

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!

Welcome to the latest edition of the Froebel Trust newsletter where we would like to share with you some of the work that is supported by the Trust, as well as upcoming events and training.

The Impact of Our Funding

Research

One of the main strands of our work is to fund research projects which relate to early childhood, and we are pleased to be able to update you on two projects which finished earlier this year.

4P's Project – University of Reading, Maria Kambouri-Danos

In 2016, the Trust awarded a research grant to Maria Kambouri-Danos and her colleagues at the University of Reading, for a project which involved the development of a practitioner-parent partnership model underpinned by Froebelian principles. The project's main research question was: What should be the key features of a developing partnerships model for early years, which aims to promote parent-practitioner partnership based on Froebelian principles?

The model involved gaining the perspectives of parents and early years practitioners on how they work together in the interests of children, and how they view play as a starting point for their partnership. Play was chosen to form the basis for bringing parents and practitioners together to talk about partnership because of its importance in the early years and the clear association with the well-being of children and families.

The team developed, delivered and evaluated four partnership sessions specifically designed for early years practitioners and parents, where the exchange of ideas was encouraged and participants were made to feel welcome in an inclusive environment. These sessions emphasised the importance of two-way dialogue as well as providing time and space for parents and practitioners to share relationships of trust and respect.

Through their work the team were able to find out from parents and practitioners the challenges and barriers they perceive in partnerships, which included time, communication, training and issues relating to diversity.

Overall, the project recognised the complexity of building successful practitioner-parent collaborations, and suggests for parents and practitioners to have systematic opportunities to discuss and share ideas, in order to develop trusting relationships and constructive partnerships between them. Support from Government, local authorities, and other professional bodies for CPD sessions can help to create this space for practitioners and parents to collaborate. Making the time to talk as part of the nursery experience is also essential, and can be helped by continuing to support the Key Person approach as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Playful Writing – Canterbury Christ Church University, Kate Smith

This research carried out by Kate Smith was a longitudinal study over one year which set out to explore to how Froebelian ideas of play, as 'creative self-activity and spontaneous self-instruction', could support children's engagement with mark-making, drawing and writing.

Two main research questions were posed:

- How do playful pedagogical practices based upon Froebelian principles support children's mark-making, drawing and writing?
- How are teachers able to listen with care to children's 'playful writing' activities in reception classrooms?

The intention was to provide empirical evidence that showed how the application of Froebelian principles within playful pedagogical practices may help develop opportunities for children's mark-making, drawing and writing in school. In doing so, the project aimed to encourage practitioners to think about literacy and play not as separate, but as entwined, and therefore limited if narrowed towards adult-led activity with specific curriculum outcomes in mind.

The research participants were a group of six reception teachers, who met monthly over the period of one year to discuss their perceptions about play, mark-making, drawing and writing, and to develop a community of practice. The group's activities provided a space for participants to engage in reflective dialogue with each other about their pedagogical practice, and critically explore ways in which they were able to listen to children in co-constructing a deeper understanding of children's multiple meaning-making, creativity, imagination and connection to the world within playful writing activity.

The main themes which emerged through teacher discussions based on photographs, videos and observations of children included:

- The importance of identifying shared professional values from which to begin to define playful writing
- The recognition that discourses of play – who articulates these, and how these change over time – frame the language used to describe play in the classroom
- The importance of the role of the adult
- That social function, spontaneity and movement, and materiality are identifying characteristics of playful writing

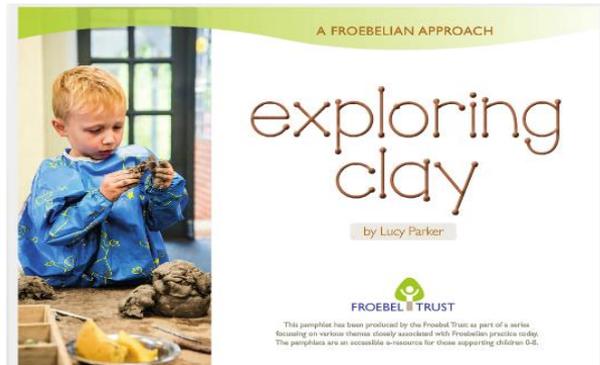
The teachers were also able to pinpoint two aspects of their role in supporting these characteristics. First by developing sensitivities to children's play, and second by creating environments that encouraged and facilitated, or nurtured, playful writing opportunities.

