

# MACHNAMH

*A biannual publication by The Froebel Department staff & students*

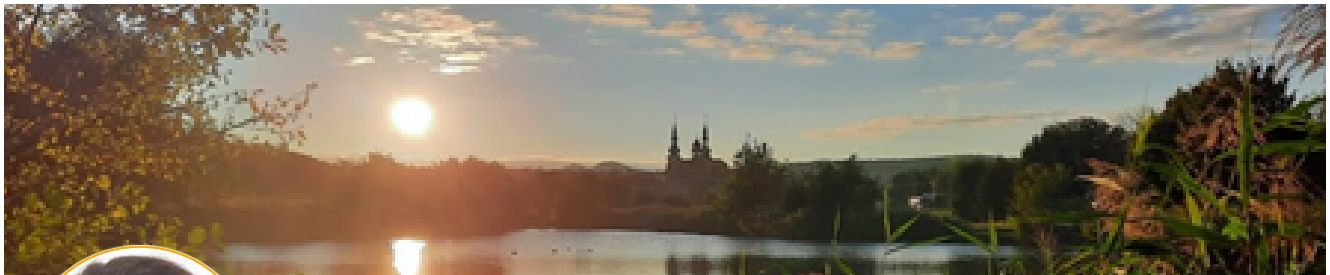


Photo by Melissa Scully on Erasmus at the Lakes Velehrad in the Czech Republic



## Foreword by Niamh Fortune

Head of Froebel Department

Is mór an onóir dom an t-eagrán seo den iris *Machnamh* a chur ar fáil daoibh. Thosaigh mé ag obair i Roinn Froebel sa bhliain 2008 agus creidim gurb iad na scoláirí croílár na Roinne. Originally a primary school teacher, I believe my true understanding of child-centred education began when I started in Froebel. The emphasis in the department on relationships and active teaching really came into focus over the last 23 months. Like many others we found this relationship-building so difficult on our computer screens. Returning to face to face teaching has definitely been a highlight of this academic year. The wonderful energy and enthusiasm of the students remind us why we love teaching. Accepting the role of leading the department has also been a highlight and a whirlwind!

It is really an exciting time in the Froebel Department. A new cohort of students have started in the full-time BA degree in Early Childhood Teaching and Learning

It is so heartening to see the professionalism, creativity and flexibility of the students since we returned to the department. We also have a new group of BEd, PMEd, MEd and PDISE students, so it is an exciting place to work. Is breá liom an obair atá ar siúl agam leis na scoláirí i Roinn Froebel agus mé i mo Cheann Roinne.

**'THE CHILD'S SOUL IS AN  
EVER BUBBLING FOUNTAIN IN  
THE WORLD OF HUMANITY'**

*Friedrich Froebel*

I think this edition of *Machnamh* really gives a good flavour of our wonderful Department.

Congratulations to all involved. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

Enjoy reading!

Niamh

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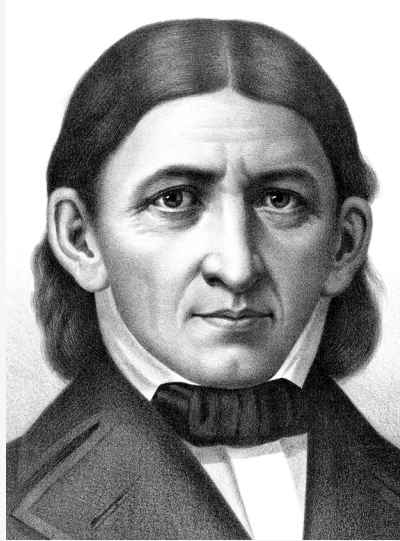
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Ráiteas Misin na Roinne Froebel

# Student Welcome 2021



**Fáilte romhaibh! A warm welcome to our new BEd, PMEd, MEd, BA and PDISE students. It has certainly been a strange and busy year for students and staff, but we hope that you have been enjoying your time so far nonetheless. Despite the ongoing pandemic, we hope that you experience the busy and vibrant lifestyle of the Froebel Department. We wish you all the best for the coming years and we look forward to seeing you flourish and develop during your studies.**

# Mission Statement

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.

# PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Anna Wrafter, Deirbhile Tiernan and Katie Ryan**

Fáilte romhaibh go dtí an naoú heagrán de Mhachnamh!

It is with great pride and privilege that we introduce the ninth edition of Froebel's newsletter, Machnamh. Since its conception, Machnamh has sought to celebrate and document the achievements and works of Froebel staff and students. Although the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has restricted many of the events and opportunities that would usually take place in the Froebel Department, we all have found ways to become accustomed to new changes whilst engaging with our course work.

We would like to preface this publication by extending our appreciation and thanks to Séamie Ó Néill for presenting us with this new venture of editing and creating Machnamh this year. It has been a rewarding journey.

We would also like to thank Mireia Guardino-Ferran for her continuing support, help and advice during the editing process.

Finally, we would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to each and every one of you who has contributed to this edition of Machnamh, in particular, Eimear Colreavy, Noel Stapleton, Clodagh Jackman, Ethan Dowling and Ester Símo Arcas. We would also like to thank our peers and college friends who have supported us greatly during these times. Without your help and support, this publication could not have been achieved.

Go raibh maith agaibh,

*Anna Wrafter, Katie Ryan and Deirbhile Tiernan*



# **Staff Teaching and Learning**

# Play-rich Learning Environments Throughout Childhood

**On 24 November 2021, the Irish Froebel Network (IFN) co-hosted a webinar with the Froebel Department Research Committee**  
**An article by Dr Tríona Stokes**

Head of Education and Irish Froebel Network founder, Séamie Ó Néill, introduced the IFN and outlined its mission and areas of focus. Froebel graduate, and lecturer in Digital Learning, Ailbhe Forde, gave a virtual tour of the IFN website and officially launched it. The Irish Froebel Network archive was also launched on the night, and introduced by its creators, lecturers Laoise Ní Chéirigh and Dr Máire Nic an Bhaird, along with Clodagh Jackman.

