

A Froebelian approach

Time for childhood: Slow pedagogy

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Contents



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Froebelian principles

Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852) was the inventor of kindergarten and a pioneer of early childhood education and care. Froebel's work and writing changed the way we think about and value early childhood.

Froebel's ideas were considered revolutionary in the 1850s. The principles of his work continue to challenge and be relevant to modern mainstream early years educational practice.

Unity and connectedness

Everything in the universe is connected. The more one is aware of this unity, the deeper the understanding of oneself, others, nature and the wider world. Children are whole beings whose thoughts, feelings and actions are interrelated. Young children learn in a holistic way and learning should never be compartmentalised for everything links.

Autonomous learners

Each child is unique and what children can do rather than what they cannot, is the starting point for a child's learning. Children learn best by doing things for themselves and from becoming more aware of their own learning. Froebelian educators respect children for who they are and value them for their efforts. Helping children to reflect is a key feature of a Froebelian education.

The value of childhood in its own right

Childhood is not merely a preparation for the next stage in learning. Learning begins at birth and continues throughout life.

Relationships matter

The relationships of every child with themselves, their parents, carers, family and wider community are valued. Relationships are of central importance in a child's life.

Creativity and the power of symbols

Creativity is about children representing their own ideas in their own way, supported by a nurturing environment and people. As children begin to use and make symbols they express their inner thoughts and ideas and make meaning. Over time, literal reflections of everyday life, community and culture become more abstract and nuanced.

The central importance of play

Play is part of being human and helps children to relate their inner worlds of feelings, ideas and lived experiences taking them to new levels of thinking, feeling, imagining and creating and is a resource for the future. Children have ownership of their play. Froebelian education values the contribution of adults offering 'freedom with guidance' to enrich play as a learning context.

Engaging with nature

Experience and understanding of nature and our place in it, is an essential aspect of Froebelian practice. Through real life experiences, children learn about the interrelationship of all living things. This helps them to think about the bigger questions of the environment, sustainability and climate change.

Knowledgeable and nurturing educators

Early childhood educators who engage in their own learning and believe in principled and reflective practice are a key aspect of a Froebelian approach. Froebelian educators facilitate and guide, rather than instruct. They provide rich real life experiences and observe children carefully, supporting and extending their interests through 'freedom with guidance'.

Find out more about a Froebelian approach to early childhood education at froebel.org.uk



Introduction



Fig. 1: A Froebelian approach prioritises play, listening and relationships

This pamphlet offers educators the chance to reflect on the relationship with time in early childhood education and care (ECEC) through Froebelian principles and practices. The pamphlet is based on a Froebel Trust funded [research project](#) by Alison Clark and a [practitioner project](#) in Falkirk led by Donna Green.

The concept of Slow pedagogy is introduced and Froebel's ideas are explored through a Slow lens. In what ways can a focus on the temporal aspects of Froebelian practices support children and educators in early years settings? Making the relationship with time more visible may help to reveal where everyday life has become pressured and hurried and in turn reveal small steps to reclaim time for supporting all children to thrive.

Slow pedagogy: why now?

There are many downward pressures on the early childhood sector for young children and those who work with young children to be hurried. This impetus to hurry can take many forms, including from national testing and inspections and an emphasis on making children 'school ready'.

These pressures have become more significant post-pandemic as indicated by the influence of a 'catch-up narrative'. This policy agenda pushes children to reach expected development goals against a background of a cost-of-living crisis. These factors may direct attention away from some of the core values in ECEC and reduce the opportunities to enjoy being with young children and sharing in their curiosity, creativity and energetic explorations of the world.

Slow pedagogy prioritises time for play, learning and relationships. It is relevant to a range of pedagogies that emphasize an unhurried approach to the relationship between children and adults and a valuing of care and creativity.

Froebel advocated for the importance of childhood in its own right, not as a preparation for the next stage in life and he placed play centre stage. Froebelian educators ensure rich first-hand experiences and develop relationships with families, carers and the wider community. Froebelian pedagogy is a slow pedagogy.



