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The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

MACHNAMH



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**Maynooth
University**
National University
of Ireland Maynooth



Mission Statement of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education

Guided by the philosophy of Friedrich Froebel and the principles and values of Maynooth University, our mission is to prepare and inspire caring educators in their pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning and research towards the holistic education of every child in a changing Ireland.



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FOREWORD

Marie McLoughlin

Fáilte romhaibh ar ais i ndiaidh Samhradh gnóthach anseo i Roinn Froebel, Ollscoil Má Nuad!

It is with great pleasure that I welcome readers to the eighth edition of Froebel's newsletter *Machnamh*. We are living in very strange times as the COVID-19 virus continues to disrupt the normal vibrant dynamism of University life. In light of our current context, this edition of *Machnamh* may seem slightly different but it still seeks to showcase and highlight the ongoing achievements and activities of staff and students within and beyond the Department. In documenting the internal and external developments of our thriving community, we strive to give readers a taste of the wealth of talents, discoveries, and leadership found in the Froebel Department. In this semester's issue, the broad range of contributions demonstrates the Department's aim, which is to continuously expand the educational experiences for all through various avenues. Particular highlights include: Aisling Supple's Erasmus experience in Copenhagen, Patricia Kennon's research in the field of children's literature and an interview with Froebel's own Brian Tubbert.

I would like to extend my gratitude to each person who contributed to this issue of *Machnamh*. These collaborative efforts allow for *Machnamh*'s continued success.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Marie McLoughlin
Head of Department



PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ciara O'Donnell agus Chloe Mather

Fáilte romhaibh go dtí an ochtú eagrán de Mhachnamh!

It is with great pride that we introduce to you the eighth edition of Froebel's newsletter *Machnamh*. Since its conception, *Machnamh* has sought to document and celebrate the achievements and exertions of Froebel staff and students. Although the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has restricted many of the opportunities and events that would typically take place within the Froebel Department, in true Froebelian fashion, staff and students found ways to engage and embrace the new, equally hectic life.

We would like to preface this publication by extending our gratitude to Séamie O'Neill for presenting us with this new venture in *Dissolving Boundaries in Educational Leadership*. It has been a challenging and rewarding opportunity.

Finally, we would like to thank each and every one of you who has contributed to this edition of *Machnamh*, in particular, Eoin Casey, Jane Lynam, Amy Flood and Charlie O'Donnell, without whom this publication could not have been achieved.

Go raibh maith agaibh,

Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather

Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather



Fáilte Roimh Froebel!

STAFF WELCOME

It is with great pleasure that we welcome our newest member of staff, Laoise Ní Chléirigh, to the Froebel Department. Laoise is a past pupil of Froebel herself and has been lecturing for the Department in the area of SESE for a number of years. Some of her achievements include being presented with the Maynooth University Postgraduate Research Impact Award in 2019 and her involvement with the award-winning AgroCycle Kids project. Laoise is a passionate lecturer who has contributed so much to the Froebel Department already and we cannot wait to see how she continues to contribute in future years!

STUDENT WELCOME

It is with great pleasure that we also welcome this year's BEd 1 and PMEd 1 students to the Froebel Department! We know it has been a strange year in the Department, full of challenges and surprises, but we hope you have been enjoying your time so far nonetheless. Despite the ongoing health crisis, we hope you have been able to get a taste of the hectic and busy lifestyle of the Froebel Department. It has been tough for most of us to adjust, so we cannot imagine how it must be for all of you. So, from all of us in the Froebel Department, welcome to Froebel! We hope you have your laminators and málaí draíochta at the ready!



Brian Tubbert in his first year of teaching.

Interview with Brian Tubbert

By Chloe Mather and Ciara O'Donnell

Brian Tubbert has been involved in education since the age of 19, wracking up an impressive 46 years of his career, having taught in 7 different countries in a number of different roles. He has been a central figure in the Froebel Department for many years, having joined in 1999 when it was still in Blackrock, which made the news of his retirement incredibly sad for both students and staff alike. We had the opportunity to sit down with Brian and discuss his time in the Froebel Department, his aspirations for retirement and more.