The event showcased graduate Action Research projects from across three of its programmes. Dr Tríona Stokes introduced each of the graduate speakers. Susana Garcia Nombela is a graduate of the BA Early Childhood degree and is currently working in an ECCE setting in rural Meath. She presented on the subject of her dissertation topic, fostering children's creativity through the environment. Patrick Cavaliere, a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education and currently teaching in Arklow, presented on Action Research relating to his introduction of outdoor multi-breaks throughout the school day.



MEd Research in Practice graduate, Rose Halpin Duffy, concluded the presentations by sharing the process and findings of her research which reflected upon her use of Aistear with children in 4th class. This was the third webinar in the series of offerings from the Froebel Department Research Committee. The committee intends to extend the thematic focus of play and the outdoors throughout the remainder of this academic year.

# Community Engaged Learning in Action in the Froebel Department

'Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine'

## *le Dr Máire Nic an Bhaird*

'Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine'. This seanfhocal invokes a sense of community and interconnectedness, two core elements of the Community Engaged Learning pedagogy which I embrace in modules. Community Engaged Learning is positively impactful for both lecturers and students as it is a teaching and learning pedagogy connecting meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enhance the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.



Final year 2021/2022 Bachelor of Education students (EDF441) and first year Professional Master of Education students (EDF602A) in The Froebel Department have formed learning communities with Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann and relatives/guardians/friends/neighbours. Collectively, they are exploring primary school days between the years of 1920-1980 and the first-hand witness accounts. Our work is emulating the superb folklore initiative of Scéim na Scol at the end of the 1930s, where primary school children in Ireland collaborated with their teachers, principals, the Irish Folklore Commission and their communities in collecting Irish folklore. The pedagogy of Community Engaged Learning is guiding these History of Education modules as Cuimhní Scoile has both learning and community action goals. The project gives students experiential opportunities to learn in real world contexts and develop skills of community engagement, while addressing the significant needs of Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann. Community Engaged Learning is agentic and democratic ensuring that the students of Cuimhní Scoile collaborate and develop the structure of the prompt questions for their community interviews and maintain ownership and direction of the process.





Community Engaged Learning has also been embedded into the elective for final year students called Teanga an Ghrá (EDF485). This elective was awarded 2 Community Engaged Learning bursaries during the 2020/2021 academic year via Project Live and the Healthy Ireland Government Scheme. Students and lecturers (Máire Nic an Bhairst and Laoise Ní Chléirigh) embarked upon real life projects called Dearcán and Tairseach to enhance their own teaching and learning and the peer-teaching and learning of the students, while benefitting society via these biodiversity enhancement and well-being projects. The work culminated in workshops for schools, biodiversity and well-being videos for Kildare citizens, lesson plans, enhancement of biodiversity in roof top garden of the MU School of Education, the creation of the Tairseach Tree Trail and digital mapping resources.

Tá an Eleathanach ar ais i mbliana freisin. Tá Máire Nic an Bhairst, Fiona Nic Fhionnlaóich agus Séamie Ó Néill ag obair le Pól Ó Cainín sa Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta, le daltaí Choláiste Mhuire, lena bpríomhoide – an tUasal Mac Eoin - agus le múinteoirí na chéad bhliana, Múinteoir Aisling agus Múinteoir Conall. Is sampla éifeachtach é seo d'Fhoghlaim a Dhéanann Teagmháil leis an bPobal. Oibríonn an pobal seo a bhfuil féiniúlacht na Gaeilge agus an chultúir go smíor ann le chéile ar leasa an phobail mhóir. Mar aon le daltaí scoile na hÉireann, léann léitheoirí na Gaeilge an Eleathanach i Meiriceá agus san Astráil.

Community-Engaged Learning has a profound impact on students' and lecturers' teaching and learning. It provides the opportunity to apply what we have learnt in 'the real world'. Problem-solving, problem analysis, critical thinking, and cognitive development are significantly enhanced when the pedagogy of Community Engaged Learning is utilised in university modules. It allows for improved ability to understand ambiguity and complexity but to arrive at solutions together within the learning community. As a lecturer, it has given me a greater sense of personal and professional identity, efficacy, spiritual growth, and moral development. Of course one of the most important aspects of learning for our participants is interpersonal development, particularly the ability to work well within groups and with others, and build communication and leadership skills together, in communities of learners made up of both staff and students alike.



# Freedom by Alexandra Wejchert



Colin Hunt, Chief Executive Officer of AIB (left) and Prof Philip Nolan former President of MU on North Campus

The stainless steel "Freedom" sculpture by Polish Irish sculptor Alexandra Wejchert stands proud on the North Campus of Maynooth University. The sculpture exhales stainless steel branches, bending and sweeping in its massive presence. And like the gentle flutter of bird's wings, Freedom seems naturally au courant as one passes the protecting aura of the sculpture's presence.

Freedom was originally commissioned by Allied Irish Bank in 1985, the stainless-steel sculpture stands at 11.5 m (37 ft) high and now peers over crowds of students outside the School of Education building, reminding us that anything is possible.

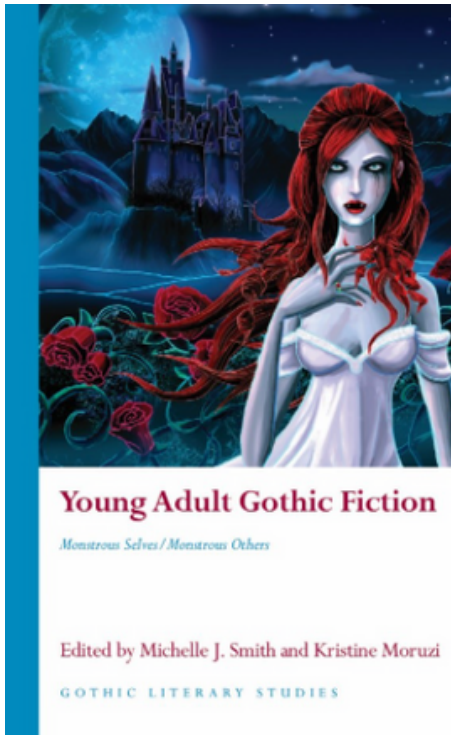
Alexandra Wejchert was born on 16 October 1921 in Cracow, Poland. Alexandra studied architecture in Warsaw University and there experienced the German invasion of Poland, which haunted her for life. Through the rhymical quality of her design and the with baroque sinuosity and an exceptional quality of aspiration expressed in her flaming birdlike, upward writhing shapes, we now also know the privilege of 'Freedom'.