Fig. 2: Many educators and children feel a pressure to hurry and 'keep-up' in current education systems

Slow pedagogy:

- Is about 'being with' – attentive to the rhythm of children, adults and materials.
- Can involve sudden, fast exchanges with children as well as slower moments.
- Values play and the present moment.
- Makes time to listen to children's ideas and experiences through a range of expressive languages.
- Is attentive to strengthening relationships.
- Supports creativity and imagination and other abilities and attributes that are difficult to measure.

- Appreciates the group as well as individual children's progress and wellbeing.
- Is respectful of children's past experiences and cultures.
- Keeps longer term perspectives in view about children's lives, about education and the planet.
- Can be a place of resistance when policies sit uncomfortably with pedagogical principles. (Adapted from Clark 2023).

Slow pedagogy isn't about being in 'slow motion'. It is a way of engaging that is attentive to children and context and can include different rhythms, for example in dancing, singing, running, reading and being still.



Fig. 3 a and b: Being actively engaged in the moment can be part of a slow pedagogy

Four key themes of a slow pedagogy

The four interconnecting features of a slow pedagogy in early years settings are: 'being with', 'going off track', 'diving deep with children' and 'taking the longer view'. These themes reflect and connect to the principles of a Froebelian approach.

'Being with'

Slow pedagogy prioritises time for educators to 'be with' children. This can involve feeling you have permission to 'stay in the moment' with children. It emphasises the importance of time to listen and to build and enjoy relationships with children, rather than feeling the need to always be busy and rushing on to the next thing. This has implications for a working environment in order for colleagues to know that being with children is valued and prioritised:

"We shouldn't feel guilty for taking on this slow approach because the rewards you reap from the children are amazing." Senior Early Years Officer

"Today the most urgent need in education is that the school should be united with the life of home and family."

Froebel in Lilley 1967, p.156

Children each have their own preferred pace and rhythm that may change throughout a day. 'Being with' involves educators being able to tune in to these different rhythms. This is particularly important when working with children with additional needs (Whistler with Montgomery 2024).

Froebel emphasised the importance of learning being anchored in relationships rather than a mechanistic process.

It takes time to establish such connections and begins with the youngest children (Guard 2024). Children need to feel comfortable with their peers and adults in early years settings in order to thrive. Educators too need to feel comfortable about 'being with' young children and their families and to continue to reflect on how these relationships can be nurtured.



Fig. 4: A Froebelian approach is inclusive; taking time to observe, understand and support the unique needs of every child

'Going off track'

Slow pedagogy values how children may take their learning in unexpected directions. This doesn't mean that days are unplanned but that there is a flexibility in schedules to support children's interests and concerns and an openness to surprise. Educators need to have the confidence to manage a level of uncertainty as to how children's ideas may develop.

Froebel recognised children's capacity to explore and to become and be autonomous learners.

"These are pedagogies that allow for and indeed value the unpredicted or the unexpected which allow for going in unexpected directions so they are not driven by the need to get somewhere which is already known but by an openness to exploring what is not known and which value things such as surprise."

Moss cited in Clark 2023, p.42

"[The child's] aim is to enlarge their range of vision...to seek out and find the undiscovered, to see and know the unseen..."

Froebel in Lilley 1967, p.126-127



Fig. 5: In the community woodlands children observe real life seasonal changes whilst becoming aware of the natural world and their place in it

'Diving deep with children'

Slow pedagogy seeks to give children opportunities to go deeper with their learning through play. It is about valuing depth and making connections rather than shallow, detached learning activities. This can involve rethinking timetables and routines to support longer periods of uninterrupted play through 'unfragmented' or 'stretched' time (Cuffaro 1995, p.31). First-hand real experiences are key, creating '*reservoirs for learning*' (Whinnett 2024, p.178). Diving deep *with* children is a reminder of the skilful role of educators in supporting this process, which can involve giving children opportunities to experience 'freedom with guidance' (Liebschner 2001, p.135).

Extended periods of play can be important for children to make connections between their earlier experiences and their outer world as expressed in the Froebelian principle of Unity and connectedness.

