be confidential and anonymous. It will be destroyed in ten years as stated timeframe in accordance with Maynooth University guidelines. The correct guidelines will be complied with when

carrying out this research. The research will not be carried out until approval is granted by the Froebel Department of primary and Early Childhood Education.

I would like to invite both you and your child to give permission to take part in this project.

If you have any queries on any part of this research project feel free to contact me by phone (School phone) or by email at \_\_\_\_\_

Yours faithfully,

Claire Wynne

---

## Information Sheet Parent



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

1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020

### Information Sheet

#### Parents and Guardians

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

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at 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, questionnaires, audio recordings, interview transcripts etc. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### **What are the research questions?**

- How do I ensure the voice of the parents and the pupil are included in implementing a Student Support Plan?
- Can collaborative planning between parents and special education teacher improve efficacy and motivation in a pupil with Down syndrome?
- How can I develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a pupil with Down syndrome?

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

- Records of meetings, observations, questionnaires, reflective journal, surveys, interview transcripts, amended Student Support Plans, pupil testing, lesson plans, samples of pupils' work, notes from parents, a collaborative journal, audio

recordings, feedback from colleagues and critical friends, notes from conferencing between pupil and teacher.

**Who else will be involved?**

The study will be carried out by myself 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 alongside you and your child. I would like to engage in collaborative planning with you from January to March. This will involve a fortnightly meeting either face to face, by phone call or by email. I would also like to keep a collaborative journal with you. I hope to collect some initial data through interview format with you in December. This may take place face to face or alternatively an online questionnaire will be used. From January to March I will engage in weekly collaborative planning with your child during school time. In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. 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.

**Further Information:**

In the event of any unforeseen circumstance or school closure, communication will move to phone call and online platforms. This can be achieved through email. In the event of school closure teaching and communication will be online also via Aladdin Connect, Google Drive or Seesaw.

You have the right to cease participation at any point throughout the research without the need to supply a reason.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further queries.

Thank you,

Claire Wynne

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**Student contact details:**

**School Phone Number**

## Information Sheet Critical Friend



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020**

### Information Sheet

#### Critical Friend

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

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at 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, questionnaires, audio recordings, interview transcripts etc. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### **What are the research questions?**

- How do I ensure the voice of the parents and the pupil are included in implementing a Student Support Plan?
- Can collaborative planning between parents and special education teacher improve efficacy and motivation in a pupil with Down syndrome?
- How can I develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a pupil with Down syndrome?

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

- Records of meetings, observations, questionnaires, reflective journal, surveys, interview transcripts, amended Student Support Plans, pupil testing, lesson plans, samples of pupils' work, notes from parents, a collaborative journal, audio recordings, feedback from colleagues and critical friends, notes from conferencing between pupil and teacher.

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

The study will be carried out by myself 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?**

Critical friends are people who will ‘listen, question, suggest improvements and alternatives’ about my research (Sullivan et al. 2016:102). The multiple perspectives of critical friends will ensure triangulation of my data in displaying a truthful and accurate account of my research. I will ask for your signature if any direct quotes that are used in my data. I would like to engage reflectively with you about my research, through face to face conversation, email and or phone call.

In all cases the data that is collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. 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.

**Further Information:**

In the event of any unforeseen circumstance or school closure, communication will move to phone call and email. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further queries.

**Student contact details:**

**Private mobile:**

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Claire Wynne

## Information Sheet Class Teacher



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

1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020

### Information Sheet

#### Class Teacher

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

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at 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, questionnaires, audio recordings, interview transcripts etc. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### What are the research questions?

- How do I ensure the voice of the parents and the pupil are included in implementing a Student Support Plan?
- Can collaborative planning between parents and special education teacher improve efficacy and motivation in a pupil with Down syndrome?
- How can I develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a pupil with Down syndrome?

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

- Records of meetings, observation, questionnaires, reflective journal, surveys, interview transcripts, amended School Support Plans, pupil testing, lesson plans, samples of pupils' work, notes from parents, a collaborative journal, audio



recordings, feedback from colleagues and critical friends, notes from conferencing between pupil and teacher.

**Who else will be involved?**

The study will be carried out by myself 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 to participate in a Student Support Planning meeting in December. You also have the opportunity to engage in a collaborative journal between all participants should you wish to do so. In all cases any data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. 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.

**Further Information:**

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further queries in relation to my research.

Thank you.

**Student contact details:**

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**Claire Wynne**

## Information Sheet Special Education Teacher



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

1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020

### Information Sheet

#### Special Education Teachers

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

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at 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, questionnaires, audio recordings, interview transcripts etc. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### What are the research questions?

- How do I ensure the voice of the parents and the pupil are included in implementing a School Support Plan?
- Can collaborative planning between parents and special education teacher improve efficacy and motivation in a pupil with Down syndrome?
- How can I develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a pupil with Down syndrome?

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

- Records of meetings, observation, questionnaires, reflective journal, surveys, interview transcripts, amended School Support Plans, pupil testing, lesson plans, samples of pupils' work, notes from parents, a collaborative journal, audio recordings, feedback from colleagues and critical friends, notes from conferencing between pupil and teacher.

#### Who else will be involved?

The study will be carried out by myself 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 to complete an anonymous written or online questionnaire. In all cases any data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. 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.

**Further Information:**

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further queries in relation to my research.

Thank you,

Claire Wynne

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**Student contact details:**

## Information Sheet Special Needs Assistant



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

1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020

### Information Sheet

#### Special Needs Assistant

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

Teachers undertaking the Master of Education in the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education at 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, questionnaires, audio recordings, interview transcripts etc. The teacher is then required to produce a thesis documenting this action research project.

#### What are the research questions?

- How do I ensure the voice of the parents and the pupil are included in implementing a Student Support Plan?
- Can collaborative planning between parents and special education teacher improve efficacy and motivation in a pupil with Down syndrome?
- How can I develop my own teaching whilst incorporating the individual strengths and talents of a pupil with Down syndrome?

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

- Records of meetings, observation, questionnaires, reflective journal, surveys, interview transcripts, amended Student Support Plans, pupil testing, lesson plans, samples of pupils' work, notes from parents, a collaborative journal, audio

recordings, feedback from colleagues and critical friends, notes from conferencing between pupil and teacher.

**Who else will be involved?**

The study will be carried out by myself 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 to observe the recruitment process of a pupil involved to ensure the truthfulness of their consent and assent. In all cases any data collected will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. 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.

**Further Information:**

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further queries in relation to my research.

Thank you,

Claire Wynne

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**Student contact details:**

**Appendix 12. Participants Informed Consent**



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

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

**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 both my own participation and my child's participation in this study. I am aware that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information. I know that I can cease participation in this research at any point without the need to supply a reason.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian

Signature

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

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

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

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

**Informed Consent Critical Friend**



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Critical Friend Consent Form**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I consent to taking part in the research as a critical friend. I consent to any comments or feedback I may make either verbal or written, via email, Zoom or phone call may be included in data as part of the research. I am aware that all data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. I know that I can cease participation in this research at any point without supplying a reason.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Critical Friend

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

Claire Wynne \_\_\_\_\_

**Informed Consent Class Teacher**



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Class Teacher Consent Form**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I consent to any comments or feedback I may make either verbal or written, may be included in data as part of the research. I am aware that all data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Teacher

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Claire Wynne



**Informed Consent Special Education Teacher**



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Special Education Teacher Consent Form**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I agree to complete a written questionnaire. I am aware that any comments made in the questionnaire will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Education Teacher

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Claire Wynne

**Informed Consent Special Needs Assistant**



**Maynooth  
University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Special Needs Assistant Consent Form**

I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I agree to be present as a third party in the formal/informal recruitment process of pupils that I work with. I am aware that all data will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. I know that I can cease participation in this research at any point without supplying reason.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs Assistant

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

Claire Wynne \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 13. Updated Ethics**



**Maynooth University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

12<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Board of Management and Principal Consent Form**

Claire Wynne, a student on the Master of Education programme at Maynooth University, has permission to conduct an action research project with the pupil and parent in her class. I have read the information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I understand that the school's, teacher's, special needs assistants', parent's and pupil's names or any other identifying information will not be used in any aspect of this study. I am aware that due to school closure arising from Covid 19 regulations, correspondence with research participants via phone call, email, Zoom, Seesaw or Aladdin Connect may be used in data collection for the Action Research Project being facilitated by Claire Wynne.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson of the Board of Management

School's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Claire Wynne

**Updated Parent Consent**



**Maynooth University**  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

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

**Parental Consent Form**

I have read the updated information provided in the attached letter and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to both my own participation and my child's participation in this study. I am aware that correspondence via phone call, email, Zoom, Seesaw or Aladdin Connect may be used in data collection for the Action Research Project. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information. I know that I can cease participation in this research at any point without the need to supply a reason.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian

Signature

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

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

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

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

**Appendix 14. Child Assent**



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

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



**Child's assent to participate**

My parent(s)/guardian(s) have read the information sheet with me and I agree to take part in this research.