Prof Alison FitzGerald from the Department of History

By **Brían Crotty**

# ‘Zombies Vs Unicorns: An Exploration of the Pleasures of the Gothic for Young Adults’



Book cover

Dr Patricia Kennon's essay was published in the edited collection, *Young Adult Gothic Fiction: Monstrous Selves/Monstrous Others* (eds. Michelle Smith and Kristine Moruzi, The University of Wales Press).

Patricia also won the 2021 Karen Alane Robinson Children's Literature Fellowship. This fellowship supports scholars to do research in the children's and young adult literature collections of the Irvin Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of South Carolina, USA. She will undertake this archival study in 2022.

Patricia and her co-investigator, Dr Melanie Ramdarshan Bold of the University of Glasgow, have been awarded an Ireland-Scotland Bilateral Network Grant for the collaborative project, 'Building A Youth Literature Community Resilience Framework: Children's and Young Adult Literature and Sustainable Wellbeing Post-COVID 19'.



This Grant scheme focuses on strengthening co-operation and learning between excellent researchers, academics and practitioners in Scotland and Ireland. Dr Kennon's project will take place during 2021/22 and is in partnership with six Irish and Scottish national arts organisations and youth organisations



By Dr Patricia Kennon

# 'Back in the Room' with Run of the Mill Theatre

A morning bursting with creativity occurred, when the performers of Run of the Mill Theatre, along with facilitators Aisling and Sinéad visited the Visual Art Room in November. Coordinated by Dr.Tríona Stokes, in association with MAP office, Froebel Dept. were delighted to host their series of 'Master Classes', in the Drama Room. The group enjoyed exploring the theme 'Back in the Room', with a variety of guest facilitators having returned to face-to-face workshops earlier in the semester for the first time since the pandemic commenced.



Students at 'Back in the Room'



During the visual art 'Master Class' the theme, 'Back in the Room', was further explored through a variety of drawing activities with all performers eagerly participating. After a round of introductions, names remembered and breakfast coffees discussed, the session began with a mark-making exercise in response to music. Individual performers led this activity, as a combined group piece was skillfully created; the level of energy in the room grew. Following this, all engaged in warm-up 'blind' portrait drawings, to great whoops of laughter and excitement as we shared sketches of friends, before spending time on developing portraits from observation. To end a busy morning, performers took the floor to pose for a series of timed, gesture line drawings.

The visual art techniques employed were linked to Ann Bogarts, 'Viewpoints', Theory of Performance. This method encourages performers to focus less on their characters' psychology and more on observation and movement. Some of the viewpoints explored provided an opportunity for the performers to demonstrate an understanding of kinesthetic, spatial, repetitive and gestural responses.



Practising Ann Bogarts' technique

It was a session filled with passion, commitment, creativity and fun. It was great to meet new friends, through a shared experience of collaborative engagement. We are greatly looking forward to building on this partnership, with Run of the Mill Performers and Froebel students learning from each other.

**By Laura Thornton  
Lecturer in Visual Art  
Education**

# The Maynooth Pardon: A historical re-enactment at Maynooth Castle for Culture Night 2021

In celebration of Culture Night 2021, recently retired teacher from Maynooth BNS, Donal Downes, led a historical re-enactment of the events leading up to the 'Maynooth Pardon' (circa 1535). Accompanied by local actor, Éanna McAuliffe, the pair facilitated PMEd Year 2 and BEd Year 3 student groups (pictured) in partaking in the drama, which was set between the dual locations of Windsor Castle and Maynooth Castle. Froebel students adopted various roles and shared in the learning experience of using drama as a powerful means to understand how and why these historical events unfolded.



PMEd2 students and Y3 BEds re-enact the Maynooth Pardon with actor Éanna McAuliffe on 16 September 2021 to mark Culture Night.

Using a script created by Donal Downes, the play features familiar historical figures from the era, including King Henry VIII, William Skeffington, and the Kildare-based dynasty, the Fitzgeralds. The local playwright and history buff has served the local schools throughout the pandemic with this historical drama-history workshop and other workshops based on plays he has penned. All are based on local historical events. Donal's plays have been presented as an offering to schools in the community in place of school tours, restricted by Covid-19 measures. In so doing, the streets of Maynooth came alive with children and student-teachers re-living history in Summer-Autumn 2021.



Another take on 16 September 2021 to mark Culture Night

**Dr Tríona Stokes,  
BEd Programme Leader**

# Visual Art Exhibitions

It has been a very busy few months in Visual Art lectures since our return to Campus in September. Grateful for the dry Autumn weather, and the vibrant display of colours observed in nature, the outdoor environment informed much of the work created by students this semester. Demonstrating their understanding of art elements and inspired by a selection of artists, including Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, Ellsworth Kelly, Yves Klein, Orla Kiely and Gail Kelly, students worked individually and in groups to develop their ideas.



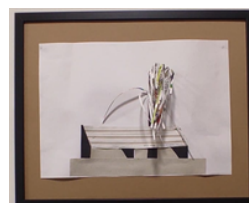
Artists: PMEd Yr 2  
 Title: 'Look Outside', 2021  
 Medium: Ink on Paper

*Exploring our Local Environment through a variety of Mono-print techniques.*

As a starting point, students explored a range of free play activities in drawing, print, clay and paint & colour before developing techniques specific to each strand area. Students subsequently realised a range of beautiful and original artwork with supportive guidance from Vis Art lecturers Brían Crotty, Vera Mc Evoy and myself. Exhibitions of work entitled, 'Drawing with Scissors', 'Matisse Paper cuts', 'Look Beyond', 'In Line with Mondrian' and 'Wonderful Weeds' added to the aesthetic environment of the School of Education and captured the attention of many passing by.