"It's the values, it's the principles, the philosophy that keep you in teaching."

- Brian Tubbert

Interview with Brian Tubbert

By Chloe Mather and Ciara O'Donnell

We met on a cold, rainy afternoon in September, questions in hand. It was the sort of day you'd prefer to spend curled up by the fire, however, as Brian would say, "there is no such thing as inappropriate weather, only inappropriate clothing!" So, we powered on. He entered the room, cup of coffee in one hand and an old photograph in the other. It was a photo depicting Brian in his first year of teaching, he laughed as he pointed out his brown, curly hair.

What has been your most memorable moment in the Froebel Department?

"There were some funny moments alright, like lecturers and students at a Kolkata fundraiser having a competition in a pub in Blackrock, sliding down stairs, lecturers versus students. Moving to Maynooth was a memorable moment. For you [the students], it was all you have known but for us, [the staff], it was a huge move, and a big move for teacher education. We're the only college that are fully integrated into a University campus. I think it's very important for teacher education, I think it should have happened when the BEd degree was introduced fifty years ago, but then again, there were all sorts of historical and political reasons for that. I think it has been a huge benefit to students and staff to come out here to Maynooth. So, that I suppose is memorable."

As a lecturer, we have learned so much from you, what is something you learned from your time in the Froebel Department?

"It sounds a bit trite, but I've learned a lot from students, and if I was to go back teaching I would be a way better teacher from having visited students on school placement and visiting schools. Some of the stuff students have done on school placement has been really very child-centred, innovative, hands on, enjoyable, active, interesting. I've seen stuff and wished I had done it myself.

I suppose, you get to know your own subject much better. When you're a teacher you're kind of doing everything, and then [as a lecturer] you kind of get into the areas you really enjoy."

What are your plans/ambitions for after you leave the department?

"Well, never to have to do a timetable again!

I mean, I'm 46 years in education, I started teaching when I was 19, I could do with a break from education. I suppose, I'll stay on the NCCA and I'll stay in touch with the Kolkata Project. I read a lot, I listen to a lot of music, I cycle, I do a lot of hillwalking. I was hoping to a bit of travelling."

Have you got anywhere you'd like to go?

"Well, top of the list would probably be South India – Kerala. I have taught with a lot of Kerala teachers and they say, "Mr. Brian you should come to Kerala!" Morocco fascinates me. The Middle East generally, Jordan is on the list. They would be the top three."

If you could teach one more lecture, what would you do it on and why?

“I think the most important thing is to talk about values and philosophy. And one of the things I like to see about students like yourselves, by the time you come to fourth year, doing your dissertation, you can see a sense of you guys developing your own philosophy and believing in the way you teach, why you’re teaching and why you’ve come to teach. And I think that’s a lovely thing. I think I would talk to people about building that and really revisiting it, and you know, adapting it and being flexible in it to an extent, but having core values and core principles and core philosophies, so that if something happens in your school, in your class, with a child, you can ask yourself the simple question, “What’s of benefit to the child?” And if you’ve got your values and your principles and your philosophy in place, the answer will be easy and the answer will be invariably correct.

Where young teachers always worry about classroom management, behaviour management, organisation, how will they get on with other teachers, but once you settle into teaching, it’s the values, it’s the principles, the philosophy that keep you in teaching. So, after ten years teaching, it’s not the management to worry about, it’s the philosophy and principles, “Why am I here?” “What am I doing?”, “Am I doing it as well as I can?”. They’re the important things, so I think that’s what I’d talk to students about.”

What was the biggest challenge you faced in your career at Froebel?

“I think changing from being a primary school teacher to being a university lecturer, there were certain things I wasn’t expecting. One was judging students, because as a Primary School teacher, you tend to report on children in a very positive way, you know, you look at their attributes, you look at their strengths, you look at their skills, you look at the whole person. And then you go to third level, and suddenly you’re judging people. And supervision on school placement, we find very hard because we know you all, we know how hard you work, we know the effort you’re putting into it.. and I found that very difficult and I still do.