Diving deep with children can also involve increasing opportunities for children to reflect and revisit their learning, to grow as autonomous learners who are able to take an active part in building on their previous knowledge and experiences.

Froebel 'argued that play helps children to relate their inner worlds of feelings, ideas and lived experiences with the wider world of things and people and to see a connection between them' (Tovey 2020, p.14).

Time is one of the important ingredients in supporting children to make these connections between their inner and outer worlds. However, the role of educators, the environment and the wider community are also crucial parts of this process.

Knowledgeable and nurturing early childhood educators, who engage in their own learning and believe in principled and reflective practice, are a key aspect of a Froebelian approach. Educators can adapt to a child's pace instead of hurrying development – just as Froebel advocated.

"We grant space and time to young plants and animals because we know that, in accordance with the laws that live in them, they will develop properly and grow well; young animals and plants are given rest, and arbitrary interference with their growth is avoided, because it is known that the opposite practice would disturb their pure unfolding and sound development; but the young human being is looked upon as a piece of wax, a lump of clay which man can mold into what he pleases."

Froebel 1885, p.8

‘Taking the longer view’

Slow pedagogy values longer term thinking in contrast to the increasing pressures to meet short term goals and priorities. Taking the longer view can include acknowledging the value of children being given time to develop skills for themselves. It may be quicker for educators to always do things for children, such as serving their food and dressing for outdoors, but developing these skills is an important part of growing as autonomous learners.

Taking the longer view is also about valuing children’s past, present and future. This includes being respectful of local and cultural knowledge in communities. Early years settings can be important holders of memories of generations of children who have contributed to the life of a centre over the years.

Taking the longer view of the planet can be an important part of introducing children to questions about sustainability including the pleasure of growing their own food and plants.

Taking the longer view closely aligns with the Froebelian principle of the value of childhood in its own right, giving value to each stage of a child’s development.

“‘I always start with the child’ is a well-known dictum of Froebel’s. It referred to the child’s ability as well as to his interests.”

Liebschner 2001, p.135



Fig. 6: Supporting children to notice and make connections with the world around them

Froebelian principles and practices through a Slow lens

An unhurried relationship with time runs through Froebel's Occupations and is also a key part of Froebel's emphasis on the centrality of play.

"... because the child learns easily through play, it must not be left to chance, but has to be an integral part of the curriculum..."

Froebel cited in Liebschner 2001, p.54

Engaging with nature over time

Slow pedagogy values children's opportunities for first-hand experiences in nature and with natural materials that can deepen over time. These values are shared with Froebelian principles and lived out daily in Froebelian practice with educators who can nurture and extend their interests.

Experience and understanding of nature and our place in it, is an essential aspect of Froebelian practice.

What might be gained by giving young children the opportunity to develop a deep connection with a natural environment over time? The following example considers the benefits of children's involvement in a community garden.

"Throughout childhood he should be allowed to maintain this connection with Nature and its phenomena as a focus of his life, and this is done mainly through the encouragement of his play..."

Froebel in Lilley 1967, p.83



Fig. 7: Harvesting herbs from their nursery garden

Practice example

Early years garden projects were established to cultivate a culture of learning together through establishing 'growing gardens' for vegetables on early years sites and community allotments. Children were given seeds and potatoes to plant at home. Families and educators provided experiences for children to plant and care for living things and make connections to life cycles and biodiversity. Watching how birds and insects were attracted to the plants increased children's knowledge about their local environment. Being involved in the whole process helped children understand where food comes from and what is needed for growth. This holistic approach is underpinned by the Froebelian principle of Unity and connectedness.



Fig. 8: Children, educators and families access community allotments where food is grown, harvested and cooked at nursery



Fig. 9: Gardening at the early years setting

Reflection

Children's involvement in growing food enables them to experience first-hand the lengthy process from seed or seedling to the table and satisfaction with the results. This helps deepen children's awareness of food production and encourages a positive ongoing relationship with food. This long-term thinking about children's future wellbeing is an aspect of a slow pedagogy.

