



University of Reading

4Ps Project

Practitioners & Parents Play Partnership

Strengthening practitioner-parent collaboration through the use of partnership sessions built on Froebelian principles and pedagogy

Institute of Education – University of Reading

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Acknowledgements:

The 4Ps Project research team is: Dr Maria Kambouri (Principal Investigator), Dr Myria Pieridou (Co-Investigator), Suzanne Quinn (Co-Investigator) and Teresa Wilson (Co-Investigator), with Dr Jie Liu as the Research Assistant.

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Interim Report for the
4Ps- Project: Practitioners & Parents Play Partnership
Strengthening practitioner-parent collaboration through the use of partnership sessions built on
Froebelian principles and pedagogy

The project:

The 4Ps Project is underpinned by Froebel's pedagogy and principles and acknowledges the importance and value of the relationship between children, family members and practitioners, and the role of play as a central, integrating element in children's development and learning.

The **aim** of the 4Ps Project is to develop and implement a unique series of sessions appropriate both for parents/ carers and practitioners in early childhood education. To do that the research team firstly conducted a literature review which included a review in the following areas:

- play and partnerships
- teacher/ practitioner – parent/ carer partnership/ collaboration
- existing models that promote partnerships.

Through the literature review the research team aimed to set the theoretical framework and identify existing CPD (continuous professional development) models used to promote partnerships and nurture high quality, stable and sensitive interactions between practitioners and parents (when saying parents, carers are also included), as well as relate these models to the Froebelian approach. As extensive online search revealed zero results in relation to existing CPD models used to promote partnerships (as explained above). In addition, with the completion of the literature review, the research team concluded that the term CPD, which was initially used in the title, did not reflect accurately the purpose of this project. CPD is usually used for development in professionals and not parents, while it also suggests that participants have experienced at least some pre-existing training, something which may not be true for this project's participants. In effect, the research team preferred to use the term 'partnership sessions' instead, as this was considered more inclusive and respectful to both practitioners and parents.

Following on this decision, building on the literature review discussions and guided by the Froebelian approach, the research team developed and implemented a new model, specifically designed for both practitioners and parents, aiming to promote parent-practitioner partnerships.

Partnership sessions:

The designed sessions were founded on the Froebelian principles of the interrelated nature of the child's growing relationships with others through play, addressing both practitioners and parents. The aim was to help practitioners and parents to work together, build relationships of trust and collaborate in their everyday life and practice in order to enhance children's opportunities to play through holistic practice.

At the core of the sessions were elements of the Froebelian pedagogy such as the power of play, the importance of knowledgeable and appropriately qualified staff, and the need for early years settings to be an integral part of the community, working in close partnership with parents and other skilled adults.

The research team initially invited five (5) nurseries as planned; however, in order to increase the number of responses we sought permission from The Froebel Trust and were allowed to recruit two (2) more nurseries. As a result, a total of seven (7) nurseries were selected aiming focus on young children and families who experience economic challenges and may also be in disadvantaged settings. We received 108 pre-questionnaire responses from approximately 280 parents and practitioners, from which 30 expressed an interest to attend the sessions. Unfortunately, only 25 were able to attend the first twilight and 23 the second twilight. In addition, 17 participants expressed an interest and will be contacted in order to participate in an interview.

As a result, the 4Ps Project combines three of Froebel Trust's research priorities as it places emphasis on:

- a) nurturing high quality interactions between staff/ practitioners and parents/families
- b) developing playful pedagogy and resourcing for play
- c) providing access to high quality early years provision for families in disadvantaged areas.

The sessions took place on Wednesday 10th of May and Wednesday 17th of May. Both sessions started at 4pm and finished around 6:30-7pm. We were based in a room at London road campus, while the children and child carers were right next door to us in the Learning Hub (resource room with early years books, toys etc.). We successfully offered and provided child care on the spot for those who needed to bring their child/ren with them in order to attend the sessions. We had 10 parents and 13 children (between 7 months and 4 years old) that requested this service in order to attend. We also catered for both the children and the parents and offered drinks, baguettes and fruit snacks during the breaks, which was appreciated by the participants.

The sessions were planned to provide opportunities for discussion and aimed to be engaging and practical. The first twilight session on the 10th of May introduced the study and the research team to the participants and then focused on Play and Play Practices and how we can use this to strengthen partnerships (see appendix 1). The second twilight focused on Soulful Play and Slow practice, on information about Safeguarding, and on techniques about Developing Partnerships (see appendix 2).

We also created the following slogan in order to promote the sessions and the project (no copyrights for image):



Together, for our children!

Finally, the research team is progressing according to the original timeframe set in the proposal, as described in the following table. The last column indicates what has already successfully taken place.