The other thing I found difficult in the change from Primary to Third Level is, [among] primary teachers, there’s a great collegiate atmosphere. And where there is to a large extent in Froebel, but I see a different attitude among academics. They look on their work as, “this is my area, this is my specialism, I own this. This is my turf and I don’t share it.” When a teacher comes up with a good idea, they share it with everyone and you want everybody to use it, and I found that very difficult. I went to meetings in Trinity and I’d come out of the meeting saying, “what was the agenda there?” and it took a while to realise the agenda was protecting their own turf, rather than looking at student care. So, I found that very difficult, those are the two things I think I found most difficult.”

Is there a colleague in the department who has inspired you?

"Ah well, there'd be a few but I wouldn't go around naming people. But I would have huge respect for most of the staff, I think they put in huge work. They're very dedicated, both to the students and to their subject. They have passion and integrity around their own subject area, which I hope transfers to students, and that you, yourselves, will find those kind of niches within teaching, that "this is my area that I really want to develop", like reading or Drama or Music, whatever it is, and that that becomes your specialism within teaching. I love to see that happening with students, so I see that on the staff, and quite a number of the staff, I wouldn't like to be picking out one name."



Brian Tubbert

If you could give one piece of advice to the Froebel students going forward, what would it be?

"I suppose, nothing is ever perfect in teaching, and to try and think the glass is half full, not half empty. You know, not every day is going to be a good day, but with the right attitude, most days will be good, and if you like teaching it's a fabulous profession. And going back to what I said before, find a niche for yourselves within teaching, and talk to like-minded people, that gives you energy as well. Do not sit beside the staff cynic in the staffroom! Because that just brings you down, so pick your school, pick the people to hang around with who are as enthusiastic as you are and then that feeds off each other."



Fourth years BEd students creating a guard of honour for Brian's retirement.

"Ask yourself the simple question, "What's of benefit to the child?" And if you've got your values and your principles and your philosophy in place, the answer will be easy and the answer will be invariably correct."

- Brian Tubbert

Dr. Patricia Kennon's Research

by Patricia Kennon

Dr. Patricia Kennon has had a busy semester of research and academic writing. Between being appointed to the Editorial Board for a new, online journal and publishing a number of works in the field of children's literature, she has had a very interesting semester! She has been hugely influential in our approach to literature in the classroom, so we were delighted to include the following piece about her recent achievements in this edition of *Machnamh*.

by Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather

Dr Patricia Kennon has been appointed as a member of the Editorial Board for the new, online journal, *The International Journal of Young Adult Literature*. This annual, open-access, peer-reviewed journal is the first-ever journal dedicated to scholarship on YA literature. The first issue was published on 2nd November: <https://www.ijyal.ac.uk/5/volume/1/issue/1/>.

Dr Kennon also recently published the following works: 'Writing Childhood: Young Adult and Children's Literature' for Eric Falci and Paige Reynolds' collection of essays, *Irish Literature in Transition, Volume 6, 1980-2020* (Cambridge University Press); and 'Reflecting Realities and Twenty-First-Century Irish Children's and Young Adult Literature' for the fiftieth-anniversary 'Global Jubilee' issue of the journal, *The Irish University Review*.

She is the only contributor writing on Irish children's and young adult literature in these significant



publications. Both this essay and article examine the evolving story of Irish childhood and the significant trajectories and transitions characterizing the publishing, reception, cultural positioning, and status of children's and young adult literature in Ireland and Northern Ireland over the last four decades. A sanitising approach and the adult desire to protect young people's 'innocence' from topics and truths perceived as too 'complex' or 'disturbing' tends to dominate much of late twentieth-century Irish youth literature into the first millennium.

Twenty-first-century Irish youth literature, while admirably dynamic in its engagement with girlhood and increasingly evolving in its recognition

of diverse sexualities, still suffers from what Ebony Elizabeth Thomas in her book, *The Dark Fantastic: Race and Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*, terms ‘an imagination gap’ around race, ethnicity, and intersectionality.

Irish children’s and young-adult literature to date has demonstrated an exciting and deepening potential for posing important questions around power, relationships, identities, and experiences, yet there are still more tales to tell, new storytellers to speak, and a wider range of realities to represent and reflect!