Artists: BEd Yr 1  
 Title: 'Drawing with Scissors', 2021  
 Medium: Paper

*Inspired by the paper cut outs created by Henri Matisse, students looked to our local natural and built environments, when developing these studies.*





## Anti-trafficking Training with MECPATHS

Froebel's mission statement espouses to 'prepare and inspire caring educators...towards the holistic education of every child in a changing Ireland'. It was with this in mind that we welcomed MECPATHS to facilitate training on Anti-Trafficking with BEd yr 1 students, on Friday 3rd December. MECPATHS is an NGO, established in 2013, by two Mercy Sisters as a social justice response to the growing prevalence of Human Trafficking (also known as Modern Day Slavery) and the exploitation of people, in Ireland.

JP O'Sullivan, networks and communications manager, along with Ann Mara, Education Manager, work as a team to bring their specific expertise in the area together seamlessly. Ann delivered this session, on behalf of MECPATHS, with great insight, empathy and authenticity. The presentation, filled with statistics and international overviews, was informative. However, the reflections shared on lived experiences were what resonated most with all present. None more so than that of Maya, a survivor of child trafficking.

Dr. Triona Stokes and I are delighted to announce Froebel Dept. is the first ITE to collaborate with MECPATHS and we hope that students across all programmes will avail of training before completion of their respective degree courses. We are very grateful for the support received from colleagues to date and look forward to further developing module links in the future. As we launch this partnership, we continue to draw students' attention to their emerging identities as educators, encouraging them through reflection to:

## Laura Thornton, Lecturer and Coordinator of ASP



Look inquiringly and wonderingly on everyday reality in the local community

Notice people, things and details in environment never seen before  
Reflect on 'what was known' and make sense of them in the light of this changed experience

Consciously engage in inquiry (Greene. M. 1973)



# TOP 10

## TIPS FOR

### SMAOINEAMH AN LAE



#### **AN DR GEARARD Ó FLOINN**

What should a good smaoineamh an lae entail?

Smaoineamh an Lae is a practice I encourage with students. After the first week of the academic year I usually have a rota set up with each class group. It's a form of mindfulness which can help those who hear it and the one who provides it to adopt a reflective attitude towards the current moment and towards the day. Inter alia, here are some of the considerations:

1. It gives participants in the lecture an opportunity to share something of what inspires them.
2. Even before a word is spoken taking a moment of silent reflection is a wholesome thing to do in the middle of a busy day.
3. A state of readiness is required if the smaoineamh is to be effective.
4. Brevity, i.e. the paucity of words very often means that on these occasions, less is more and more is less.
5. When the smaoineamh comes from the speaker's personal experience it will have an authenticity about it which those who hear it will more easily recognise.
6. The wording is important. A proverb has been described as 'the wisdom of many and the wit of one.' If the thought has an ancient provenance it will have been honed over centuries and so will have been shared by many. However, it takes one person to formulate the thought into memorable language. Sometimes this will involve a play on language where, for example, a word can have more than one meaning.
7. Sometimes an exotic idea will be attractive to hearers, coming from a culture different from theirs.
8. Othertimes, a thought from the Celtic tradition will speak to modern-day Celts and to others in ways which they appreciate.
9. Some thoughts are global in scope. For example 'Treat other people the way you would like to be treated,' can speak to everyone's heart and mind.
10. Some thoughts, like Pascal's Wager, appeal to one's reason and logic, to the left side of the brain, - so to speak - while others respond to thoughts which evoke empathy and which appeal to the right side.

# SCHOOL PLACEMENT

## From Precarity to Intergenerational Solidarity

'I could not commend the Principal enough. She included me in every aspect of school life and, from the outset, welcomed me into one of the best school environments I could hope to experience' (Final Year Froebel B Ed student)



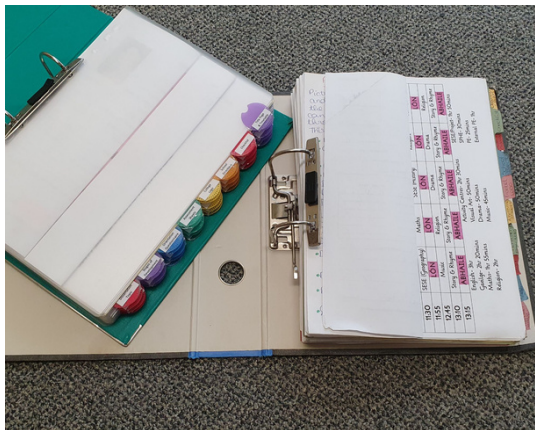
Séamie Ó Néill,  
Head of Education

School Placement (SP) is highly regarded by student teachers as a key part of their professional development, allowing them to forge their teacher identities and cultivate teaching practices. It provides opportunities for students to understand and become attuned to the complexities and unpredictability of school-life. While sourcing placements for student teachers has historically been demanding for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) institutions, providing them in pandemic times has proven to be a unique challenge. However, utilising strong relationships that have been nurtured over the years between the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education and our local school network, all students were successfully accommodated on placement in the last academic year.