Engaging with nature in these ways can also open up opportunities for children, educators and families to 'be with' each other for extended periods of time in a less hurried context and with a practical focus.

Regular visits to the same outdoor space can alert children to changes across the seasons and enjoy nature as a place of beauty and wonder.

This close attention can also be developed in urban environments through regular neighbourhood walks (O Grady 2024). Developing children's sense of belonging and respect for nature in its many forms can contribute to their growing understanding of the importance of sustainability.

Reflective questions

- What are the benefits for children in building up a relationship with a particular natural environment over time?
- How can educators help children who are new to an area develop a sense of belonging?
- What might taking the longer view about engaging with nature look like in your context?

"Teachers should regularly take their classes out of doors – not driving them like a flock of sheep or leading them as if they were a company of soldiers, but walking with them as a father with his sons or a brother with his brothers and making them more familiar with whatever Nature or the seasons offer."

Froebel in Lilley 1967, p.146

"Enabling all children to have the time and space outside to respond to what matters personally to them is fundamental to their making sense of sustainability."

Scottish Government 2024, p.9

‘Diving deep’ through woodwork

Slow pedagogy values children’s opportunities for first-hand experiences with natural materials that can stretch children’s imagination, dexterity and thinking skills. Wood is a complex material with a long timeline, from seed to sapling to established tree and then work bench. Children need time to become familiar with working with wood and in handling a range of practical tools. This can open up opportunities to follow their own

ideas and for educators and children to ‘dive deep’ by problem solving together. Children can be enabled through such processes to connect their inner world of ideas and feelings with the outer world. This requires patient, skilled support from knowledgeable and nurturing educators to gain confidence and express their creativity through woodwork. Woodwork can support learning for sustainability: repurposing and reusing materials and supporting a culture where creating, mending and repairing are valued (Moorhouse 2021).

“Woodwork helps counteract the current culture of “consume and dispose” by developing an understanding of the value of making and repairing.”

Moorhouse 2021, p.13



Fig. 10 : Child using the Japanese hand saw. Educators provide individual support in keeping with their risk-benefit assessment

Practice example

Through observation, the setting realised the importance of offering woodwork daily. They created a well organised environment where children could have access to wood, accessories and tools. Educators spent time with children and were attentive to their ideas, providing freedom with guidance and observing, supporting and extending (Bruce 2015) their learning as it developed in unexpected directions.

Whilst at the woodwork bench, Mirren took some time to look at the materials on offer: "I want to make a big magical wand to cast spells."

She collected some big pieces of wood, ribbon and pens: "Look, these nails are the small ones – I need them, they are best for my wand." Using a hammer, she hammered the nails in to hold the red and white ribbon and then added colour using the pens and when she had finished announced: "Wand! I'm going to turn you into a frog, abracadabra." The imaginative ideas came from the child as Froebel intended. Many skills were observed, and the child had a sense of pride and joy with her creation, which she played with throughout the day and proudly showed to many people.



Fig. 11: Woodwork is one of Froebel's occupations which can naturally lend itself to slow, inclusive practice where children can express their ideas and build up skills over time

Reflection

Woodwork provides opportunities for children to see their ideas come to life, demonstrating their creativity and autonomy. Persistence can be needed too in working out how to solve problems when the materials don't quite come together as the children had planned. Sensitive educators, learning when to directly help and when to observe, can enable each unique child to develop their skills. Woodwork in its widest sense – whether with a wooden hammer and pegs, tinkering with loose parts or using real tools – can offer inclusive experiences for all children. These are not processes to be rushed but to be enjoyed.

Slow woodwork can include gradually building up children's experiences and confidence in handling wood.

Reflective questions

- What opportunities do children have in your context to explore their ideas in depth through woodwork?
- How could new members of staff be supported to 'dive deep' with children's ideas through woodwork?
- How could you celebrate children's growing confidence in woodwork with parents and carers?



Fig. 12: Woodwork can enable children to express their creativity in new ways

“With woodwork, children can develop their learning at their own pace and find their own challenges.”