Dr. Patricia Kennon

Return to Campus during Covid-19

by Deirdre Forde

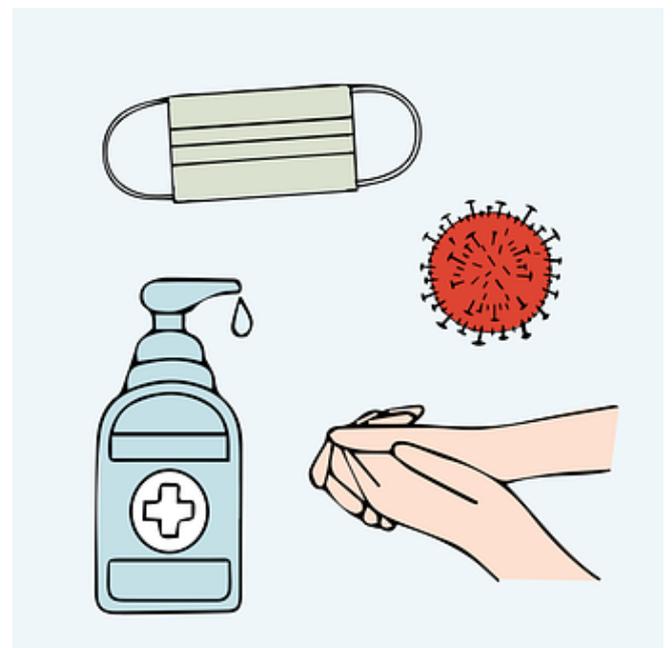
Returning to campus amidst the Covid-19 pandemic has been a rollercoaster of emotions for both students and staff alike. Re-adjusting to the hectic and busy experience that is life on Maynooth campus has been interesting, to say the least. It was an experience well worth documenting, one which Deirdre Forde and Suzanne O'Keefe capture so well in the following pieces.

by Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather

Who could have imagined such a year? And just when you were enjoying your relatively new found freedom in leapfrogging from the security and familiarity of school or living at home to the parameter-less world of University (for some of you at least!). The closure of the University in February, its re-opening for students in August and its almost closure again as I write this has been such an unprecedented time for everyone in the world, let alone the staff and students of Maynooth University. A devastating pandemic that has turned society on its head.

Nonetheless, the staff of Froebel Department has sought to adapt to the ever-changing landscape to support and protect us all in moving forward. It has not been easy. The cliché of navigating through uncharted waters comes to mind. With Irish Public Health advice continually under review, decisions that were taken one week, had to be revised the next, as we learned more about the virus. There was a great collective effort in getting the campus

ready for your return. The staff, in particular Marie, in conjunction with the wider University, put in a tremendous amount of work throughout the Summer to ensure that we could welcome you all back safely after your prolonged absence from Campus, with the aim of offering the best educational experience for you that we could manage within the constraints of the necessary public health measures.



From a personal point of view, when I returned to campus, I felt extremely grateful; grateful that my family and I

stayed safe during the early stages of the Pandemic, grateful that the schools opened and children could return to school again and grateful, that amidst all the economic turmoil of seeing businesses close, I still had my job to return to. I also felt optimistic of returning to some form of normality. It was great to see the friendly faces of colleagues face to face (as opposed to over teams). Nonetheless, whilst it was great to be able to return to work, a Department without students is a very quiet place and we were looking forward to welcoming you all back to some level of normality.

When you did return, the laughter and chat resounded through the School Of Education building once again. It was fantastic to feel that the light, life and soul of the Department had been restored somewhat, albeit, through social distancing. Despite the fact that it was a little strange wearing masks and wiping down keyboards, screens and the rest, before giving a lecture, the return to campus was a sign of our collective strength in the face of the tumultuous pandemic. The Department were very proud of the high levels of compliance shown by all of you to all the measures that had been put in place i.e. the wearing of face masks, the wiping down of tables and seats before and after lectures as well as social distancing inside and outside of the buildings. It was because of your high

levels of compliance that we were able to continue teaching face to face for as long as we did during the first semester and we are very thankful to you all for all of your tremendous efforts.