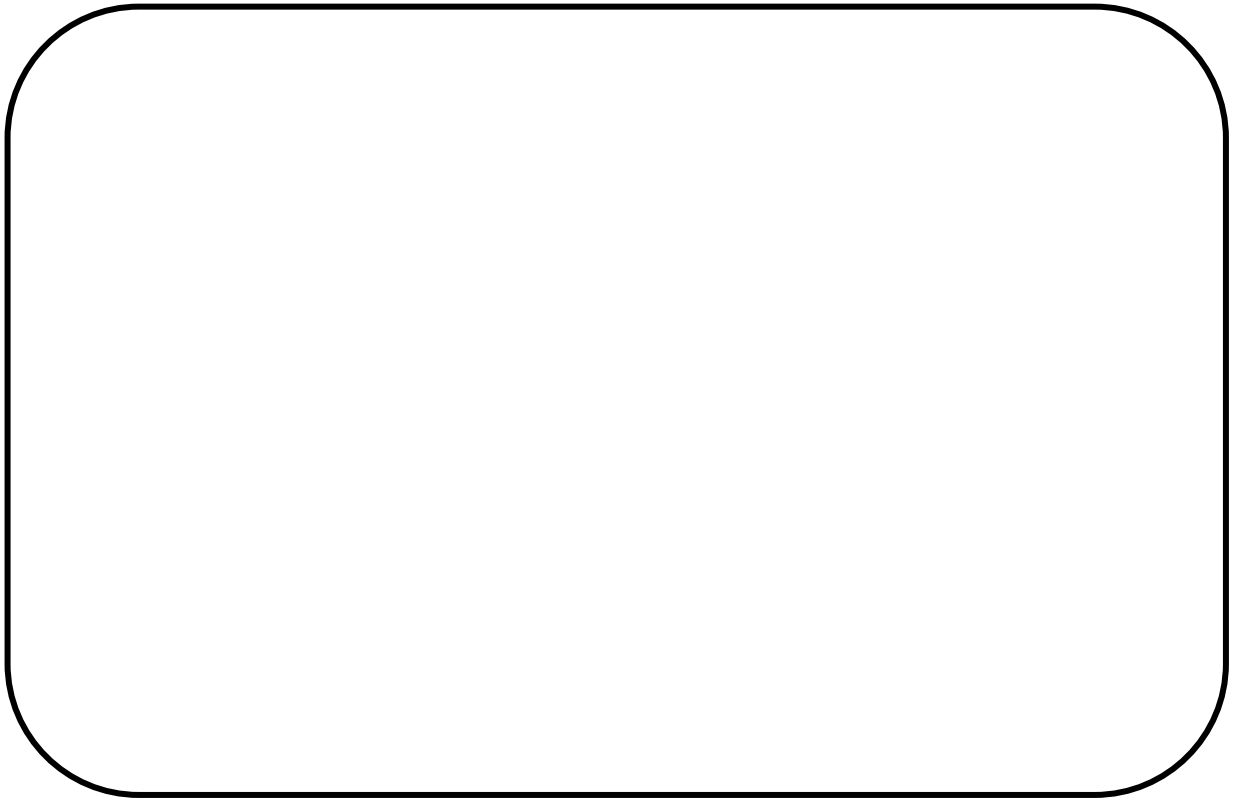
Name of child (in block capitals):

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

This is my handprint to show that I agree to take part in this



**Appendix 15. Informed Child Assent**



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



1<sup>st</sup> of December 2020

**Child's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

I am working on a project this year in college. I am trying to figure out if I can help you every day by listening to you and by chatting more to your parents. I think we could all work really well together. I really want to be a better teacher.

I would like to watch you and listen to you when you are in class. On Fridays, I would like to chat to you about activities that we might do for

the following week. I need your help to plan the things we will do. I will be writing some notes about the things I do and you do and the things we say.

Would that be okay with you? Circle one.

YES

NO



I would also like to keep a journal with you and your parents of all the work we do too.

Would that be okay with you? Circle one.

YES

NO



I have asked your Mum/Dad/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? We can also add your handprint if you like.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Claire Wynne



**Appendix 16. Amended Student Support Plan Parent**

<b>Student Support Plan</b>
<b>Strengths:</b>
<b>Interests:</b>
<b>Term 2</b>
<b>Target 1: Literacy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul> <p><b>Strategies that might help me in achieving my target:</b></p>
<b>Target 2: Literacy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul> <p><b>Strategies that might help me in achieving my target:</b></p>

<b>Target 3: Emotional/ Social</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul> <p><b>Strategies that might help me in achieving my target:</b></p>
<b>Additional Information:</b>
<b>Personnel involved:</b>  Ms Wynne  Parent  Pupil

**Appendix 17. Weekly Plan**

<p><b><u>Weekly Plan Week 3: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021</u></b></p> <p>Target 1:                  Dictation – short term memory, grammar, writing                  SNIP Programme 1: Revision spellings sessions 1 -6  <i>(1-4) can me like am to Dad went my come said was look dog boy the away see are cat they go you play going for yes this all get she and day we about Mum after</i></p> <p>(5-6) again, another, back, boy , because, been, brother, by, call, called, did, from, girl, have, here, if, just, laugh</p> <p>(7-8)came, don't, half, <i>house</i>, live, last, many, next, can't, door, first, got, help, jump, little, more, off</p> <p>Dictation : Revision of Sessions 1-8                  Choice of chalk board, writing frame, whiteboard, copy, coloured pencils, pens</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The house is next door.</li> <li>2. I don't need help to jump.</li> <li>3. I jump and laugh.</li> <li>4. My brother called first.</li> <li>5. I live in a little house.</li> <li>6. How many more?</li> <li>7. I came last.</li> <li>8. The girl got help.</li> <li>9. If you can't I will help.</li> <li>10. Here is another cat.</li> </ol>
<p>Rapunzel – retell the story                  Role play activity – Pretend to be Rapunzel in her castle</p> <p>Construction; make her castle, paint a picture of Rapunzel</p> <p>Working Memory; For two of the days there will be a three word recall and then I have added a four word recall for two days also (Introducing it slowly).</p>
<p>Comprehension:                  I found a comprehension on Seesaw that seemed suitable for Angeline. It has short sections which make it easier and then questions after each section. There are two pages so you could do it over a few days.</p> <p>I also made up a comprehension about a Trampoline as I know Angeline enjoys that too. I concentrated on 'why' questions.</p> <p>I know that Angeline loves 'make and do' activities. I wonder if she could make a little trampoline out of materials? Or she could paint etc.</p>
<p>Oral language activities – Continued use of the inference cards and the why/because cards.                  I have some further inferring activities too planned. Angeline seems to be doing well at</p>

<p>this target.</p> <p>Target 3: Social – Friendships</p> <p>Friendship Activity: Recap of Problem pals: Can Angeline remember the different problems that can happen in friendships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jealousy</li> <li>- Arguing</li> <li>- Telling Lies</li> <li>- Disagreeing</li> <li>- Peer pressure ( I have some Peer Pressure Thinking cards. Some of the names are unusual so feel free to change and I made up a little scenario too. Hopefully these help).</li> </ul> <p>This week we are moving onto the ideas of <u>Fact, Lie, Opinion</u>. Before the break I remember trying to explain this concept. Maybe it could be a fun game. Sometimes I pretend to have a badminton racket and ball. You could pretend to hit the ball to Angeline whilst saying the word ‘fact’. Encourage Angeline then to say a fact to you. It could be as simple as ‘The book is on the table’. Take turns then.</p> <p>I have planned for introducing the words <i>disagree</i> and <i>agree</i>. Again, this can be made fun whilst cooking or baking. For example, I think carrots are the nicest vegetable and get Angeline to use the words agree or disagree. If you are out for walks too there might be lots of other examples.</p>
<p>General Reading: Continued reading of the Fuzzbuzz book The Clan Next week we will move onto ‘The Haggis Hunt’.</p>
<p>Recipe: I have a recipe for a Pizza Base and a recipe for Banana Muffins. I am not sure which Angeline would prefer or maybe neither! She is doing very well with her recall.</p> <p>I have another Mind Teasers game ready. Thank you for the feedback on this.</p>
<p>Link to Froebelian Philosophy: Linking the planned new learning to prior learning Tovey (2013) uses the Froebelian approach in addressing the fact that adults who are supporting the connectedness of children’s own experiences should be ‘attuned to the distinctive nature of young children’s learning and development’ (as cited in Smedley and Hoskins, 2020: 1209).</p>