Moorhouse 2018, p.8

'Being with' children through sewing

Slow pedagogy values children's opportunities for developing their creativity and exploring their ideas and experiences through a range of media and materials. Value is given to areas of the curriculum that are difficult to measure, including art.

Sewing can be understood as a slow practice (Wellesley-Smith 2015) that has a particular relationship with time. It is difficult to carry out a sewing project in a hurry. It requires slowing down and an attention to detail. This can enable children and educators to collaborate in new ways and for children to express their ideas and feelings.

Sewing is one of Froebel's Occupations. It can be offered as an experience in early childhood to develop real life skills, learning about sustainability through making and repairing, and may support well-being with its many therapeutic and sensory benefits (Imray, Thomson and Whinnett 2023). By 'being with' children as they work with sewing materials, Froebelian educators offer freedom with guidance to support their creative ideas.



Fig. 13: Deep concentration with sewing in progress

Practice example

Educators reflected on how they and the children engaged with their sewing space and the resources on offer. Initially children were limited to sewing with fabric through needlework or a sewing machine. Observation showed these experiences weren't inclusive for all children. In addition, some educators were not confident with their own sewing skills.

Time and opportunities were provided for educators to build up their own skills and confidence about sewing and weaving. This increased the range of opportunities offered to the children. Whilst some children still wanted to hand stitch and use the sewing machine, others

enjoyed playing with the sensory textures of different fabrics, threading the large wooden beads or weaving in a variety of ways.

During reflections, educators realised they were often rushing on to other tasks. They learned to slow down and to be patient, taking time to be with the children, to observe, attune, listen, support and extend each child's interest. This helped them to recognise that all children could participate in sewing.

Many families became interested in their child's sewing and staff offered Stay and Sew sessions where families and children could sew together.



Fig. 14 : Creating a sewing hoop together can increase educators' confidence to sew



Fig. 15: Families learning together at an early years setting during a Stay and Sew session

Reflection

Developing sewing as a slow practice as part of continuous provision can make a positive impact on children and families. Sewing and weaving offer a range of opportunities that can take place at an unhurried pace. It may take many months to become familiar with different materials and tools associated with sewing and children can be autonomous learners in such an environment as their ideas take shape.

Sewing together enables children, educators, parents and carers to enjoy and be engaged in learning together. Some educators may be confident sewers and can share their expertise with others who may require time to build up new skills and confidence. Community and family members may also have cultural or generational expertise that they can share. This can be a way of celebrating what David Orr called 'slow knowledge' (Orr 1996) that can be based on long traditions.

Reflective questions

- What opportunities do children have in your context to explore sewing and develop their skills over time?
- How could sewing provide more opportunities for educators to enjoy 'being with' children?
- In what ways could sewing be supported by family and community members with local expertise?



Fig. 16: The hand sewing machine in action in an early years setting

“To learn a thing in life and through doing is much more developing, cultivating, and strengthening, than to learn it merely through the verbal communication of ideas.”

Froebel 1885, p.279

Nurturing autonomy in unhurried mealtimes

Providing meals and snacks in an early years setting is very time-consuming. These can be rushed parts of the day and an anxious time for children and adults. Reviewing everyday routines around food through a Slow lens may open up new opportunities to make mealtimes more enjoyable. Involving children in the preparation and serving of food and encouraging them to grow their own produce enables them to play a more active and autonomous role in the life of the setting.

The physical environment can have a profound impact on how mealtimes are experienced by children and adults. The need to transition to a different space to eat can be an added challenge for children. Noise may be a contributing factor in making mealtimes feel hurried and frightening. This may be particularly the case where the youngest children are sharing a space with older children.

Practice example

Educators used video recordings to revisit how mealtimes and snack times were organised, paying particular attention to children's actions. The educators noticed that the soup was so thin that many children were finding it difficult to eat independently. After conversations with catering staff, the consistency became thicker and there was a decrease in food waste, not only with the soup but other foods too. The atmosphere became calmer and there was an increase in conversations between children and adults. This supported what was working well for children and how educators could improve upon the mealtime experiences through each unique child's perspective.