By the end of the project, the group advocated the need to work with Key Stage One teachers to develop a shared definition of playful writing and advance the importance of 'tuning into' children through careful observation. In summary, reception teachers who were given time and space to explore and reflect on how their children engaged in writing through play were able to conceptualise their pedagogy and practice with more clarity and meaning

You can read a full summary of both reports on our website: www.froebeltrust.org.uk

Pamphlet Project

We are delighted to announce that we have now launched our online pamphlets which focus on various themes closely associated with Froebelian practice today.

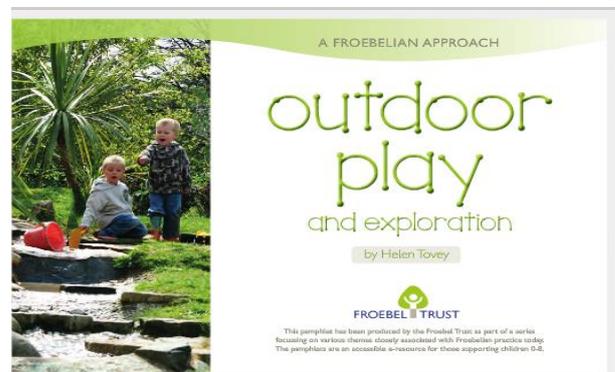


The pamphlets, which were initiated by Maurice Craft, are written by authors and practitioners who are experts in their field.

The first two pamphlets in the series are 'Outdoor Play' written by Helen Tovey, and 'Clay' written by Lucy Parker. The series has been edited by Jane Read.

The pamphlets can be read online or downloaded at www.froebel.org.uk/resources/pamphlets

We will be working towards adding more pamphlets to the series in the future.





Education

Kolkata Project

The Kolkata Project began in 2012, with the aim of supporting children in Kolkata who are unable to take up their entitlement (from the age of 6) to state funded education, due to living in very difficult circumstances. A team of Froebelian practitioners, including Sara Holroyd, Kate Razzell and Jill Leyberg, met with a variety of NGOs who provide education and support to these children based in small buildings within Police compounds in Kolkata, also known as Nabadisha Schools.

Through the relationship with the Kolkata Police, the team of Froebelians were introduced to a local education NGO called the Parivar Charity who taught children within the Nabadisha Schools.

From 2012 to 2016, the team of Froebelians made bi-annual visits to Kolkata in order to forge relationships with the Parivar teachers, gain an understanding of their level of teacher training, and understand the level of need of the children. The team delivered a comprehensive training programme in Froebelian practice and principles.

Since 2016, the Trust has focussed its support on creating a more sustainable approach to Froebelian training in Kolkata. A new team of Froebelian trainers, Felicity Thomas and Thelma Miller with the support of Asim Dutta developed a partnership with a local school in Kolkata – the Modern High School for Girls – who also oversee a teacher training organisation called the Modern Academy of Continuing Education (MACE).

Over the past two years, Thelma and Felicity have trained six MACE teachers in Froebelian principles, to ensure that these teachers could continue to visit, sustain and develop Froebelian practice for Parivar teachers in Kolkata, as well as other NGOs working in Nabadisha schools.

Thelma, Felicity and Asim made their final visit to Kolkata as part of the Trust's funded project in

February in order to deliver this objective and equip the MACE teachers with the skills and confidence to continue to embed Froebelian practice within the education system in Kolkata.

The project team were pleased to learn that the MACE training was a great success. Teachers reported the following key outcomes as a result of their training:

- Teachers had an increased understanding of the general development of children, and used this to relate to real case studies
- Teachers had an increased understanding of classroom management, introducing the idea of a timetable to structure the sessions, with a balance between activities that nurture the child's interest and ones that are adult-led
- Teachers' English language skills had improved, as they learned how to structure sentences to help children learn English nouns in context
- Teachers had improved confidence in working with other teachers. This was identified as a challenge previously due to the lingering discriminatory effects of the caste system which still permeate society

Another highlight from the final visit to Kolkata was the Froebel Conference, which was delivered by the Parivar teachers. The conference had 71 delegates in attendance, with representation from a range of local NGOs.

The Froebel Trust is very grateful to all of those who have been involved in the Kolkata Project since its inception, and would like to extend our sincere gratitude for their important work.

Upcoming Events

International Froebel Society Conference 6-8 September 2018, Hiroshima, Japan

The 8th International Froebel Society Conference will be held from 6-8 September 2018 in Hiroshima, Japan. The conference theme for this year is *Education for*

peace: Froebelian contributions at global and local levels.

The Froebel Trust is supporting a number of its PhD bursary holders to attend the conference, and we look forward to them reporting back on their experience.