Phase	Timeframe	Actions/Outcomes	Completed
Phase 1 November - February 2017	4 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Team meeting 2. Literature Review and Review of previous studies 3. SWOT Analysis of existing CPD models 4. Develop plan for new CPD model 5. Develop Questionnaires and Interview Questions 6. Develop CPD evaluation form 7. Develop information sheet and consent forms 8. Gain Ethical Permission 9. Recruit Settings and participants 10. Pilot Questionnaires and Interview Questions 	YES
Phase 2 March – May 2017	3 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop individual sessions for the partnership model 2. Collect Pre-Questionnaires 3. Second team meeting 4. Deliver first twilight sessions 5. Collect sessions evaluation forms for 1st twilight 6. Monitor effectiveness and Impact 7. Interim Report 	YES
Phase 3 June – October 2017	5 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Third team meeting 2. Deliver second twilight 3. Submit abstracts to conferences 4. Collect evaluation forms for 2nd twilight 5. Monitor effectiveness and Impact 6. Conduct Interviews 7. Collect Post-Questionnaires 8. Fourth team meeting 9. Data Analysis 10. Develop website 11. Prepare papers for publication 12. Present at Conferences 	1-5 = YES Note for point 12: Papers accepted for presentation at ERNAPE conference (July), EECERA conference (August) and additionally at the Paolo Freire conference (August).
Phase 4 November – January 2018	4 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify Impact 2. Launch of Website 3. Submit papers for publication 4. Maintain Links with Settings – Offer support 5. Fifth team meeting 6. Final report 	

Appendix 1

10th May 2017- Twilight 1: Parents and Practitioners Partnerships

- **Welcome presentation:** 1) Information on the project, quick summary, introduction of the team and Q&A 2) Ice breaking activities and expectations.

- **Introduction to the Froebelian pedagogy:** Froebel established the first Kindergarten in Bad Blankenburg in 1840. His pedagogic ideas inspired the spread of 'kindergarten movements' in Europe, the UK, US, Australia, Japan, China, and in many places throughout the world. Froebel supported that young children are capable of learning, but should not be subjected to 'schooling'. Instead they should have free choice in activities. He specifically highlighted the positive impact that good family-nurse relationships can have on a child's life as well as the importance of play as the main vehicle for learning in the early years. He specifically stated that play is the purest and most spiritual product of the child, and at the same time it is a type and copy of human life at all stages and in all relations. So it induces joy, freedom, contentment, inner and outer repose, peace with all the world. From it flows all good.

- **Parental Engagement and Play:** Sharing information is required for early years settings/nurseries and that is because it has been found to be very important when supporting children's learning and development. It is common for early years practitioners to share with parents information about their children's learning, showing examples of work or photos etc. Sharing information though should go both ways. Parents know their children better than anyone else, so sharing information around interests, needs/health, routines or new situations (new siblings) etc. This is not always as easy as it sounds, due to busy schedules and lack of time for in depth discussions. Thinking about Froebel's pedagogy, we propose play and playtime as a 'partnership facilitator'. In early years, besides play being a characteristic of effective learning it can also provide opportunities (time and space) for parents, children and practitioners to work together and to also develop and support key relationships.

- **Play as a 'Partnership Facilitator':** Offering a practical aspect, we consider examples of playing with children and use hands-on opportunities to observe and discuss individual and collaborative activity and play. Through activities and discussion, we also try some of this with each other, trying to copy good examples that we have seen or experienced. Finally, we discuss the difference between play Vs not play (e.g. adults taking control) and link this to Froebel's view of play as the expression of a child's soul (i.e. freedom).

- **Concluding remarks:** Completion of feedback/evaluation form for Twilight 1. Reminder for next twilight – 17th May. Please provide some testimonials (both participants and researchers) and express interest for taking part in a short interview (face to face or over the phone).

Appendix 2

17th May 2017- Twilight 1: Parents and Practitioners Partnerships

- **Welcome back:** 1) Welcome everyone back and recap from last twilight, reminding aims of project and research team members. 2) Feedback from last twilight: what you suggested – what we can do (more time for discussion, more information on theory, longer sessions).
- **Soulful Play:** We revisit Froebel’s pedagogy as participants expressed the wish to know more about it. We then discussed Froebel’s impact on contemporary attempts to integrate mind, body and spirit (e.g. mindfulness) and cultivating quality interactions through 'slow practice'. This session built on the importance of Froebel as a Romantic thinker and writer whose cultural legacy has impacted upon contemporary attempts to integrate mind, body and spirit (hence the tradition of the 'whole' child). It then described how these attempts (e.g. mindfulness) have a resonance for today’s Froebelian practitioners in terms of cultivating quality interactions through 'slow practice' and why this is necessary when aiming to make room for ‘Soulful Play’.
- **Safeguarding:** Considering participants feedback, in order to give more time to other aspects (such as Froebel’s pedagogy and time for discussion) we decided to spend less time on this session and only discussed the most key ideas related safeguarding while offering to all participants the opportunity to contact and/or meet our safeguarding expert (Jo Elsey) at a time that suited them outside the twilight sessions. The key ideas discussed related to the meaning and importance of safeguarding, the clarification of individuals’ (parents’ and practitioners’) responsibilities, and the significance of communicating and discussing safeguarding issues as part of daily practice.
- **Developing Partnerships:** At this last session, we share ideas and strategies of developing trusting relationships and maintaining effective communication in order to develop meaningful collaboration and strong partnerships between parents, practitioners and children. We focused and gave examples related to enhancing play and learning, being informed and involved in day-to-day activities and sharing important information with each other. Parents and practitioners were given opportunities for discussion, communication and practice through role play and group activities.
- **Concluding remarks:** Completion of feedback/evaluation form for Twilight 2. Reminder that we will soon send the post-questionnaires and that we will also contact those you expressed an interest to take part in an interview. We also inform participants that the team is working on developing a website as a result of this project and that they will soon receive more information about that. Finally, we record some testimonials from both participants and researchers that would like to share their experience (to potentially post on the website).