**Appendix 18. Shared Dialogue**

<b>Shared Dialogue/ Collaborative practice between Parent (Maria) and Teacher (Claire)</b>	
<p><b>Shared dialogue: Informing my planning</b></p>	<p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 2: 18.01.21)</b></p> <p>Target 3: Social – Friendships (Challenging when not in school)            Are you happy to continue with this target? I will upload a nice yoga page too as I know Angeline enjoys that.</p> <p>Friendship Activity: Problem pals – We could even think about using these words as vocabulary maybe at home if things cause upset or if she sees situations maybe on television or in a book she can start to name them.</p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw: 19.01.21 )</b></p> <p>In response to Problem Pals Friendship Activity:  <b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>I'm happy to continue with the friendship ideas. We have some lovely books from the Princess Poppy series and they cover things like lying, jealousy etc We have been reading these at night time so I've tied them in here for understanding.</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Fantastic! That will really help Angeline to have lots of different examples and links throughout the day. I must look up that series. I am always looking for new resources.</i></p>
<p><b>Shared dialogue: Informing my planning</b></p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw: 21.01.21 )</b></p> <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>We took a few minutes and a few examples to understand the game! When we got going we did reasonably well. I like this game Angeline enjoyed it so any more would be great. 1 - coins 2 - sit 3 -did not get at all but did explain what each person did 4 - looking with a prompt got eyesight! 5 - took a lot of prompting but eventually got colours 6 - loud noises 7 - Artic 8 - horse 9 - games 10 - warm</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Yes, I was thinking that number 3 would be hard!! Some of the language in the book is outdated but the concepts are great. Thanks for the feedback. I will be get some more of these activities ready!! Thanks so much Maria.</i></p>
<p><b>Shared dialogue: Informing my planning</b></p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw: 21.01.21)</b></p> <p>In response to a Friendship activity. Angeline was encouraged to give to describe the words, jealous, arguing, lying, peer pressure and disagreeing:</p> <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Jealousy-left out of being friends with Sarah then Angeline is jealous of Sarah being friends with Ciara. 2.</i></p>

	<p><i>Arguing-means that you are fighting and not being nice or kind. 3. Disagreeing-Angeline wants a sleepover but mammy says no. We are arguing about it and it's frustrating and have to make a deal about it together. 4. Telling Lies-Mammy said she'd make cookies for Selina but then did not. 5. Peer Pressure-hard to explain! I went through some more examples with Angeline. (Pseudonyms used throughout)</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>These are fantastic Maria. It sounds like Angeline has a really good understanding. I found more work on peer pressure and will add it into next weeks plans. Thank you Maria.</i></p>
--	---

**Appendix 19. Child- friendly Student Support Plan**



**Maynooth University**  
National University of Ireland Maynooth

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

<b>Student Support Plan</b>	
<b>Strengths:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love of books and stories</li> <li>• Likes role playing with stories</li> <li>• Very independent</li> <li>• Visual learner</li> <li>• Good sense of humour</li> </ul>
<b>Interests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballet dancing</li> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Barbie</li> <li>• Outside play- scooter /trampoline</li> </ul>
<b>Review of Term 1</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of stamps for each part of the day has been effective</li> <li>• Providing a choice of activity is an essential strategy</li> <li>• Angeline has read the Fuzzbuzz Book 7</li> <li>• Wonderland readers are being completed at home and Angeline enjoys these</li> <li>• Angeline can remember three of 3 words given. Further work to be completed on remembering a sequence of five given words</li> <li>• Angeline has completed session 12-20 of the SNIP 1 spelling programme</li> <li>• Angeline has completed the sixth hundred Dolch words</li> <li>• Angeline has commenced the seventh hundred Dolch list</li> </ul>
<b>Targets for Term 2</b>	
<b>Target 1: Literacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To write small/short dictation sentences in improving writing skills, grammar use and short term auditory memory skills (10 weekly) ☺</li> <li>• To write one sentence independently (Choice of three words given) 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 ☺</li> </ul>

Strategies:

- Use of recipe for pancakes. Parent calls out the recipe and pupil writes it down ☺
- Incorporation of rewards e.g. write the recipe and then make the pancakes, write the story and then read it to your class ☺
- Use of different writing materials e.g. copy and pencil, whiteboard, coloured pens, recipe book
- Picking a favourite book to read
- Re-write the story using visual prompts- using powerpoint of favourite fairytales ☺
- Using sentences incorporating SNIP spellings (10 sentences given for the week and two completed each day, 15.1.21) ☺
- Videos recorded with teacher saying three words. Angeline lists to the recording, waits five seconds and repeats the words to Mum.
- Creative /independent writing using a choice of three words (21/01/21)
- Using a simple pictures to target independent writing (23/02/21) (focus on interests in the pictures)

**Target 2: Literacy**

- To answer ‘why?’, ‘how?’ and ‘what do you think ?’ questions successfully
- To develop the skill of inference (Use of language what makes you think, how do we know etc. ) (Changed language use to be more child friendly 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021) ☺

Strategies:

- ✓ Use of inference picture cards (Language change- 27.01.21) ☺
- ✓ Use of word prompts when inferring / pictures and questions
- ✓ Use of stories with short comprehensions (27.01.21 Change to multiple choice answers) ☺
- ✓ Question Game: What is your favourite colour?  
Why do you like this colour?  
  
How does this colour make you feel?  
  
Who else likes this colour?  
  
What things can you find that are this colour?
- ✓ Visuals: pictures asking questions based on those e.g. How do you think the boy is feeling? Why? ☺
- ✓ Short comprehensions incorporating her interests of ballet and being on the trampoline. ☺



**Target 3: Emotional/Social**

- To expand the friendship group in recognising that another child can be friends with someone else too. (Maria has agreed to continue with this target despite school closure, 19.1.21)

Strategies:

- Use of social stories on friendship
- Use of videos online for body language (23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021) /sesame street
- ‘Problem Pals’ visual resources ☺
- Role-playing games 22/2/21 ☺
- Video/pictures displaying the behaviour and impact on others
- Maria is reading books in the Princess Poppy series with Angeline at night. These cover topics such as jealousy and lying (19.1.21) ☺
- Continue with peer pressure vocabulary
- Words disagree and agree known (27.02.21) ☺

**Review of additional work**

Completion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Hundred Dolch words (8.02.21) ☺

Completion of Book 8 The Clan (29.01.21) ☺

Completion of Book 9 The Haggis Hunt (11.02.21) ☺

Additional Wonderland readers being completed at home (Jan/Feb 21’) ☺

Recalling three words in sequence ☺ Jan 21’

Recalling four words in sequence ☺ Feb 21’

**Personnel involved:**

SET for Literacy and Social: Claire Wynne

Parent: Maria

Child: Angeline

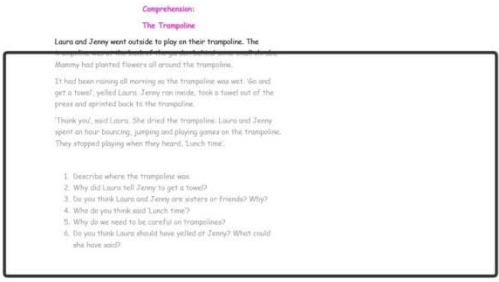

**Appendix 20. Weekly Plan Froebelian Pedagogy (Samples)**

<b>Froebelian Pedagogy</b>
<p><b>Data from Weekly Plan 1 : (11.01.21)</b></p> <p>Link to Froebel: Liebschner (1991) says Froebel wanted educators to respect children’s own ideas (as cited in Smedley and Hoskins (2020: 1203). Angeline came up with these fairytales in order of her top four.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Goldilocks and the three Bears</b></li> <li>2. <b>Little Red Riding Hood</b></li> <li>3. <b>Rapunzel</b></li> <li>4. <b>Hansel and Gretel</b></li> </ol> <p>These were the recipes that Angeline decided she would like to make to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fairy buns</li> <li>2. Pizza</li> <li>3. Pancakes</li> </ol>
<p><b>Data from Weekly Plan 2: (18.01.21)</b></p> <p>Link to Froebelian Philosophy: The Importance of Play.  <i>‘It was the adult’s task to teach children in their play in such a way that later they could discover these laws in their own play and subsequently in the reality of their own lives. Keeping this long term goal well in mind, Froebel then concentrated on certain short-term goals which he considered essential, or at least helpful, in achieving his final goal. Such short-term goals might be concerned with the ‘establishment of interest; the development of language; the experience of freedom and order in play, the development of concepts’ etc.’ (Liebschner, 1992:135).</i></p>
<p><b>Data from Weekly Plan 3: (25.01.21)</b></p> <p>Link to Froebelian Philosophy: Linking the planned new learning to prior learning            Tovey (2013) uses the Froebelian approach in addressing the fact that adults who are supporting the connectedness of children’s own experiences should be <i>‘attuned to the distinctive nature of young children’s learning and development’</i> (as cited in Smedley and Hoskins, 2020: 1209).</p>