As I write this I am sitting in my office, in an empty building, looking out on an empty campus. There is an eery silence about the campus and an uncertainty with regards to the year ahead. The same could be said for the community of Maynooth. Nonetheless, whilst we all know that there are testing times ahead, we are hopefully over the worst part of it and are facing the next stages with an air of excitement again about being able to re-discover and savour the simple things in life on the lead up to Christmas. We are all finding new meanings in the current challenging reality. It is often through challenging times such as these that we find strengths about ourselves that we did not realise previously. Therefore, whilst we wait in hope to return to campus again, I will leave you with the following quote...

"Sometimes when life throws stones, that's when we find the diamonds."



Return to Campus during Covid-19

by Suzanne O'Keefe

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.”

— Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens' words really sum up my experience of living with Covid. It really has been the best and worst of times. It has been a time that has challenged me and a time that has allowed me to grow in many ways. I haven't been able to fully make sense of all that has happened in these past few months, so instead, I've tried to capture it on a KWL chart.

K

What I know

- Froebel students and staff have been so supportive during this time.
- Washing our hands is VERY important.
- It has been a very challenging time for many socially, emotionally, financially, and personally.

W

What I want to know

- Will there ever be a return to 'normal' life?
- When can I book a foreign holiday again?
- How can I celebrate New Years Eve this year?

L

What I have learned

- Eating dinner has become an 'event' and something to look forward to everyday.
- Baking is fun and even more fun when you drop it off to various neighbours to enjoy..
- I've rediscovered my local neighbourhood and learnt to see it through 'fresh' eyes.

Black Studies Webinar

by Simone Doyle

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, many opportunities were offered to us in the form of online webinars. One such webinar was the Introduction to Black Studies webinar.

This was a fantastic opportunity, and we spoke to BEd Year 4 student, Simone Doyle, about the experience. by Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather

On Thursday, October 5th 2020 I had the opportunity to attend a Black Studies Webinar. The seminar was delivered as a Webinar given the current Covid-19 constraints. It cannot be denied that all things Covid were forgotten when Dr. Ebum Joseph began delivering the webinar. Dr. Joseph was full of enthusiasm and life, the passion and commitment to Black Studies was evident from the get go. I sat back, notebook in hand, knowing full well that this was going to be a powerful and informative webinar.

Dr. Joseph began with the following quote: "Whoever controls the narrative of the past, controls the present and controls the future." It cannot be denied that Black Studies was here to provide us with a powerful lens through which we look at the achievements, as well as the issues, that are faced by black people. The narrative of Black Studies is a narrative that should be brought into our everyday lives. It was made clear that the dialogue needs to change. We are all responsible and in a position to inform ourselves and educate others on Black Studies.



As student teachers, we were encouraged to know the contribution of Africa to the world. There are 54 countries in the continent of Africa and every one of these countries have contributed to the world we live in today. For example, the foundations of modern science and technology can be found in African History. One need look no further than towards the Egyptian Pyramids, they still remain structurally sound to this day. This is an amazing example of historic engineering that deserves recognition. Through project work, these contributions can be made evident and an abundance of rich and exciting information can be gathered in relation to the African continent..

I could keep typing on this webinar, I am excited about what I learned and how my own personal bias and ideas were effectively challenged. The webinar lasted two hours, but I think any one of us who attended would agree that Black Studies is a topic that we could never stop learning from.

In the words of Dr. Loveth Owzor, Africa has often been "... painted as the poor cousin of the global community." However, research and time highlights that there is little room for this painting in our galleries anymore. Instead, this webinar painted Africa as a diverse continent, rich with history and culture with societies that set the foundations for the world we live in today.

Sports Inclusion Webinar

by Hannah Brady

Inclusion is at the heart of the Froebel philosophy and is something which matters a lot to the fourth year BEs. As such, the opportunity to attend an online webinar for Sports Inclusion was welcomed warmly by the year. We spoke to Hannah Brady, one of the attendees, about the experience. by Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather

On Wednesday the 23rd of September we had the amazing opportunity to partake in the Cara Sport Inclusion and Disability Awareness online workshop. Many Froebels availed of the opportunity and it transpired to be a very worthwhile experience.