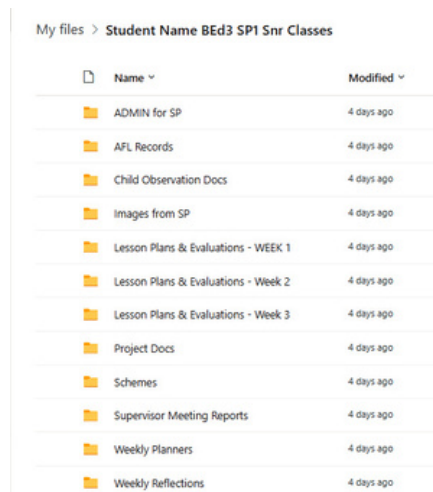
As the system struggled to cope with teacher shortages, the presence of student teachers in schools had reciprocal benefits. While gaining valuable classroom experience, students were also able to provide some substitute cover for schools at critical times. Indeed, our final year students reported that they undertook an average of 42 days' substitute cover in the last academic year, contributing an approximate total of 4,500 days' cover to the system.

Despite the rigid protocols, challenges, and frustrations that the pandemic presented, students reported that they were highly supported in schools and overall, had very positive experiences. By responding in-situ to an evolving crisis, students were naturally exposed to professional learning opportunities in the supportive environment of schools. They developed skills, including agility and flexibility in response to fast-changing circumstances, that they will bring forward into their teaching career. Students' knowledge and skills in digital learning and ICT increased significantly as they facilitated e-learning during the periods of school closure.

Traditionally, students were required to submit planning files in paper-based folders, endangering several rainforests in the process! Due to remote working and the avoidance of paper handling, all SP documentation was uploaded digitally and assessed online. Following positive feedback, the digital folder will be retained for future placements.



Traditional SP hardcopy folder



New electronic SP folder

As Higher Education Institute (HEI) tutors were unable to undertake on-site visits, teachers and principals took on a more proactive role in providing feedback to students and engaging them in professional conversations. Reports from students indicate their appreciation of receiving guidance from those who have the deepest understanding of teaching and school life. However, it must be acknowledged that teachers also reported that, due to more onerous responsibilities in supporting student teachers on SP, they would prefer, as protocols are eased, if HEI tutors could once again undertake school visits.

The number of students requiring school experience as part of their preservice teacher education and the types of placements required to meet the Teaching Council criteria have led to a significant strain on the system. From year to year, the sourcing of such placements becomes more and more precarious, as the number of teachers available to host students barely matches demand.

From my conversations and interactions with principals, I get a great sense of intergenerational solidarity as they support young student teachers on the first steps on the ladder to becoming effective educators. Collectively, principals are in a powerful position to influence the relationships between HEIs, teachers and schools. On behalf of my colleagues in Initial Teacher Education, I would like to sincerely thank school principals for all their support in providing rich and rewarding experiences for our students. Is mór againn é.

This article previously appeared in *Leadership Plus* Issue 120 December 2021.



# Tairseach

**BY LAOISE NÍ CHLÉIRIGH AND MÁIRE NIC AN BHAIRD**

Do you know the English translation of the word 'Tairseach'? It means 'threshold' and lends itself nicely to the beautiful addition which has been created, connecting the two campuses of Maynooth University by 9 native trees of Ireland. Available to all, starting opposite the School of Education on North campus, each tree is indicated by a small numbered post from 1-9. Users are invited to first meet a seductive but craggy alder tree. From there, crossing carefully at the traffic lights, and venturing down the sloped walkway opposite the library, one can say hello to the majestic scots pines. These tall giants are soon followed by a subtly mystical willow, almost hidden discreetly behind the silky birches nearby. The campus cat will quietly advise you to take a gentle right after his home and enjoy the native Irish hedgerow adorning a nearby walkway. The trail continues, and to reveal all of the 9 jewels available for this sensory experience, with the nuggets of folklore and science included on the GIS supporting the trail, might mean you won't take the trail yourself. So, we'll stop there before we reveal too many! We urge you instead, to put your coat on in the crisp spring air, cross the threshold from the indoor classroom to the outdoor classroom without walls, and enjoy familiarising yourself with the 9 chosen native trees, including allegedly the oldest yew tree in Ireland. If you must let technology intrude on your walk, use the GIS created by both staff and students of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Stephen Seaman, Ground Supervisor and the techy talents of the Geography Department. Tairseach could not have come to fruition without the marvellous support of Project Live and Kildare County Council. The links for the GIS and lesson plans created for local groups and schools are available below. We hope you enjoy crossing the Tairseach and delving into the ecology and tangible magic of the Maynooth University Award-Winning Campus.

*Bainigí súp as!*

Explore the interactive map here <https://bit.ly/3law9Vi>

A PDF full of activities <https://bit.ly/3hdJP0s>

# Free Mother Tongues membership for Froebel staff & students

Free membership to Mother Tongues is available to Froebel staff students who have an interest in early language development, bilingualism/multilingualism and interculturalism. This offer is open to any staff and student at any level.

This year we are offering many webinars on a wide range of topics and we are also starting a new community of practice, open to anyone who has an interest in these themes.

The Individual Plus membership we would like to offer to you and your students have many benefits. Members get unlimited access to webinars, articles, practical resources, toolkits and instructional videos that help them to support children who speak more than one language both in the home and the school/pre-school environment. It also offers discounts on books published by our partners, which include dual language books distributors.

In addition, all our webinars from 2020 and 2021 are available to watch on-demand, which is great for busy learners!

**To get a free membership, you need to follow the procedure to purchase an Individual Plus membership and enter a discount code.**

- 1. Fill out all the required fields in the registration form available at <https://discover.mothertongues.ie/register/?lid=6>**
- 2. Enter the code **OR1fWTpR9f** at checkout to access 100 % discount**
- 3. You will receive confirmation in your inbox (check spam)**

Please do not hesitate to contact our Education officer Soraya Sobrevía ([soraya@mothertongues.ie](mailto:soraya@mothertongues.ie)) if you have any questions

Best wishes for this busy term!

Francesca,

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# **Student Teaching and Learning**

# Erasmus in the Czech Republic

## by Conor White and Melissa Scully (B.Ed 3)



Dobry den from Palacky University! There is lots to see here in the Czech Republic, much of which is often over-looked. Prague absorbs most of the tourism, but the rest of the country is just as fascinating, if not better! There are two parts to the country. Prague, in Bohemia, is the more modern, liberal part of the country, despite its exceptional architecture and historical landmarks. Olomouc on the other hand, the city of Palacky University, is located in Moravia, which is the much more traditional, old-fashioned side of the country. It is here in Olomouc where you get to experience the true traditions of the Czech people, including their very own dancing, which is called; “pulka” or the half step.