**Appendix 21. The Child in the Student Support Plan**

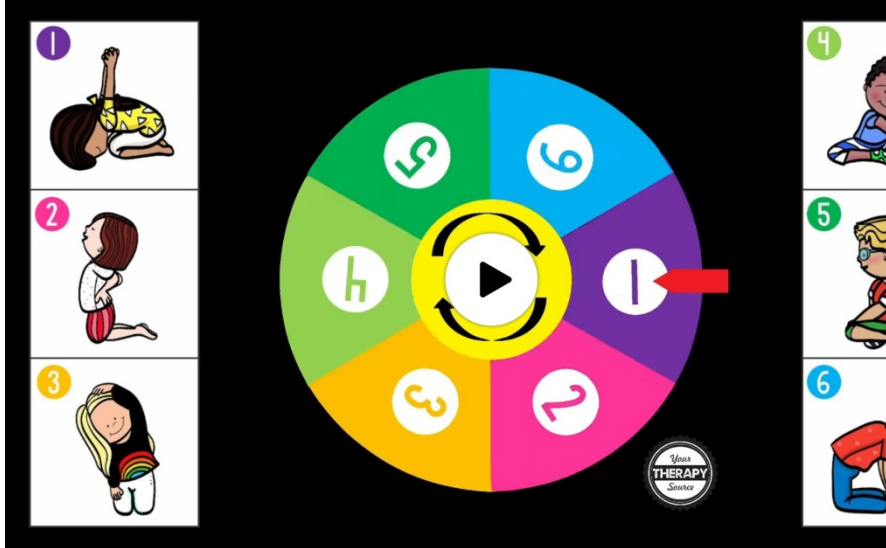
<b>Use of the Student Support Plan</b>	
<p>Data from Student Support Plan completed by Maria (parent in December)</p> <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Love of books and stories</b></li> <li>• <b>Likes role playing with stories</b></li> <li>• <b>Very independent</b></li> <li>• <b>Visual learner</b></li> <li>• <b>Good sense of humour</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 1: 11.01.21)</b>                      Goldilocks activity – retell the story: Blank level questions – why questions (See attachment)                      Role play activity – making the different sizes of chairs, bowls of porridge, dress up ad goldilocks, describe the difference in beds and chairs. What makes a bed comfortable? (Use playdough or blocks or lego/any construction materials)</p> <p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 2: 18.01.21)</b>                      Role play activity – Guess my character (Encourage Angeline to mime the activity and you could guess which pig she is pretending to be. Or you can upload a video to Seesaw and I can guess who she is). Or you could play: What did the Three Little Pigs pack in their suitcases, socks, t-shirts, jeans, shoes etc.....etc.</p> <p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 6: 22.02.21)</b>                      Friendship: How our Body Language can be used to show how we are feeling? Silent Movie Games and Role Play activities as I know Angeline likes those.</p>
<p>Data from Student Support Plan completed by Maria (parent in December)</p> <p><b>Interests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ballet dancing</b></li> <li>• <b>Reading</b></li> <li>• <b>Barbie</b></li> <li>• <b>Outside play-scooter /trampoline</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 1: 11.01.21)</b>                      General Reading:                      Fuzzbuzz reading – and the activity, choice of workbook activity to complete over the week                      Pick a book reading – choose a book from the shelf to sit and read as part of a break activity (Wonderland readers, fuzzbuzz readers, fairytale books)</p> <p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 2: 18.01.21)</b>                      'I know Angeline loves Ballet. I have a part 1 and a part 2 Comprehension for Monday and Wednesday. The part 2 is quite challenging so this can be completed over two days'</p> <p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 3: 25.01.21)</b>                      I also made up a comprehension about a Trampoline as I know Angeline enjoys that too. I concentrated on 'why' questions.                      I know that Angeline loves 'make and do' activities. I wonder if she could make a little trampoline out of materials? Or she could paint etc.</p>


**Appendix 22. Two Stars and a Wish Implemented (Samples)**



<b>Voice of the Child ‘Two Stars and a Wish’</b>	
<b>Data from Angeline</b>	<b>Data from Seesaw and Weekly Plans</b>
<p><b>(15.01.21)</b></p> <p><b>‘I wish for harder comprehension stories (but not too hard) questions were too easy for me this week’ ☺</b></p>	<p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 2 18.01.21)</b>                      Comprehension:                      Angeline flew through those comprehensions last week so I made up two more.                      I know Angeline loves Ballet. I have a part 1 and a part 2 Comprehension for Monday and Wednesday. The part 2 is quite challenging so this can be completed over two days.</p> <p><b>(Data from Weekly Plan 3 25.01.21)</b>                      Comprehension:                      I found a comprehension on Seesaw that seemed suitable for Angeline. It has short sections which make it easier and then questions after each section. There are two pages so you could do it over a few days.                      I also made up a comprehension about a Trampoline as I know Angeline enjoys that too. I concentrated on ‘why’ questions.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> Q1: back of the garden Q2: because the trampoline was wet. (Prompt Why?) because it was raining outside Q3: Best friends because they go to school together and they play together. Sister means a relationship in a family! Q4: Mammy Q5: Might sprain your wrist, break your ankle or hurt your head, leg or arms Q6: No suppose to use please and thank you. Jenny can you get me the towel please.  <b>Claire (audio recording):</b> Well done Angeline. You answered all of those questions so well. You are right the little girl should have said please and thank you to Jenny. You always have such super manners Angeline.</p>

**Appendix 23. Learning Through the Voice of the Child (Samples)**

<b>Angeline’s Voice Through Activities</b>	
<b>Froebel’s ideas involve practitioners finding a space for the ‘children’s own ideas and thinking, and thereby promote their personal development’ (Hargreaves et al., 2014:309).</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Angeline likes to make fairy buns and decorate them but she does not like to eat them.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 21.01.21)</b>                      We have been using recipes to develop writing skills, sentences structure, sequencing and working memory. Maria makes the recipe with Angeline to provide motivation over the course of the week.</p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Angeline made the fairy buns and decorated them with Daisy. She was very particular with the decorating which is funny as she won't even eat them</i></p> <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, those fairy buns look absolutely amazing. You and Daisy did the most fabulous of jobs decorating them. Is there one for me? Well done guys.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Angeline loves to be creative.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 27.01.21)</b>  <b>In response to try and make your own trampoline(Make and Do):</b></p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>We made our little trampoline!!! I'm afraid I'm not</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angeline loves yoga.</li> </ul>	<p><i>very artistic but we had fun trying!!!!</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 22.01.21)</b>                  In response to the following yoga activity:  <b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>We love this poster! We love yoga here.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 05.03.21)</b>                  In response to a Yoga activity:</p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>As you can imagine we enjoyed this.</i>  <b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>I thought so. I found it last night and loved it:) Great Angeline enjoyed.</i>  <b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline I am so glad you enjoyed your yoga today. I must do some yoga when I get home later. I am really glad you enjoyed doing it.</i></p>
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Learning through Collaboration : Valuing the Voice of the Child		
Angeline	Teacher	Angeline
<p>(December 2020) I asked Angeline what Fairytales and Recipes she would like to do after Christmas for the project. Her responses were as follows:</p> <p><b>Fairytales:</b> Goldilocks</p>	<p><b>Weekly Plan 3:</b> <b>(25.02.21)</b>                      Rapunzel – retell the story                      Role play activity – Pretend to be Rapunzel in her castle</p>	<p><b>Data from Seesaw (26.01.21)</b></p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Angeline made a Rapunzel tower.</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Angeline. This is incredible. I am so proud of you. The tower is just</i></p>

<p>and the Three Bears Little Red Riding Hood Rapunzel Hansel and Gretel</p>	<p><b>Weekly Plan 4:</b> <b>(01.02.21)</b></p> <p>Recall: Fairytale: Hansel and Gretel. Make a Gretel craft using a toilet roll. You can also make a little skirt and wrap it around the toilet roll too. (Only an idea as Angeline seems to be enjoying the crafts).</p>	<p>wonderful!!!!!!</p> <p><b>Data from Seesaw (22.02.21)</b></p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Here is our attempt at Gretel! Looking a bit worse for wear - I'm blaming the trip into the forest!</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Ha ha. She looks great!!!</i></p> <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, I love your Gretel. Well done. I think I should make one. Maybe I'll make the Hansel. You did super!</i></p>
<p><b>Recipes:</b> Fairybuns Pizza Pancakes</p>	<p><b>Weekly Plan 1</b> <b>(11.01.21)</b></p> <p>Recipe: 'Goldilocks loved porridge for her breakfast. I know that you love pancakes. I have added a recipe for pancakes. See if you can remember all of the different steps for making the pancakes. Can you start you own little recipe book or decorate a pancake menu for me that I could put on my fridge. I would love to try and make them'.</p> <p><b>Weekly Plan 2</b> <b>(18.01.21)</b></p>	<p><b>Data from Seesaw (21.01.21)</b></p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Angeline made the fairy buns and decorated them with Daisy. She was very particular with the decorating which is funny as she won't even eat them</i></p> <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, those</i></p>

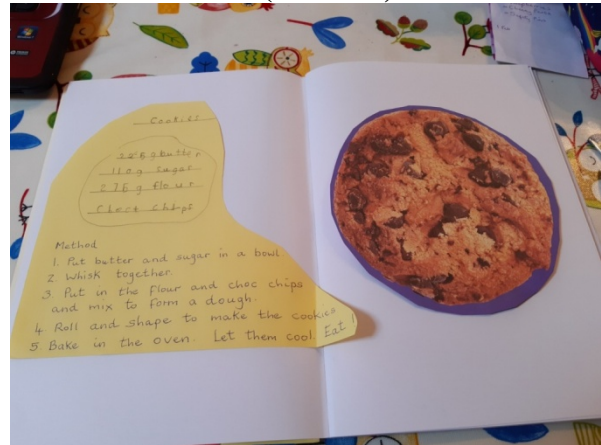
Another choice activity that Angeline chose is fairy buns. She could dress up as the Mammy and make fairy buns for the little pigs or one of the pigs making fairy buns for his Mammy. There is a fairy buns recipe in the folder.

Weekly Plan 3  
(25.01.21)

Recipe: I have a recipe for a Pizza Base and a recipe for Banana Muffins. I am not sure which Angeline would prefer or maybe neither! She is doing very well with her recall.