We began by discussing the meaning of disability. The speakers outlined to us the various types of disability including physical, intellectual, and sensory. In addition, they emphasised how a disability can be temporary or permanent. This was extremely helpful, as we are bound to encounter a wide variety of disabilities in the classroom and therefore, we must be aware of the different types. We then examined pictures of people with disabilities and hypothesised what disability they may have. While some were obvious, others were more hidden, which is important to consider when meeting a new class.

Next, we discussed what is deemed acceptable when talking about disabilities. It is important that we stay up to date on what is the correct terminology as we could unintentionally hurt a child by using an incorrect term. Most importantly, we



should focus on the person first and what they can do, not what they cannot. If you are unsure of the correct language, simply ask! This language is vital to creating an inclusive environment in the classroom.

Following this we considered barriers to participation in sport for people with disabilities. We examined these at attitudinal, access, structural and personal levels. This was enlightening as while one may be aware of some of these barriers, others may never have crossed our mind, for example, how a lack of adequate transport may prevent someone from partaking in a sports team. As teachers, it is vital that we consider these barriers and attempt to alleviate those that we can. Simple ways we can do this include having a variety of equipment, showing the children a range of role models in sport, and ensuring you increase your own knowledge and awareness.

Overall, it was a very helpful workshop that I would thoroughly recommend to everyone!

Teaching Division to First Years

by Grainne Roche, Rachel Walsh, Aoibhin Kennedy

Last year as a part of our Maths Competency module with Eddie Costello, we had the opportunity to practise teaching a group of senior class pupils from a local primary school. Sadly, as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to facilitate a similar session this year. Instead, we worked in class co-constructing Maths lessons in one of the areas we as student-teachers find the most intimidating: division.

Three students from the year, Grainne Roche, Rachel Walsh and Aoibhin Kennedy, bravely volunteered to teach this lesson to a class of first year BEd students.

by Ciara O'Donnell and Chloe Mather

Today, we facilitated a Maths lesson on division for first year students. We decided to focus on the two types of division – repeated subtraction and equal sharing.

Firstly, we invited the students to chat with their partners and come up with a definition for division. This was very interesting as we gained an insight into the ideas the students had about what division entails. One group defined division as ‘how many times one number can fit into another number’. Another group defined it as ‘the opposite/inverse of multiplication’. This proved to be important later in the lesson when we discussed why there are two ways of carrying out division sums.

We then asked the students to divide 12 dots by three. We then allow the students to share how they did this task. Some divided the dots into groups of three groups of four. Others divided the dots into four groups of three. We then asked the students which one was correct. This was interesting as the students concluded, with some prompting, that both ways are correct.

We directly taught the students the two concepts of dividing ‘Repeated Subtraction’ and ‘Equal Sharing’. We modelled these concepts pictorially. We then asked the students to write a word question for both a repeated subtraction and equal sharing sum.



Disclaimer: Not one of our first year students

This activity proved useful as a form of assessment for learning. We discovered that not all students understood the concepts yet. We then had to think about teaching it in another way. We decided to go back to the basics and use concrete materials to model the concepts.

Bruner’s theory of going from the concrete to the pictorial to the abstract proved to be a successful way in facilitating the learning of division for these students. This is also relevant in teaching of Maths in the primary school classroom. The Kahoot quiz proved to be an effective form of assessment of learning for the students. This information is very relevant to us as it informs us about how well we taught the subject and how we may improve our teaching of division in the classroom in the future.

Having reflected on this lesson I feel that we could have spent a little more time ensuring the students understood how to recognise division questions that involved equal sharing and division questions that involved repeated subtraction. Perhaps a few more examples could have been given before inviting the students to come up with their own questions. As well as this, we could have spent more time discussing answers to questions that a significant number of students answered incorrectly in the Kahoot quiz. This would have been a good opportunity for peer-tutoring.

An aspect of this lesson that we overlooked was the importance of the quotient in each case.

The sum 12 divided by 3 equals 4 can be examined through the lens of equal sharing or repeated subtraction. In terms of equal sharing, there are three groups with 4 in each group. The number in each group is the quotient. In terms of repeated subtraction, we subtract groups of 3 repeatedly from 12 as many times as possible. The number of groups we have is the quotient.