Fig. 17 : Children leading their learning through real life experiences using pictorial recipe books

Practice example

When educators reflected on mealtimes before the project started, their observations showed that the experiences of lunch were predominantly adult led. Where there was more child choice, there was greater participation at snack time but this was not transferring to lunch.

When the focus was on snack times and lunch for babies to three-year-olds, observations showed that educators had got into a system of “this is the way it has always been done.” Evaluations identified this as an area for improvement as educators wanted to improve the experiences for children.

As a result, educators offered children the choice of when to come for lunch and snacks, where they wanted to sit and with whom. They viewed the children as capable and responsible, valuing childhood in its own right. The children became involved with the whole process

of mealtime experiences: growing or buying the food, preparing the food, setting the table, serving themselves and others, respecting and feeling an ownership of their mealtime spaces. The slow practice recognised the children as autonomous learners.

Slow mealtimes offered time to be together with peers and educators whilst being mindful of each child’s needs. The educators could use observation and reflect on these experiences through each child’s perspective. This is a valuable use of time. Froebel advocated the importance of real-life experiences where mealtimes, cooking and baking can offer an abundance of interconnecting opportunities (Denton & Parker 2024).



Fig. 18: Knowledgeable, nurturing educators role model and provide sensitive guidance

Reflection

There is no one blueprint to follow for developing mealtimes as a slow practice as there will be many differences in the numbers of children, relationships with catering staff and the physical environment. But a common factor will be the need for continuing discussion across the early years team and with children, parents and carers to explain and review changes and to reflect on what might be the emerging benefits and for whom.

Following a professional development day where they explored Slow pedagogy, the team from an early years setting in Scotland made changes to their lunchtime routines and observed some of the differences it made:

“The children are growing in confidence as they make choices from start to finish. Lunchtime has become a social event and the rich language, which develops from the adult/child interactions, supports an unhurried time for learning. Routines and processes become autonomous when the children are choosing their own food using spoons and tongs, knowing when they have finished by scraping their own plates and loading the dishwasher.” Senior Practitioner, Scalloway Early Years

Reconsidering the length of time that can be made available for mealtimes and snack times may be one way to make a positive change. Snacks, for example, could be available for children to help themselves over a longer period or routines changed so children gather in small groups to talk and eat together.

The furniture, crockery and utensils may all have an impact on the role that children can play, including children with additional needs. Would a change in the size and weight of a water jug, for example, make it easier for more children to pour their own drinks?

Reflective questions

1. How could children play a more active role in how mealtimes are organised?
2. What arrangements are working well and what could be improved in order make mealtimes a more enjoyable time for children and educators?
3. How does the choice of furniture and utensils impact on children's experience of mealtimes?

From Slow to deep

In a Froebelian approach, Slow pedagogy involves finding ways to extend children's learning over time, and involves children in planning and reflecting on their learning.

Educators can take a longer view of children's learning and consider a way of teaching that is not dominated by short-term thinking. For example by:

- Providing children with many opportunities to revisit their learning, such as helping to compile floorbooks and portfolios or profiles and being able to share and review these living records.
- Making time for children and colleagues to reflect on previous learning as a catalyst for next steps.
- Enabling children to explore a project in depth, following their ideas, and supporting their development of new skills and expressive languages.

Taking time to document the process can be an important part of 'going deeper' as children can enjoy revisiting their learning and celebrating and building on their achievements.



Fig. 19: Time for children to reflect on previous learning

Practice example

A nursery garden project took place over a year. A group of fifteen of the oldest children in the nursery led the project with an experienced educator. Major changes were needed to the outdoor playspace that had originally been part of the school playground with an old metal climbing frame that was no longer safe.

The project began in September with children drawing the existing space and talking about what they liked and didn't like about playing outside at nursery. One of the children had a sister at a neighbouring nursery and suggested they all went on a visit. This nearby nursery had an established natural garden. The children sent a letter to request a visit. The garden project continued to 'unfold' with the children documenting their visit through photography and drawings, discussions about new resources and the designing of models of a future space using small loose parts (see Fig. 21). The individual models were combined into a whole group model that became the plan for the redesigned space. At each stage the educator identified 'possible lines of development' that she recorded in the project's floorbook.