*fairy buns look absolutely amazing. You and Daisy did the most fabulous of jobs decorating them. Is there one for me? Well done guys.*

**Data from Seesaw (28.01.21)**



**Claire (audio recording):** *Angeline, you are making my tummy rumble. Look at that cookie. Oh my goodness and you did so well on your recipe and the journal you did a fantastic job putting it in. Thank you so much for doing that Angeline. Do you like cookies actually Angeline?*

**Data from Seesaw (29.01.21)**



**Maria wrote:** *Angeline helped make cookies with chocolate buttons.*


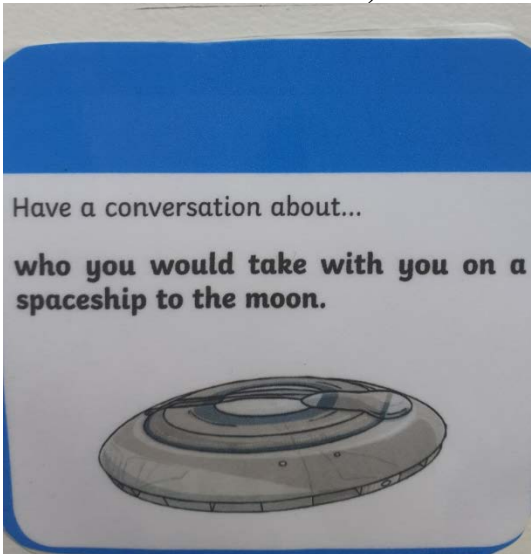
**Claire (audio recording):** *Angeline, those cookies look...I am smiling from ear to ear Angeline. Those cookies look unbelievable and so tasty. I bet you were such a super helper in making those cookies. They look delicious and scrumptious and mouth-watering. That is what they look like to me.*

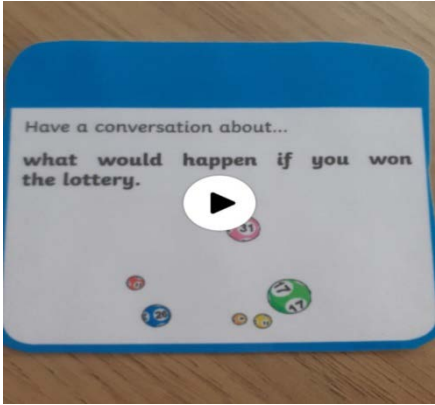


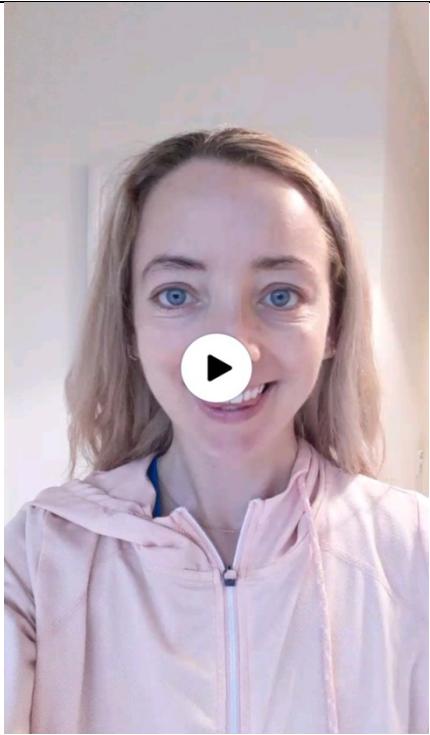
		<p><i>They are fabulous. Enjoy those cookies now later with a nice cold glass of milk. Have a lovely Friday Angeline. I miss you lots. You are working so so hard. I am so proud of you.</i></p> <p><b>Data from Seesaw (08.02.21)</b></p> <div data-bbox="815 421 1334 618" style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>We did get to make pizza last weekend! Instead of writing out the recipe this morning, we played a pizza memory game that you had previously included in our resource pack. Angeline enjoyed it.</i></p> <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, that pizza looks so delicious. Did you make that? Oh my goodness, it looks scrumptious. Well done. You're a great baker or cook I should say.</i></p>
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**Appendix 24: Organic Interventions**

<b>Interventions</b>	
<p><b>Intervention 1</b> <b>(11.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>Decision to send a Weekly Plan To Maria with a reference to Froebelian pedagogy</i></p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 14.01.21)</b> <i>‘I decided to email my weekly plans to Maria on a Friday. I want to do this in advance as I feel that the Seesaw can be overwhelming. Even though some of the activities I upload may be short it still looks like a lot on the screen. I do not want to bombard Maria and Angeline. The weekly plan is all about choice. Giving it in advance on a Friday might make it easier for Angeline and Maria to pick and choose activities on a given day that they might like to do’</i></p> <p><b>(Data from email 11.01.21)</b> <i>Email sent by Claire to Maria</i> <i>‘Also, I added a lot of documents. So obviously just pick and choose. I also put in a rough plan for the week of targets we discussed before Christmas’.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from email 22.01.21)</b> <i>Email sent by Claire to Maria</i> <i>‘Good morning Maria,</i> <i>Thank you so much for everything this week. I feel that Angeline worked very hard.</i> <i>I have attached the weekly plan for next week so that you will have a rough idea again of activities planned over the course of the week. As always absolutely no pressure to complete all of the work. Only do what is manageable’.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from my Weekly Plan 1 11.01.21)</b> Link to Froebel: Liebschner (1991) says Froebel wanted educators to respect children’s own ideas (as cited in Smedley and Hoskins (2020: 1203) Angeline came up with these fairytales in order of her top five.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. <b>Goldilocks and the three Bears</b></li> <li>6. <b>Little Red Riding Hood</b></li> <li>7. <b>Rapunzel</b></li> <li>8. <b>Hansel and Gretel</b></li> </ol> <p>These were the recipes that Angeline decided she would like to make to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fairy buns</li> <li>2. Pizza</li> <li>3. Pancakes</li> </ol>
<p><b>Intervention 2</b> <b>(14.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>Decision to send a Weekly</i></p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 14.01.21)</b> <i>‘I think that because Angeline will be completing her Two Stars and a Wish tomorrow that I will send her my own weekly feedback page on Seesaw too. It is challenging that I can’t engage in dialogue with her through this activity. I am hoping that through a feedback page I can focus on her strengths and allow Angeline to see how proud I am of</i></p>

<p><i>feedback page to Angeline</i></p>	<p><i>her great work'</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Weekly Feedback Page 15.01.21)</b>  <b>Week 1</b>                  Angeline, you worked so hard this week. I have missed teaching you but you made me smile every day with all of your great work. I loved hearing you say your Goldilocks story, practising your reading, your pancake recipe and much much more! I think you and Mammy deserve a big rest this weekend.</p> <p>I hope you are doing your ballet and yoga still. I am going to try to do some yoga this weekend myself.</p> <p>I am looking forward to working with you and Mammy next week☺                  Keep up the fantastic work!                  Claire</p> 
<p><b>Intervention 3 (14.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>Decision to continue with the Conversation Starters</i></p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 14.01.21)</b></p>  <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Angeline can voice record or draw a picture of this activity.</i></p>

	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 14.01.21)</b>  <i>‘Everyday Angeline surprises me with her answers and imagination. To incorporate the word ‘space’ into the activity and create a new game ‘space ball’ is just excellent. She was smiling the whole way through her video recording and you could see her delight in truly imagining the situation. I am going to continue with these conversation starter cards as Angeline loves is so imaginative and inventive and this will be a great opportunity to let her uniqueness shine and for me to learn more about her too’.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 26.01.21)</b>                  In response to Conversation Starter video:</p>  <p><b>Maria wrote for Angeline:</b> <i>I would go to Italy with Mammy and my family. I would sun bathe and paddle in the pool and go wind surfing. I would read on the sun lounger and relax. I would make sandcastles. I'd have some coke and ice cream and tuc crackers! I would get myself an iPhone so I could be grown up like Daisy. I would spend it on getting Barbie's sisters (dolls).</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>I absolutely love this!!! Can I go to Italy with you please Angeline? The vocabulary used is excellent. A very descriptive piece.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 4 (21.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>Working Memory Video increasing the number</i></p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 21/01/21)</b>                  In response to a working memory activity: I left a video saying three words. Angeline repeats back the three words given.</p>

	 <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Angeline got it on her first attempt! Surprise - robot – firework</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>That is excellent. Great work Angeline. How about two days next week of three words and two days of four words? Slow and steady.</i></p> <p><b>Maria wrote (22/01/21):</b> <i>Yes I think increasing to 4 would be good now.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 5 (21.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>Decision to include a Weekly Art activity</i></p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 21.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>‘I love how creative Angeline is. I realise that I don’t make enough time for this in the classroom as I feel under pressure to complete texts and activities. This can be very structured. I realise now that Angeline’s motivation increases when she is given fun projects to engage in. I am going to plan a fun art activity linked to the fairytale or story we do for her every week’.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from my Weekly Plan 25.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>‘I know that Angeline loves ‘make and do’ activities. I wonder if she could make a little trampoline out of materials? Or she could paint etc’.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 27.01.21)</b></p> <p>In response to try and make your own trampoline(Make and Do)</p>