Overall, this was an excellent experience as we had the opportunity to try out our teaching methods in an environment that is relaxed and familiar before entering the classroom in which our teaching will be examined. The first-year students were helpful in providing responses and discussing their thinking behind the area of division.

by Grainne Roche, Rachel Walsh, Aoibhin Kennedy



Left to right: Aoibhin Kennedy, Rachel Walsh, Grainne Roche



Photo by Aisling Supple

Aisling's Erasmus Experience

By Aisling Supple

I am currently studying at University College Copenhagen for my Erasmus semester where I am taking three modules: The Nordic Model, Integration of Physical Activity in Everyday Teaching Practice and Creativity and Experimental Processes.

In 'The Nordic Model' we explore the Danish education system; its core values, aims and key methodologies. Aesthetic learning processes including the incorporation of drama, music and visual arts are central to the Danish way of teaching and learning. This course involves lots of collaborative projects and we are encouraged to make use of creative and innovative presentation styles including video, role-play, song, poetry etc.

This module also included a week-long internship at a Primary School. I spent a week observing a 6th class at Randersgales Skole, Denmark's first world goal certified school. The UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development are at the core of the school's values and each year the children work on projects in collaboration with the local community helping to address and explore these goals. The Danish education model is based on an idea of mutual respect, equality and democracy. It was interesting to experience this atmosphere in the school environment where children are given lots of freedom and autonomy to work independently and are encouraged to voice their opinions and discuss topics with their teachers in a co-operative manner.



Photo by Aisling Supple

In 2014 it became compulsory for Danish schools to incorporate an additional 45mins of physical activity within the school day. This has shone a light on studies regarding the impact of physical activity on learning readiness and cognitive development. In my Physical Activity module, we explore connections between physical activity and learning and discuss ways of using these benefits within the classroom environment. We also look at outdoor education as a means of integrating physical activity in rich learning experiences. We had a workshop with Jacob Wienecke, a lecturer in Integrative Physiology at the University of Copenhagen, where he introduced us to 'Basket Matematik'. It is an ongoing research project involving the combination of playful basketball activities with mathematical concepts and learning outcomes, with the aim of improving children's motivation and mathematical performance.

My final module 'Creativity and Experimental Processes' focuses on innovation and the incorporation of



Photo by Aisling Supple

problem-based experimentation and creativity within the classroom. We work on design projects with a particular focus on processes of trial and error and the consideration of challenges and obstacles along the way. We discuss the environment of the classroom and ways in which we can promote and foster critical thinking and imaginative exploration of materials and topics with children.



Photo by Aisling Supple

M.Ed (Research in Practice) 2020

We have had another very successful year with our M.Ed. Action Research cohort of students, who completed their year-long studies in October 2020. There have been some notable achievements by the group which are outlined below.

Sharing the Research Experience at Early Childhood Ireland.



Racheal Govan, M.Ed. class 2019-2020

One of our students working in the Early Childhood sector, Racheal Govan, was invited to share her research experience at an online Research Symposium hosted by Early Childhood Ireland in October this year. The theme of the Symposium was 'New Realities in Research in Early Learning & Care – First 5'. Congratulations to Racheal on contributing to this event.

Partnerships

This is the third year of the programme and we have developed stronger partnerships with our colleagues from NEARI (Network for Educational Action Research) who have contributed significantly to the successes experienced in the past three years. See details of the NEARI group on www.eari.ie

INTO Research Bursary



Dean Vaughan M.Ed. class 2019-2020

Congratulations to Dean Vaughan who was awarded the INTO research bursary in 2019 for his studies. Dean will have the opportunity to share the completed thesis on the INTO website entitled; 'Fostering children's expressive language skills through Aistear: The Early Childhood Framework (2009)'.

Online Open Day

The postgraduate open day will take place in Spring 2021 on the Maynooth University postgraduate section of the Website where you can find out more about the programme. The programme leader will be available to answer any questions you may have. We look forward to meeting you virtually at that time!