More details and information about how to book can be found on the conference website at: <http://www.naruto-u.ac.jp/facultystaff/hyuji/ifs/index.html>.

Edinburgh Froebel Network Conference 22nd September 2018

The 10th annual Edinburgh Froebel Network conference, with funding from the Froebel Trust, will take place on 22nd September 2018.

The focus of the conference this year is *Gifts for our Future: Perspectives on Play*. The conference will be held at the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms.

Last year there were over 300 delegates with attendees describing the conference as uplifting and inspiring! This year the conference is going to be even bigger so book your place early to avoid disappointment.

For more information and details on how to book tickets, please visit: <http://edinburghfroebelnetwork.org.uk/>

Training Opportunities

Froebel Short Courses

On behalf on the Froebel Trust, Early Education is delivering a unique modular Froebel Course that is delivered around England by experienced peripatetic Froebelian trainers.

The courses were designed in response to requests from practitioners in early childhood education for short, practically focused local courses supporting them in understanding, studying and implementing a

Froebelian approach to their work in both group and home settings.

We have had a wonderful response to the courses that have been delivered to date, with participants commenting:

- "Really relevant – able to implement immediately"
- "I feel enthused and motivated about the simple changes I can make to improve my practice and the learning environment"
- "Understanding the connectedness of children's learning"
- "I feel new ideas especially for open-ended activities and adults to be based in the activity playing too"
- "The tutors were really enthusiastic and ignited a fire back into my practice."
- "My children will benefit from my knowledge as I will understand their behaviour more and where it comes from. I will know how to support their development."



For more information and details on how to book, please visit www.early-education.org.uk/froebel

New Grant Funding Rounds 2018

Open Call Research Grants

We are pleased to announce the dates for our Open Call Research grants for 2018. The Fund will open for applications on the 23rd July, with a closing date of the 3rd September. All applications must submitted by this



date. Please be sure to check the Trust's website for more information.

PhD Bursaries

The Trust will also be opening a new PhD Bursary funding round this year. The Fund will open for applications on the 21st May, with a closing date of the 29th June. All applications must be submitted by this date. Please be sure to check the Trust's website for more information.

Grants Awarded

Strategic Partner Grants

We are pleased to announce that the Trust has now awarded Strategic Partner Grants in 2018 to:

University of Roehampton - £22,000.

Canterbury Christ Church University - £12,000.

Edinburgh Froebel Network - £11,750.

University of Cape Town - £9,529.80.

Strategic Partner Grants were introduced in 2016 as a way to consolidate the Trust's support of professional development, bursaries, training and small research projects at key early years education centres across universities in the UK and internationally. Applications are conducted through invitation only.

Research Activity Grants

We are pleased to announce that one of the Trust's PhD bursary holders from Roehampton University, Vasiliki Eirinaki, has received a Research Activity Grant to present her research at the World Association for Infant Mental Health (WAIMH) Congress in May 2018.

The subject of Vasiliki's research is: *The effect of maternal postnatal depression on infants' verbal and non-verbal communication skills.*

Vasiliki was chosen to present out of over 2080 abstract submissions and she will be presenting on 'Postmental Depression and Anxiety and the Baby.'

We look forward to Vasiliki reporting back to us after the conference and we will post her report on our website.

General Updates from the Trust

Staff update

Liz Biskar joined the Froebel Trust as Grants Manager at the end of November last year. Liz most recently worked at Freedom from Torture, a human rights charity which provides holistic counselling to asylum seeking torture survivors in the UK. Liz brings a wealth of knowledge and experience of grants, project management, and the UK charity sector. She currently serves as a Trustee at Refugee Action Kingston.

We are currently recruiting for a new Director of Education, Research & Strategy. For more details on this role please go to:

<https://jobs.theguardian.com/job/6715140/director-of-education-research-and-strategy>

GDPR

On 25th May, new European data protection law, GDPR, will come into effect. Part of the regulations effect how, when and for what purpose we can contact you and this will affect our future newsletter distribution. We will shortly be contacting all subscribers to renew your consent to continue sending these communications as without it, we have to remove you from the mailing list.

Froebel Archive

The University of Roehampton Library is pleased to announce the launch of the University of Roehampton Archives Catalogue.

There are a number of special collections including The Froebel Archive for Early Education. The collection contains a broad range of documents which includes over ten thousand photographs and more than three hundred artefacts.

For more information about the archives and how to access the material visit:

<https://calmview.roehampton.ac.uk/>

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