A module I am currently enjoying studying is called ‘The History and Geography of the Czech Lands’.

This module takes us on small tours and encourages us to explore the Czech Republic. By exploring the country, we have the opportunity to view its unique landscape and experience the Czech culture. The village of Czesky Krumlov is one example. It is built on the bend of a river, and it has been one of the most enjoyable places to visit so far! Another highlight of the Erasmus exchange so far has been a visit to the beautiful lakes of Velehrad. It is here where pilgrims gather each day to pray to the brothers known as ‘The Apostles of the Slavs’- Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius.

A useful phrase in the Czech Republic is: “prosím”. This word has many meanings and can be used very often throughout the day. “Prosím” can mean ‘please’, ‘can you help me?’ and ‘thank you’. Finally, by placing the word ‘vás’ after it, can mean ‘excuse me’ and ‘sorry’.

# Erasmus in Norway

**An article by Katie O'Brien and Louis Hannon (BE.d 3)**

Hei alle sammen!

My name is Katie O'Brien and I am doing my Erasmus in Bergen, Norway, along with Louis Hannon. We are Froebel students and we are studying in Høgskulen på Vestlandet/ the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences for the Autumn semester. We arrived here on August 1st and have had an extremely exciting and interesting time since we got here.

We live in an area of Bergen called Fantoft that houses up to 1,800 students, who are mostly international students. We have met people from all over the world, from Guatemala to the Philippines. The majority of people are German, French, Spanish, Belgian or Italian. We have had amazing opportunities to try their different homemade cuisines and experience a large range of culture differences.



**Some common phrases we have been using:**

1. Tusen takk – Thank you so much
2. Unnskyld meg – Excuse me
3. God morgen – Good morning

Louis achieved a very difficult task of hiking all seven mountains that surround Bergen in one day. We both have gone on college excursions, one of which required us to camp on an island for three days. Our extremely active course brings us into the outdoors on an almost daily basis, and focuses our learning on the educational resources that are freely available in nature. This type of education is typical in Norway, and we have been able to observe the enjoyment that children find by participating in it. We will soon be going on a two week internship in a kindergarten to see how some of the theory we are learning is put into practice. So far, it is safe to say that we are having a fantastic time, and will be trying our absolute best to make the most of our last few months here!



# Erasmus in Denmark

## An article by Alie Martin (B.Ed 3)

Hej fra København! I'm Alie and I'm a 3rd Year B.Ed studying in UCC Kobenhavns Profesionshojskole for my Erasmus semester!

When I arrived here, I thought that as a Froebel student I would be well-versed in all things play, However, I have learned so much from my time here that has enriched my experience of teaching though play! You'd think us Froebs would know it all, but we could learn a thing or two from the Danes alright! In Denmark, every teacher training college has a Play Lab, donated by the Lego Foundation to remind teachers of the importance of play as a central methodology to their teaching. Our Play Lab has everything you could possibly dream of: a slide, a play dough station, a lego section, wobble boards and all the arts and crafts materials your teacher heart desires. I have spent many free hours in college in the Play Lab and it's safe to say I'll be missing it when I come home.



I am studying Teacher Education here in KP; however, we are not all primary school teachers on this course. I have met people studying to be counsellors, SNA's, paediatric nurses, secondary school teachers and even university lecturers! This makes the collaborative work we do here in KP much more interesting as there is a wide range of perspectives on effective didactics and it's incredible to hear so many stories from other teachers' experiences.

The group work has really made me have to step back and look at how I work with others and it has been a real eye-opening experience. As well as group work, not a lot of our time in lectures is spent in the classroom. A huge amount of our lectures to date have involved field trips to museums and galleries as well as assigned tasks in various parts of the city. One of my most recent projects involved designing an art workshop for children situated in a street food market which was both engaging and delicious.

Studying in KP allows you to learn in one of the most beautiful cities on the planet. Not only is it full of stunning architecture, but the country itself is committed to sustainability, with plenty of pollinator-friendly green spaces, recycling centres and the famous Loppemarket where I bought an authentic aviator jacket for only 6 euro!



I will sign off with a lovely Danish word I have learned here: Hygge (hyoo-geh). Hygge means anything cozy and comfortable. If it gives you the warm fuzzies, it's Hygge! Think blankets in wintertime, a hot chocolate with your best buddy, even an ice cold beer in a nice warm pub.

Tabhair aire agus feicfidh mé go luath sibh! - Alie

# Erasmus in Finland

An article by Ciara Walsh (B.Ed 3)



Hi, my name is Ciara Walsh and I am currently on Erasmus in University of Eastern Finland. Here in Finland a big part of their culture is nature exercise and sauna. Finnish people are very friendly.

I am studying many modules which I am finding very interesting. In particular, I am enjoying the 'Introduction to Finnish Music' education. It is a very active class and is very different to the music classes in Ireland. I also am enjoying 'Introduction to Finnish Educational Systems and school life' this module gives a great insight into the excellent education system here.



