

Planting indoor and outdoors to create a calm and beautiful environment full of learning, creativity and connectedness

Introduction and Rationale

This project uses Froebel's principles as well as following national guidance and research resulting in a rich learning experience for children. It engages children in nature, letting them be autonomous learners and realise that unity and connectedness helps to understand themselves, others, nature and the wider world. The Scottish Government recommends creating an environment which encourages enquiry, discussion and exploration. [Building the Ambition, 2014; 73.5.3]

Unity underpins all of Froebel's principles and Froebel pioneered outdoor learning giving it the same status as indoors. The idea that a nursery is a place for children and also a place where plants are grown connects individuality and differences and this makes a whole. It's very important for children to learn in a lovely environment and being surrounded by plants makes sure they see natural beauty. There is oxygen production and they remove carbon dioxide from the air we breathe.

Implementation

Good ideas come from great minds.

In the beginning of the project practitioners came together to create a mindmap of ideas on how the outdoors and indoors could be developed. Discussions led to sharing different points of view, sharing of pictures of what it could look like and the different learning the children would experience. The project's aim was to create a rich learning environment that would benefit everyone. Mindmaps were also created with the children to find out their ideas. Froebel stated that 'I wanted to educate people to be free, to think, to take action for themselves' [Froebel in Lilley 1967:41] The idea that education should come from activity and enquiry was Froebel's belief. Practitioners listened to a podcast by Michael Mosley called 'Just one thing'. This was all about the benefits that houseplants can make to your life. It was interesting to hear that not only do they look good, are great for calming the environment but can also give lots of health benefits.

Books were shared about plants by practitioners and children. Confidence was shown as everyone learned about how plants connect us to nature.

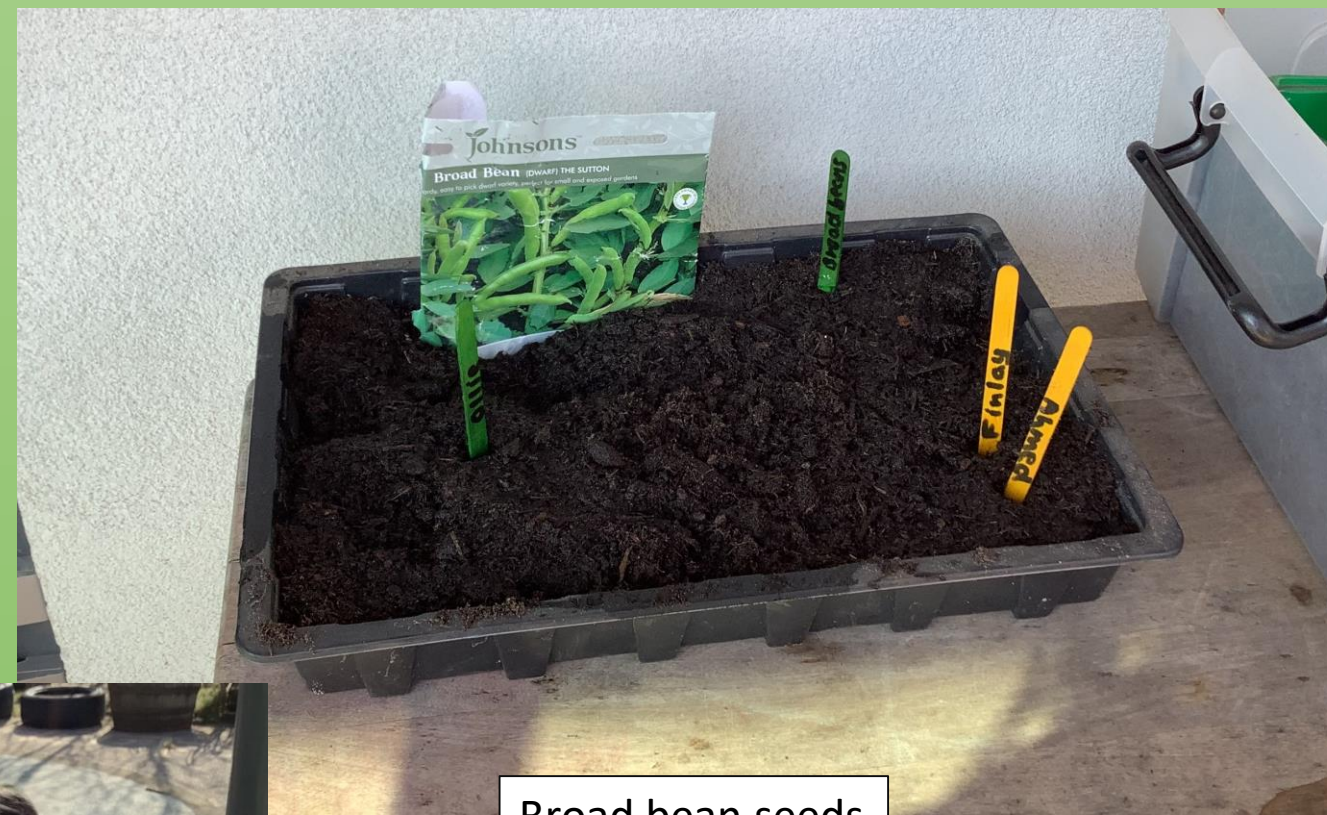
Planting sessions started with all the children in small focus groups. Children with additional needs were included and activities adapted as needed to suit individual needs. Recording was done by taking photos and sharing them with parents in learning journals and a weekly email/sway. It was noted that children learn best when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to experiment, make errors, decisions and choices and are respected as autonomous learners.

Sustainability

This project will now continue throughout the years to come and it will not be a challenge as learning has been made about the importance of planting and plants. Froebel regarded freedom for children very important and that adults should help them think for themselves, make choices, solve problems and pursue their own interests and talents. The environment that has been created indoors and outdoors now offers a rich environment which has been well planned. It is supportive and challenging and becoming a place where everything is connected. Being aware of this unity helps to understand oneself, others, nature and the wider world. Froebel says 'It is all unity; everything is based on unity, strives towards and comes back to unity' [Froebel in Lilley 1967:45].

References

Dweck C (2006) Mindset, The New Psychology of Success: 1st edition: New York: Random House
C, Honore, In Praise of Slow (2004) Orion Books Ltd, London
Lilly, I. (1967) Friedrich Froebel: A selection from his writings, Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
Scottish Government document - Building the Ambition (2014) Education Scotland



Broad bean seeds



Planting seeds



Indoor plants



Child watering sunflowers



Painting of a blossom tree

Conclusion

To conclude, this development project has been full of growth in every way.

Practitioners were keen to learn about developing the environment through growing and planting in a Froebelian way. Carol Dweck [2006] states in a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have these qualities. Examples of this were seen throughout the project through curiosity and great learning. Practitioners developed by being nurturing and creative and reflective educators. Like the growing of the seeds and gardeners tending their plants, educators nurtured and supported children's growing potential.

It is interesting to observe by being part of the project that almost all growing either by plants or animals, or children is done at a slow pace. It takes time, it is not rushed. Patience is the key. After reading 'In Praise of Slow' by Carl Honore [2004] P231 he talks about unstructured play and about exploring the world at a slow pace. It can be digging for worms in the garden and it can help children develop their social and language skills. It has been a positive outcome of this project to learn that slow is not wasted time. It is also very important to read Froebel's following statement 'Let us live for our children: then will their lives bring us joy and peace and we shall ourselves begin to grow in wisdom.' [Froebel 1885:92]