The children were able to demonstrate their ability to be autonomous learners in this enabling environment. Some of the quietest children gained confidence in expressing their ideas. As work on the redesign started the children were able to practise their woodwork skills by helping, under supervision, to saw down the old fence! The builder created the outline of the new space from the sketch of the children's model and the group took part in the new planting.

A huge sense of achievement was shared in being able to make real changes to their playspace. The project floorbook continues to be enjoyed and is a springboard for ongoing conversations.



Fig. 20: A detail from a floorbook about the garden project showing children's drawings of a neighbouring nursery's outdoor space



Fig. 21: Children's individual models of a future outdoor space were discussed and combined into one large model to form the plan of the new design

Reflection

Following a tight script for a project might lead to an intended outcome but with few opportunities for children to demonstrate their knowledge and interests. Genuinely listening to children needs time to develop trust, especially for the less confident children to be able to express themselves.

An extended project, developed in a respectful, unhurried way, may take unexpected directions and provide an increased sense of belonging and achievement for the children involved. Working in this way requires educators to be comfortable with open-ended processes, with the skill to communicate what is happening to colleagues, parents and carers when necessary. Extended projects are one way of offering children the chance to deep dive into a topic. The documentation developed during such a process can then become the vehicle for children to revisit and build on such experiences.

Reflective questions

1. What opportunities do children have to choose to revisit records of their previous learning and shared experiences?
2. What qualities are needed in order to equip educators to stay with a project for an extended period of time?
3. How might wall displays and floorbooks be catalysts for further explorations?



Fig. 22: Seeing their projects displayed in the setting can give a sense of achievement for the children involved

Final thoughts

"It makes everything so much easier. Don't think of it as another task to take on a slow pedagogical approach. Pick something small because you start small and it's amazing the change that you will see. You can see that in mealtimes, you can see it outdoors and you can take it into any area across the board. I would say 'Try it, start small and you will see a massive change.'"
Senior Early Years Officer

Engaging with ideas about Slow pedagogy is a process that cannot be rushed.

Each of the early years settings involved in practitioner development projects about Slow in Scotland began by choosing a routine or activity that they wanted to explore through a Slow lens. The exact focus emerged through discussion with colleagues, aided by prompts such as: 'When in the day do you feel most rushed?' and 'When do you think children feel most rushed or spend long periods waiting?' Mealtimes were one of the starting points for reflecting on the relationship with time. The

starting point will depend on your context, challenges you are facing, and the skills and interests of your learning community. You might start by considering how to:

- Rethink the welcome and home time routine.
- Increase opportunities for children to spend extended periods of time outdoors.
- Develop slow practices with block play including organising the environment so that children can add to their creations and extend their play.
- Provide further access to a woodwork area for children to develop their confidence.
- Involve parents and carers with particular skills who can support slow practices, for example with sewing, gardening and cooking.



Fig. 23 a and b: Time and space for block play



Fig. 24 a and b: Taking the time to reflect and learn together

Slow, unhurried leadership can involve creating a culture where colleagues know that taking time with children is valued. This can apply across every aspect of the day, both indoors and outdoors, and at the beginning and ending of the day, as well as during mealtimes and nappy changing, and with blocks, clay, paint, stories and songs...

Slow, unhurried leadership involves being a listener – to children, colleagues, parents and carers. Listening requires time and can be difficult to prioritise, but it is at the heart of a slow pedagogy. There is an ongoing process that involves discussion, reflection, action and adjustment. There will be obstacles and challenges in establishing any changes to routines and practices. This can involve educators making small steps to start with and reflecting with colleagues about the impact of a change. This way of working is about continuing to grow rather than finding quick solutions.

Key questions might include:

- Are we making the best use of children's time?
- What does an unhurried approach enable?
- Who is benefitting from the changes?
- Are there particular groups of children or individual children for whom there has been positive change? How do we know this?
- What has been the impact of the changes on colleagues and myself?
- What have been the main challenges?
- What would we like to focus on next?

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