**Maria wrote:** *We made our little trampoline!!! I'm afraid I'm not very artistic but we had fun trying!!!!*

**Claire wrote:** *Oh Wow. I love it. That is such a super picture. Well done Angeline.*

**(Data from my Weekly Plan 01.02.21)**

*'Recall: Fairytale Hansel and Gretel. Make a Gretel craft using a toilet roll. You can also make a little skirt and wrap it around the toilet roll too. (Only an idea as Angeline seems to be enjoying the crafts).'*

**(Data from Seesaw 27.01.21)**

In response to Hansel and Gretel creative activity:



**Maria wrote:** *Here is our attempt at Gretel! Looking a bit worse for wear - I'm blaming the trip into the forest!*

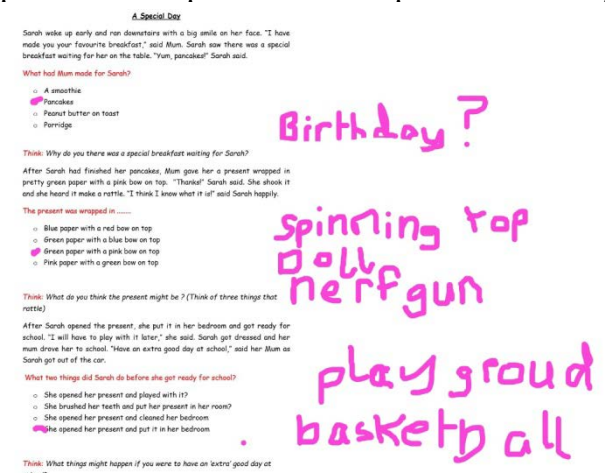
**Claire wrote:** *Ha ha. She looks great!!!*

**Claire (audio recording):** *Angeline, I love your Gretel. Well done. I think I should make one. Maybe I'll make the Hansel. You did super!*

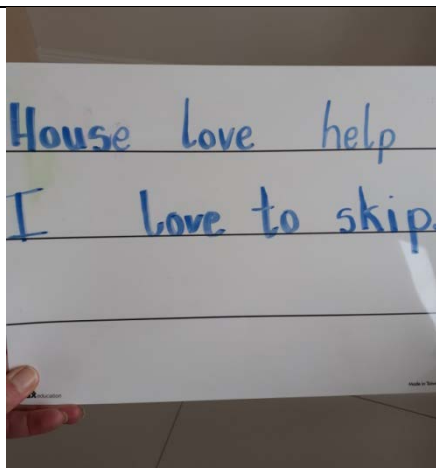
<p><b>Intervention 6</b> <b>(21.01.21)</b></p> <p>Decision to continue with Mind teasers activity</p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 21.01.21)</b> <b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 21.01.21)</b></p> <p><i>‘Maria asked for more of the Mind Teasers activities that I uploaded today. She said that Angeline really enjoyed the game. I need to make sure that I plan for more of these in my lessons as I know Angeline loves having fun and playing games. I want her to enjoy learning’</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 7</b> <b>(26.01.21)</b></p> <p>Decision to change language used for Inference</p> <p>(Parent and Teacher via Semi-structured Interview)</p>	<p><b>(Data from Semi-Structured Zoom Meeting 26.01.21)</b></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>It is challenging. Sure I even see like Daisy when she is answering questions no matter what the subject is History, Geography or whatever, an awful amount of their work would be inferred so it is a very important skill to have. I just don’t.... maybe it’s me using language, the language around it. Using the word infer I don’t know does that actually mean anything to her.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>I wonder then... that’s a really good point because I would agree with you there. Even when I am leaving the recording for her that it sounds strange I would never say it like that. I would probably say what would that make you think happened?</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes, maybe I need to have a think of the language around it.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Do you know what? I think for the recordings even if I change the wording of it, like that with the girl with the cast on, what do you think might of happened her, like I am sure that that would make it more applicable for Angeline.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes that might actually help.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Because that language and then in a few years we can say to her then, okay what can you think... oh a new word for that is... because Angeline is very good at relating words together like we said little, small. So then we could introduce the word. Do you know what? We probably just introduced that word too soon.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>I think that could be the case actually. Because as you said when your recording the video and I am repeating it back to her I am kind of going in my normal day to day I would never use that word.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>It actually now that we are even chatting about it, it’s kind of it is making me think why did I even use that word. I suppose it kind of just comes out when we are making the targets and the cards.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>And that’s what we are trying to do. We are trying to use the skill of inference but we very rarely use that word so I think when I use the word she is kind of looking at me. I know, what are you talking about Mammy?</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Okay so that is definitely something that we can change. Okay great. And then I suppose then Maria any suggestions then. Is there anything you would like more of or you feel Angeline would benefit from or anything?</i></p>

	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 26.01.21)</b>  <i>‘Through our conversation we ended up figuring out that the reason Angeline was finding the skill of inferring difficult was due to the actual language being used. I felt slightly embarrassed as I should have known that this word was abstract and unsuitable. It was actually really helpful to go back and forth and get to the bottom of something. I am glad that Maria felt confident in sharing that something was not working’.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 8 (26.01.21)</b></p> <p>Decision to include Multiple Choice answers in Comprehensions</p> <p>(Parent and Teacher via Semi-structured Interview)</p>	<p><b>(Data from Semi-Structured Zoom Meeting 26.01.21)</b>  <b>Maria:</b> <i>I know she really loves the comprehensions which is great.</i>  <b>Claire:</b> <i>Okay</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>We really love them. I suppose what happens is at the moment, I suppose I am trying to focus her on listening I tend to obviously read them because we probably get to a point where she has done enough kind of reading with books so I tend to read it.</i>  <b>Claire:</b> <i>Yes</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>And then she is answering the question so we do all of that orally at the moment which is fine. I don’t know sometimes when she answering questions it’s probably fine, I don’t know sometimes when she is answering them if the question is like what colour was the scarf she’ll just say red. I suppose I am thinking in terms of if you were actually writing it. I am thinking more structured kind of saying the scarf is red, the scarf was red. I don’t know is that something to think about or do we keep going with the oral side of it?</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Yeah I think it is probably what do we want, what is our goal? I know we talked about that. I suppose our goal is that she comprehends. So, in her knowing that the scarf is red I would kind of feel then she has comprehended it, but if you want her to develop then more of the writing skills, as in, when she is given a comprehension that she will have to write the answers, the scarf is red. I suppose it would depend on what we actually want, do we want to develop her actual understanding of the text first.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Well I suppose we do. I am actually thinking aloud now. The one that we had today, ‘The Holiday’. It was great. I suppose it was great because it brings it onto the next level of actually marking the answer. Putting an ‘x’ or whatever in a box but at least that’s bringing it on where I do have to do something. Rather than just orally giving an answer I know I have to mark the one I want, so that maybe more of those.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>That’s great. I’ll get some more of those ones. And how many would you feel in a week? Because obviously Maria, you’re teacher now. (Claire laughs)</i></p>



	<p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Probably for a bit if variety, I suppose two a week.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Two a week.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>She does love them I have to say but what I try do and even today we did the one on the holiday and she seen there was a trampoline one and she said ‘what’s that and I said well that’s a trampoline one we will do that tomorrow or the next day. She was like but I want to do it, but I say no no, because I want to just vary it. So I am thinking if we do it every second day. I think two at the moment is quite enough.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>I’ll sort that.</i>          (Data from Seesaw 02.02.21)          In response to Multiple Choice Comprehension ‘A Special Day’</p>  <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Angeline disappointed we didn't get to find out what the present was!!!! LOL</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Ha ha. That is so funny. You can tell her it was a Barbie. Or an accessory for Barbie. Great that it sparked her interest.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 9 (26.01.21)</b></p> <p>Independent Sentence Writing          (Parent and Teacher via Semi-structured Interview)</p>	<p><b>(Data from Semi-Structured Zoom Meeting 26.01.21)</b></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Is coming into play. My only little suggestion and I don't know at the moment I am kind of thinking we might wait a few weeks but you know with the dictation.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>The words, because Angeline is doing so well, I thought to push her a bit more and this might tie in then with not writing the sentences for comprehension if she is, would she be able to come up with her own sentence. Just one even a week using those words. Just that she gets a little....because she has such an amazing imagination she really does. I do laugh so much at the answers she does give.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>I know and I just type them, they're hilarious.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>They really are. They are absolutely brilliant. So I just thought</i></p>

	<p><i>it would be nice if she learned to get her voice down onto paper as well. Even if it was just one sentence and it doesn't matter if some of the spellings are wrong. It is just getting her use to you know she is able to write a sentence herself.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes so would we do that like... I am just ..give her a word, whatever it is, let's just say house and you have to write a sentence with the word house in it.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Yes you could do that definitely or you could even just say, 'Do you know what there are so many words there is there any sentence you could come up with?' and just see and like that just giving her a little more of the choice in it rather than you and I giving her the dictation. Let her just have and like that it's kind of just having I suppose things that we have done before. I'm trying to think of in school, what would you call it, free writing.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes, they are creative.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>So we could try that maybe one of the days. Look we have so much to be doing.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes we can try that maybe for next week. We will go with our dictation ones this week and then next week. I might just start off with two words or three words I don't want to crowd her and say here is a bank of words now go make up a sentence.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>No, she wouldn't.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>If I give her two or three words and see how we go.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Yeah, great idea.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Okay we'll try that.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from my Weekly Plan 4 01.02.21)</b>  <i>Independent writing: Write one sentence using any of the following three words:  House.....love.....help  I have a recording ready of this where I will model the process behind it. Hopefully this helps.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 03.02.21)</b>  In response to Dictation and Free Writing Video:</p>
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**Maria wrote:** *Angeline is doing well with the free sentence writing this week.*



