
Froebel Trust Practice Development Grant 2018-19



June 2019

Greengables Nursery & Family Centre
Catriona Gill, Head Teacher



Project Outline

Part 1 aimed to:

- develop a whole staff understanding of Froebelian Principles and how these underpin our pedagogy through a collegiate book study.
- To share this understanding with parents and families through our Vision, Values & Aims and our Curriculum Rationale.

Part 2 aimed to:

- use collaborative enquiry to develop our continuous provision and deepen our pedagogical approach.
- link our work to the Craigmillar Tapestry Project
- link our work to the Fruitmarket Gallery RE: GENERATION project developing cross generational and community collaboration and working with two artists who explore ideas of community and place and a ceramic artist. (This is dependent on their own project funding)
- focus on the following Froebelian principles through the introduction of the occupations of sewing and clay in both the Nursery & Family Centre.
 - The relationship of every child to family, community, nature, culture and society
 - The role of play and creativity as central integrating elements in development and learning

Project Impact

Part 1: Book Study

As a staff we engaged in a collegiate book study, using Helen Tovey's 'Bringing the Froebel Approach to your Early Years Practice'. Collegiate time was dedicated to reading and discussing chapters of the book using the reflective questions to guide our discussions. This has had a direct impact on our practice as staff have come to a clearer understanding of our pedagogy and the principles which underpin it. Staff are becoming more confident in articulating 'our way' of doing things and are

thinking more deeply about the experiences we offer the children and the ways in which we offer them. This is helping us to develop a consistent approach across the whole team.

We had initially planned to share this understanding with parents and families through our Vision, Values & Aims and our Curriculum Rationale, however we felt that a better way of doing this would be to create posters explaining our pedagogical approach which would be displayed in the corresponding areas in the playroom. This would enable staff to use the posters to talk to parents about aspects of our provision. The posters have been of great interest to our parents and they will ask questions of the staff about them. There have been a number of comments about the photographs, which seem to be the hook to draw them in. We have also found the posters important for new or supply staff, as a way to concisely articulate our pedagogical approach. For example

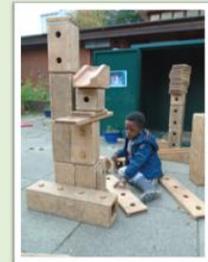
Block Play & Pedagogy at Greengables



“Rich block play does not just occur. It develops when the adult acts as a powerful catalyst working hard to enable it.”

(Bruce in Gura, 1992: 26)

At Greengables, we want our children to be happy, creative, valued and caring. This informs our pedagogical approach which is based on Froebelian principles. Block Play is a core aspect of our provision, both indoors and out.



We will

- Ensure blocks are freely available on a daily basis both indoors and out.
- Provide a large contained space for building (indoors) which will also help protect children from interruption and encroachment.
- Provide a sufficient number, shape and size of blocks to enable large structures to be built or several children to work at once.
- Ensure every block has a designated storage space which helps children to see the modular structure of the blocks as a whole system and begin to understand the mathematical relationships.
- Provide resources to support literacy & numeracy ie pencils, paper, rulers, tape measures, dice, camera etc.
- Support block play when possible, with the presence of enthusiastic and knowledgeable adults.
- Observe children's play and use our knowledge of the stages of block play, to support and extend and provide accessories and loose parts when appropriate.
- Use Hanen approaches and sustained shared thinking to develop communicative turn taking and extend thinking and learning.
- Support children to take risks and develop their own understanding and assessment of risk.

Developed by staff at Greengables Nursery School

We are currently developing posters about clay and sewing.

Part 2: Collaborative Enquiry

Over this year, we have introduced clay and sewing to our setting as part of our continuous provision. We previously had clay available on an ad hoc basis, but its importance was not understood by all and there was a tendency to view it as an activity belonging to one particular member of staff. Before the project, we did not have sewing available in the nursery.

Clay

From the beginning of the school year (August 2018), clay was put out in the nursery every day, however, it was not being used well by the children; the play was not particularly creative and did not appear to develop much. In January 2019, the whole staff attended training led by Thelma Millar. This was very much enjoyed and had a significant and immediate impact on practice. There was a consistency in the way that the clay was presented and cared for and a shared understanding of how to create opportunities for creative play. Children now have opportunities to explore clay both indoors and outdoors on a daily basis in a much wider variety of ways. Staff are more confident at allowing children to explore their ideas and to play with the clay in unconventional ways. For example, recently I observed children mixing the clay with water, smearing it onto trees and watching it dry in the sun. This is an experience that would not have been possible a year ago.



The staff team is currently creating a poster titled Clay & Pedagogy at Greengables and we are also completing our collaborative enquiry which explored “The impact of staff training on children’s experiences and play with clay.”

Unfortunately our planned collaboration with the RE:GENERATION visual arts project at the Fruitmarket Gallery, did not come to fruition as the gallery was unable to secure funding for the project.

Sewing

From August 2018, a variety of forms of sewing (and threading) have been available in the nursery, both indoors and outdoors. However, despite several re-organisations of space, we have not yet found a configuration that enables sewing to become fully a part of our continuous provision. However, children have had many opportunities to learn sewing skills and use them creatively, for example, sewing leaves outdoors and creating large and small samplers.



We have also been able to re-introduce an adult sewing group to our Family Centre and our families have particularly enjoyed mending clothes and making new clothes out of old.



It has become clear that without a specific training input, the development of sewing within the nursery, has been a bit more stop and start than we had hoped. Our nursery teachers have been meeting with some retired Froebelian teachers who have historically always had sewing in their classrooms, in order to further their knowledge and understanding of sewing in nursery, and they have also visited other settings where sewing is available. We are currently starting to bring our ideas together in order to develop specific Froebelian training of our own.

Future Plans

Part 1: Book Study

After sharing the success of our project with cluster colleagues, we are now leading developments in our Cluster Early Learning Improvement Partnership (ELIP), based around developing staff knowledge and understanding of Froebelian principles and practice. The ELIP involves three primary schools, two early years centres and two standalone nursery schools. Almost all settings have at least one or more Froebelian trained practitioners, but there is not a consistency of approach or understanding across all staff. We will be using some chapters from Helen Tovey's book across the seven settings to deepen pedagogical knowledge and to share practice across the settings in a focused way. We hope that this way of sharing practice collaboratively will build capacity and leadership in our staff teams.

Part 2: Collaborative Enquiry

We will produce pedagogy posters on clay and sewing, to share with parents and others.

We will continue deepen our understanding of sewing in order to develop staff training based on Froebelian principles.

Conclusion

Overall, the project has had a significant impact on our Froebelian practice. There is much more consistency of practice across the staff team and a deeper understanding of what Froebelian pedagogy looks like in our setting. We are able to make professional decisions using the principles to inform us.

We received the grant quite far into the session, so there are parts of the project which we are still developing and working on, however, our children are being offered rich daily experiences in clay and sewing which are developing their skills, encouraging their creativity and enhancing their lives.

We are also delighted that sewing is again something which we are offering our adult learners within our Family Centre. We hope to build on this next session by creating opportunities for the children and adults to work on something together.