Music classroom



Woodwork classroom



Teaching classroom

**Kiitos!= Thank you**

# Erasmus in Barcelona

An article by Ciara McDonagh and Jade O'Reilly, B.Ed 3

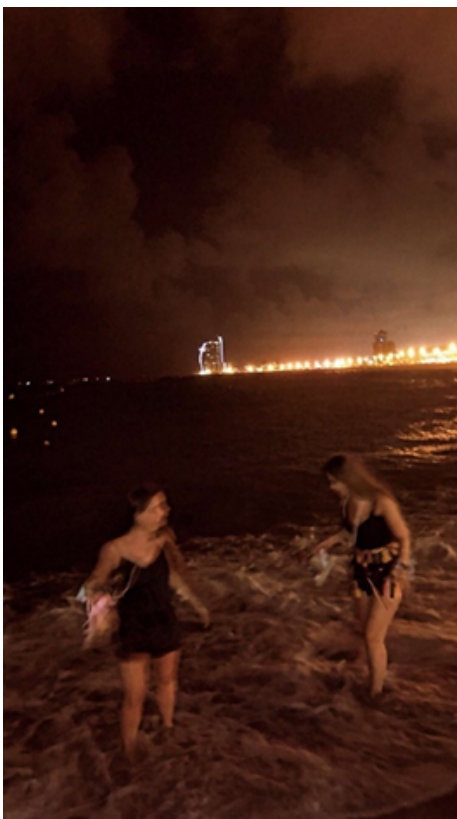
## **Hola chicos!**

My name is Ciara McDonagh, and I am a Froebel Erasmus student. I am here in Spain with Jade O'Reilly, and we are studying at Universitat Abat Oliba CEU, Barcelona. We are absolutely loving our experience here and we have learned so much over the last month.

In terms of language and culture, Jade and I are very fortunate to live in a complex with students from a huge number of countries across the globe. Therefore, not only have we been working on our Spanish, but we have learned a lot from our Egyptian, Moroccan, Swiss, French, and Cypriot, Dutch, Hungarian, Belgian, German, Italian and Spanish friends.

Barcelona is situated in Catalunya and while Spanish is widely spoken and understood, the locals really appreciate when you make the effort to speak a few words of Catalán, such as the examples below:

Bon dia= Hello/good morning  
 Merci= Thank you  
 Em dic Ciara= My name is Ciara



I am taking Spanish language class which I really enjoy as it is helpful in navigating my everyday life here. From an educational perspective, this class gives me an insight into what approaches are effective, as well as some of the challenges faced by children learning Irish and EAL children. I also get ideas for activities that I could use in my own classroom which encourage the communicative approach when teaching/learning a language.

On Wednesday, Jade had the opportunity to teach English in a local school as part of her module English Language Teaching. This was a great chance to work in a school outside of the Irish education system, and to work with children who have limited English.

Jade and I can feel our time here passing quickly and so we will try to embrace and cherish every moment we have here.

Adiós,  
 Ciara and Jade

# Erasmus in Austria

An article by Ailbhe Hackett and Zuzanna Kolodziej B.Ed 3



Greetings from Salzburg, Austria! We are studying in 'Pädagogisch Hochschule Salzburg Stefan Zweig'. The university here is fabulous, it is overlooked by the famous 'Festung Hohensalzburg'- not a bad sight when we are walking to university in the morning!

Ailbhe's favourite module is 'Hands-on-Science'. During these classes, all students teach and carry out various experiments with the group. In this group of international students, we are collaborating to learn new methods of teaching science to children while gaining new perspectives in STEM (MINT in German).

Zuzanna's favourite module is 'European Dimension and Intercultural Competences'. It involves examining different models of intercultural competence in the education context. Group work and presentations are a big component of this course which allows the Erasmus students to compare and learn from each other's cultures.

Austria is beautiful and Austrian culture is very different to Irish culture. Austria is a very Catholic country, and family is very important to Austrians. Due to this most places are closed on a Sunday – supermarkets, shopping centres etc. It was difficult at first to get used to this, especially when we are used to shopping on a Sunday! It's a lovely custom because it encourages family time and rest for Austrians, maybe it's something we all could learn from!



**Tschüs!! (Bye!!)**

# Interview with Erasmus student Ester Símo Arcas

Ester Simó Arcas is a 21- year old Erasmus student from Barcelona. She studies a double degree in education in Barcelona. It is a five year course. Ester is in her fourth year and has decided to spend some of it with us in Froebel.

## Why did you decide to do an Erasmus?

I wanted to study abroad as I wanted to explore the world and to discover how people lived in other countries. I wanted to live elsewhere to learn more about myself and find out how I would cope outside of my comfort zone.

## Did you choose to attend Maynooth University or were you assigned to Maynooth University?

I was able to choose the university. I could go to Liverpool or a few other places but I chose Ireland. Ireland was my first choice. I really enjoy nature and I knew this country had impressive landscapes and I thought I would like the culture and thankfully, I really do!

## The lectures you attend are taught through English, did you find it difficult to get used to the language in the beginning?

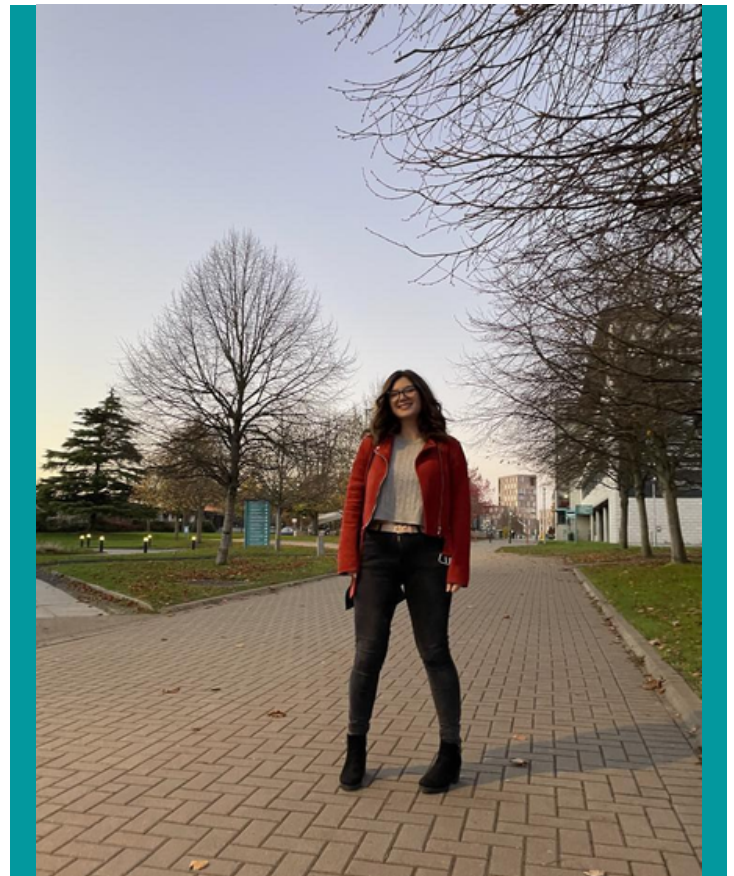
I watch everything in English on Netflix, so it was not a big shock for me that everything was in English. However, in most shows I watch, the actors have American accents and so I found the Irish accent difficult to understand in the beginning.