**Claire (audio recording):** *Angeline, your free writing is absolutely wonderful. I really really think you are doing so well at it. Good job!*

**Intervention 10 (09.02.21)**  
Increase in Language Activities

**(Data from my Reflective Journal 09.02.21)**

*‘In an email last week Maria mentioned that Angeline is not receiving her Speech and Language at the moment as online is not optimal for her. I have decided to create extra language activities and upload these to Seesaw. I want Angeline to continue to progress’*

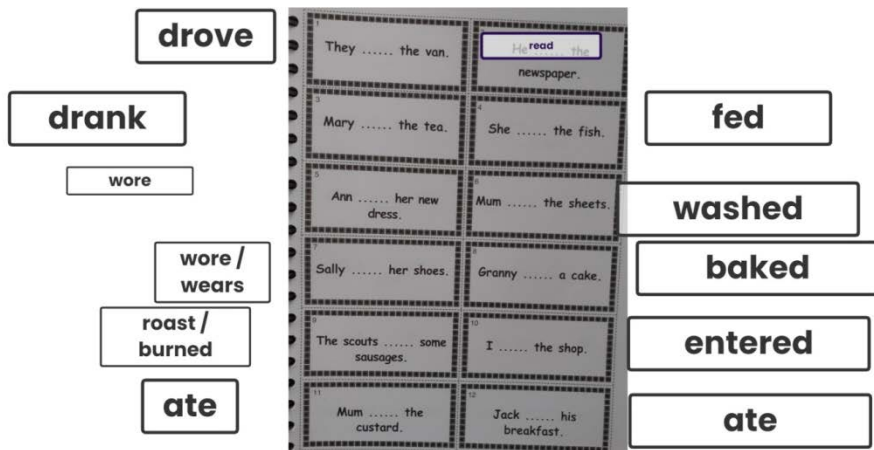
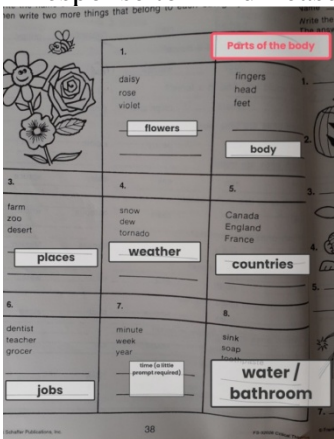
**(Data from Seesaw 21.01.21)**

In response to a Mind Teasers activity:

**Maria wrote:** *We took a few minutes and a few examples to understand the game! When we got going we did reasonably well. I like this game **Angeline enjoyed it so any more would be great.** 1 - coins 2 - sit 3 - did not get at all but did explain what each person did 4 - looking with a prompt got eyesight! 5 - took a lot of prompting but eventually got colours 6 - loud noises 7 - Artic 8 - horse 9 - games 10 - warm*

**Claire wrote:** *Yes, I was thinking that number 3 would be hard!! Some of the language in the book is outdated but the concepts are great. Thanks for the feedback. I will be get some more of these activities ready!! Thanks so much Maria.*

**(Data from Seesaw 22.02.21)**

	<p>In response to Revision of verbs activity:</p>  <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Fantastic work on your verbs. I am just looking over all your answers. I love that answer, I entered the shop. That was really really clever. And also, the scouts roast and burned some sausages, well done. An another one I was thinking for Sally and her shoes could be, Sally lost her shoes or Sally found her shoes so there are so many different verbs we can use. I am really proud of you. Fantastic work.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 23.02.21)</b></p> <p>In response to Mind Teasers Activity:</p>  <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Well done Angeline. You figured all of those out very very quickly. Well done, super work.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 11 (09.02.21)</b></p> <p>Pronoun he /she activities</p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 09.02.21)</b></p> <p>In response to Why/Because Cards:</p>



**Maria wrote:** *to get more food coz they are hungry and they have no food left. I explained to Angeline we should use he and not they.*

**Claire wrote:** *Yes, very important. Great you picked up on that.*


**Claire wrote:** *I had a look there Maria and I found some cards that might help. They are related to what is she/he doing so they will encourage he/she language. I will upload some for the week after midterm.*

**(Data from my Reflective Journal 09.02.21)**

*'Today Maria noted that Angeline was using the word 'they' instead of 'he' for a why/because card. I have found resources that I am going to try for next week as I know this can be a difficult concept for children. It will be an opportunity for Angeline to get into a habit of using the correct pronoun'.*

**(Data from Seesaw 23.02.21)**

In response to Language Cards: What is he/she doing?

	 <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>I think that's really, really clever Angeline that you think she is writing a song. It actually does look like that in the picture, doesn't it? I wonder what her song might be about? What do you think? And you think she is in her office, it does look like that as well doesn't it? She has a nice table and I can see the door. It's not very colourful her office. It is very plain isn't it. So well done. I think you thought about that really, really well. Super!!</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 12 (12.02.21)</b></p> <p>Emailing Student Support Plan</p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 12.02.21)</b>  <i>'I am going to send Maria a copy of the Student Support Plan. I think it would be optimal before our Zoom meeting that she can see the progress so far. I have put in smiley faces of targets achieved so that Maria can show Angeline how she is reaching her goals. I know that Maria values Angeline's input in her plan'.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from email sent by Claire to Maria 12.02.21)</b></p> <p><i>'Good morning Maria,</i></p> <p><i>I hope you are all well. I have attached a weekly plan for the week after midterm. I also have been looking at the Student Support Plan and wanted to send it on to you and Angeline. I used smiley faces so that you can show Angeline how well she is doing'.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Student Support Plan)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Visuals: pictures asking questions based on those e.g. How do you think the boy is feeling? Why? 😊</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Short comprehensions incorporating her interests of ballet and being on the trampoline. 😊</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Intervention 13 (23.02.21)</b></p> <p>Independent Story Writing</p>	<p><b>(Data from Semi-Structured Interview 23.02.21)</b></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>I think we introduced there the last time the independent sentence writing. I think that has worked really, really well.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Great.</i></p>

**Maria:** *And that's kind of something maybe we could kind of build on maybe a little bit. Because I was just getting her to write the sentence, again give her the choice, I've three words here, you can pick one and you can just write a sentence all by yourself, whatever you want to write. Now some days, like today, she picked name and she wrote a really short one, My name is Angeline. I'm just going, yes that's fine. Other days we can then have a big long story and I'm trying to shorten it down with her. Yeah, it would be nice and I suppose we are only starting this, but it would be nice to move on that she could nearly write a little story. And when I say little story I mean maybe like three lines or four lines.*

**Claire:** *Well, I would agree with you. I feel that she is just ready and think that's why the last day I was saying about the independent writing, because she has a great imaginations and she is well able so I have this little book, and let's say there is a picture at the top of it and then there is a selection of words at the bottom. So she would have the words to choose from. So like that I do think she would be able to come up with a mini story, I am thinking when we go back to school or I can even I could even start next week that, she would be able to just pick a few words, and like that on one day she might only write one sentence to do with the picture, and then on another day she might decide to write three.*

**Maria:** *Yeah, I'm just wondering on that. It's hard to know what way to start. I wonder would we be better off just showing her a little picture first without having to use specific of words.*

**Claire:** *Yes, definitely.*

**Maria:** *For example, getting her to write a few little sentences about the picture. You know it could be a little picture of a mermaid, you were giving mermaids today. It be could be like, I like mermaids, they swim in the sea. They have nice tails. I don't know, whatever the story is but just three sentences rather than, a kind of, I want her to come up with the sentence rather than, because she is well able if I say to her put the word old in a sentence, she is well able to do that but again it's still kind of being prescriptive isn't it kind of?*

**Claire:** *I actually, that's a great point Maria. So yes, why don't we just start then with a picture. I'll just put up a picture. Maybe, so do you think then I should target it then to things that she likes to begin with so whether?*

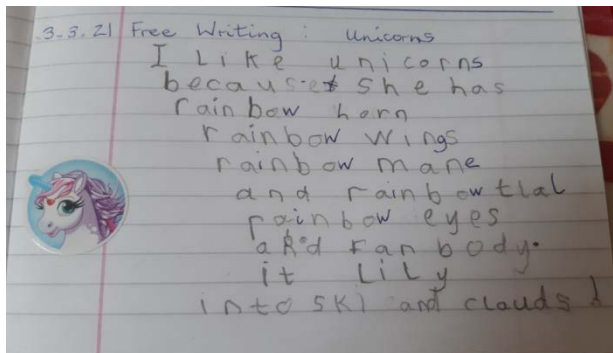
**Maria:** *Oh absolutely.*

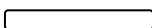
**Claire:** *It's Barbie or if I find ones of trampoline or pancakes she can come up with it. Okay great.*


**Maria:** *And I think then as well we don't want this to become, I don't want this to become a one page story either, I just want a few little*

	<p><i>lines. But I guess the simpler the picture the better.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Okay, perfect.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Because otherwise she'll want to describe everything in the picture and we'll never kind of get the task done you know that way. Too, we kind of just want to end up with two little, three little lines whatever it is.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Yes</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes, so simple little pictures would be good. If it something that she likes.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>It makes a big difference</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>She'll engage more. And then I think once she gets quite established with that, then I think we kind of move to say, okay here is the picture of the mermaid and you have to write a few lines but you have to use the word tail, swim and shells in it. Then we can kind of be prescriptive because it is making her think a little bit more.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Or, do you know what, I am just thinking of that there, rather than even giving her the word bank, let's say on a Monday we could come up the wordbank together use it as a vocabulary building, you know, have the picture, do you remember like we've done before with the Elkan programme, write all the words around it.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes, that's true.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>And then she would have her own word bank.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes, that would be good.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>To build on it as well. So I suppose that is probably something, the next question is what could we do differently but that probably is answering it in the same way.</i></p> <p><b>Maria:</b> <i>Yes, that covers that as well.</i></p> <p><b>Claire:</b> <i>Absolutely.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 23.02.21)</b>  <i>'Our decision last time was to introduce independent writing. It is hard for me because obviously I am not there when Angeline is completing this but Maria says that it is working really well. We then began to chat about progressing this further. I suggested a set of words but Maria felt it was too prescriptive and not a viable approach for starting off. We decided on beginning with a simple picture and allowing Angeline to just write whatever she wanted to based on the picture. I was truly delighted that Maria did not just agree with my</i></p>
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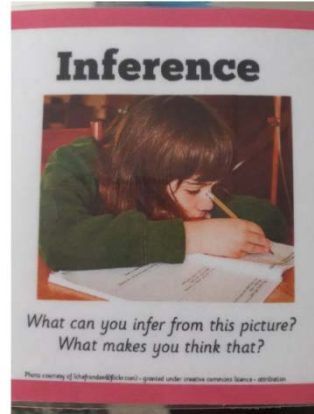
	<p><i>initial idea. It has got me thinking about parent/teacher meetings and that these should be a space for shared knowledge but at present this is not the case. It is usually the teacher who has full control and makes the final decision. We don't give parents the opportunity to reflect on the success and more so failure of strategies or targets in a SSP'.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 03.03.21)</b>                  In response to Independent Story writing:  <b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>This is Angeline's attempt today. She had lots of ideas and got excited trying to get it down on paper! It's a good start - we can progress to work on layout down the line.</i>  <b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Exactly!! I think this is brilliant and the fact that she is excited too is wonderful. Her motivation will be great going forward. I must pick her up a notebook that she would like and we can use it as her special story copy.</i>  <b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, I have enjoyed reading your story so much about unicorns. It is a wonderful story and I can see how hard you worked in everything you wrote about the unicorns so well done. Super!</i></p> 
<p><b>Intervention 14 (24.02.21)</b>                   Videos for Body Language</p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 24.02.21)</b>  <i>'Maria asked yesterday about some videos to support Angeline's understanding of body language and emotions. This first of all prompted me to think that I should have foreseen this challenge for Angeline as I know she is a visual learner. I also think that in the classroom resources are at my fingertips but online can be a challenge'.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 25.02.21)</b>                  In response to Sesame Street Video to teach about body language:</p>



	 <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>Angeline found this video both mesmerising and hilarious!! She did get the various emotions –happy, sad, mean, angry.</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>Ah that is brilliant. I actually wasn't sure whether she would enjoy it! That's great. You could re-watch for tomorrow and pause at certain points and ask her to mirror the body language or do the opposite body language.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 15</b> <b>25.02.21</b></p> <p>Mentioning returning to school to ease the transition</p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 25.02.21)</b> <i>'I have started to mention school in some of the audio recordings just to give Angeline a sense of time and going forward. I think that if Angeline is aware we will be returning to school soon that this might help with the transition'.</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 01.03.21)</b> In response to Conversation Starter on Superhero powers. <b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, I absolutely love this answer. Oh my goodness, so you would go up to the sky and you would fly, you would do a loop the loop and a somersault and a double flip and a love heart. I can even imagine you doing that and that you would turn invisible. You would also have super strength. You would be amazing. Do you know what? You are going to have to draw a picture of all of that as I would love to put it up in my classroom. Well done Angeline, I loved hearing that about your super power. Very cool!!</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 02.03.21)</b> In response to Independent writing. <b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline, this is absolutely amazing! Oh my goodness, your story about Barbie. Do you know what? That has to go up in the classroom when we get back. You are such a wonderful story writer. I am so proud of you and you should be so proud of yourself! Well done.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 16</b></p>	<p><b>(Data from Seesaw 26.02.21)</b> In response to Inference Card:</p>

(26.02.21)

Uploading the Zones of Regulation and Yoga

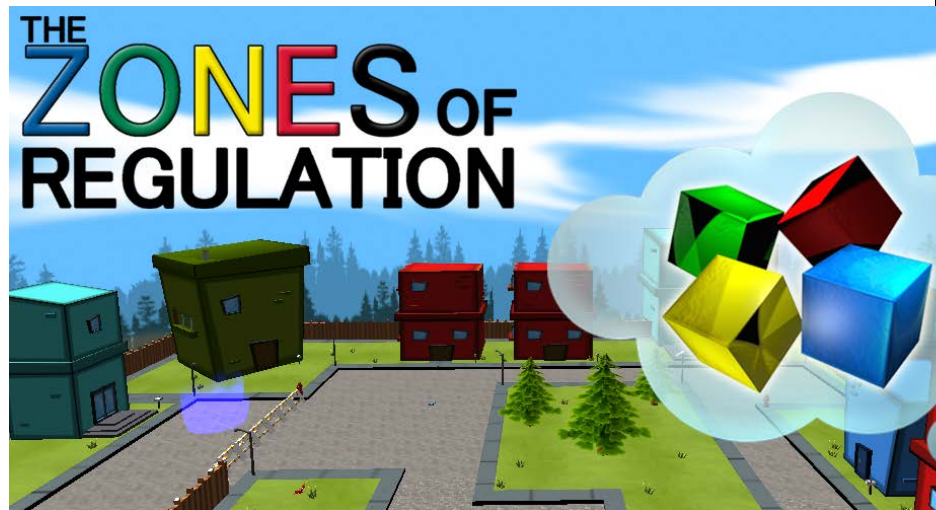


I think she is feeling tired. She wants a break from writing. Her hands are tired.

**Maria wrote:** *I think Angeline is transferring how she's feeling with home schooling onto this girl!!! LOL!!!*

**Claire wrote:** *Ha ha oh poor Angeline. She has worked so hard. Thankfully it is Friday and she can have a rest for the weekend:)*

I uploaded this video in response to Angeline feeling tired. It had a cosmic yoga link attached as Angeline liked a previous yoga activity.




**(Data from my Reflective Journal 26.02.21)**

*'Maria commented that Angeline was feeling like the girl in the picture. I'm struggling as if this was in the classroom I would have been able to respond immediately. I felt guilty as I was so focused on literacy activities that I had failed to check in with Angeline's emotional wellbeing. In the classroom using the zones is practised daily so I don't know why I forgot to implement. I will continue to upload small check in using the Zones. I know Angeline really enjoys yoga so I need to focus on this too!'*

**(Data from Seesaw 05.03.21)**

In response to a Yoga activity:

	 <p><b>Maria wrote:</b> <i>As you can imagine we enjoyed this.</i></p> <p><b>Claire wrote:</b> <i>I thought so. I found it last night and loved it:) Great Angeline enjoyed.</i></p> <p><b>Claire (audio recording):</b> <i>Angeline I am so glad you enjoyed your yoga today. I must do some yoga when I get home later. I am really glad you enjoyed doing it.</i></p>
<p><b>Intervention 17 (26.02.21)</b></p> <p>Sending a card and addressed envelope to Angeline</p>	<p><b>(Data from my Reflective Journal 12.02.21)</b></p> <p><i>'Angeline told me in the zoom that she missed her SNA. I asked her would she like to write a card. I just feel that it must be so strange for Angeline to be faced with online learning. Going from daily interactions with so many adults and other children to being at home. I am a video on the screen now. The shared interactions with her SNA were invaluable to her. I think the relationship between a child and their SNA is something that could definitely be studied in the future as I genuinely think their input in a SSP is invaluable. I wonder are they given enough recognition though?'</i></p> <p><b>(Data from Seesaw 26.02.21)</b></p> <p>In response to a card and stamped address envelope I sent Angeline so that she could write a note and post it to her SNA:</p>



**Maria wrote:** *Claire I meant to say last week we got the card you sent to forward on to (named SNA). Angeline wrote a lovely message and we posted it. She has just gotten a reply from (named SNA) and was so excited! (named SNA) included some lovely unicorn sticker so Angeline has gone running off to decorate her room! If (named SNA) is in the school at the moment please send on my thanks. This was a lovely idea so thank you!*

**Claire wrote:** *Awh that has made my day Maria. Delighted that Angeline got (named SNA's) card. (Named SNA) is so thoughtful with the stickers. I can only imagine how excited Angeline is:) No problem at all. Just said it would be something nice for the two of them:)*