## What course are you studying in Barcelona? Does it differ from the Froebel course?

My class is very small in Barcelona in comparison to Froebel. I do a double degree, so I have classes with students from both primary education and infancy education. I am in my fourth year and so this means that we are mainly applying theory to practice, and it is very hands on.

## Where did you visit during your stay in Ireland

I have visited Cork, Galway and I visited Howth twice. I have been to Dublin many times. I am planning to visit the Cliffs of Moher.



## Would you consider the possibility of living abroad for a longer period of time?

I love where I live in Barcelona. Before this Erasmus, when people asked me if I would like to live in another country I always thought that I would not as I was ok in Barcelona. However, following this experience, I think I would definitely like to live away from home for another while. I think in the end however, I would find my way back to Barcelona!

# Interview with Noel Stapleton

Noel is a third year Froebel student. Hailing from Mountmellick, he recently won an All-Ireland title at Scór and he is an avid traditional Irish musician.

**Hi Noel. Great to chat to you. Can you tell us how you came to win the an All-Ireland at Scór?**

Hi girls, thanks very much for inviting me to be a part of this year's Machnamh newsletter. I am really grateful for the opportunity to speak about my career in music this far. Thank you!

In November this year, I was lucky enough to be part of a group of five musicians who won the 'Ceol Uirlise' category at Scór Sinsir na hÉireann at the Air Dome in Bekan, County Mayo.

So, there was five musicians in the group. They include: Alain Carroll played the uilleann pipes, Brian Ryan played the tin whistle and the piano, his daughter Sophie played the harp, Senan Moran played the fiddle and I played the button accordion. I would also like to mention Conor White, who was originally in the group for the first two rounds of the competition which took place all the way back in January and February of 2020, but he was unable to take part in the final two rounds as he is currently on Erasmus. Conor played the tin whistle and piano before Brian became a member of the group.

So, there was four rounds in total, there was the Laois final that took place in January 2020, the South-Lenister final that took place in Clonroche in County Wexford in March 2020 (the week before the lockdown restrictions!). Due to Covid, they weren't able to have the two final rounds (Lenister and All-Ireland final) but they held the Lenister final during our October placement which took place in Gibstown in Meath. It definitely was a brilliant experience and I was over the moon to have the opportunity to not only win a competition but to perform after such a long year and a half of not being able to perform officially for a live audience. It was a brilliant day out and I'm thankful to everyone who is involved with the Scór committee, for hosting such a wonderful event for

Also, I'd like to thank my wonderful GAA club Kilcavan and Laois County board who were completely behind and supported us every step of the way.

**From your own experience do you think playing instruments/traditional Irish music has an impact on primary school children?**

Absolutely, as I mentioned, my two Comhaltas tutors are primary school teachers. They really used their skills as primary teachers and their skills with children to help nurture the interest in Irish traditional music. I was subbing recently in the school where they both teach. Due to Covid, they are not able to run classes more often, but pre-covid they used to have music classes for the children during break times and after school. Music is really encouraged and all the children in the school are encouraged to take up an instrument. As a teacher at the Comhaltas branch, I can see how nurturing the interest of primary school children has so many benefits for the children. I definitely do believe that it plays an important role in children's development. Children learn social skills whilst learning to play an instrument, I know that sport is a brilliant hobby but sport isn't for every child. Personally, I didn't have an interest in sports as a child, so music was my social outlet. There are so many social skills involved when learning an instrument, particularly with Irish music as it is a very sociable hobby. It's not like other genres of music where there is a lot more emphasis on the individual musician. With traditional music, there is definitely a huge emphasis on playing with others. The social skills that a child develops from doing that is extraordinary and as well as that you make friends for life through Irish music. So, I think that Irish music definitely plays a huge part in the development of children and it should be encouraged as much as possible.



**What instruments do you play? Was music an important part of your childhood?**

I play the button accordion, bodhrán, céilí drums and the piano. The button accordion and the bodhrán would be my two main instruments. In recent years, I ventured into a new genre of music with electronic music production (using music software to create different genres and styles of music). This was something completely new to me! When growing up, I was strictly confined to Irish traditional music! It's definitely been a great experience to venture into something new aswell.

Absolutely, music was a very important part of my childhood. When I was five years old, I began lessons playing the tin whistle with my local Comhaltas branch. The teachers there were Brian Ryan, who is part of our All-Ireland Scór group and his wife Fiona Ryan. They are both primary school teachers. They really helped nurture my interest in Irish traditional music. The really helped bring the tradition to young children. I have them to thank for my current interest in the traditional music of Ireland!



**Congratulations Noel on your recent success and we wish you all the best in your future music career!**

# Interview with Eimear Colreavy (B.Ed 3)

## She is the creator and business owner of 'Dartraí Designs'

**Hi Eimear! We're Looking forward to hearing about your business. Firstly, where did the inspiration for the name 'Dartraí Designs' come from?**

The main thing I would like people to know about my business is that it is an Irish business. I wanted to have an element of the Irish language in it. So, that's why there is an Irish word as part of the name. The reason I picked 'Dartraí' is because I live beside the Dartry mountain range, which is located in Sligo and Leitrim.

**What made you decide to start your own business?**

It was during the first lockdown, I found a new hobby and I realised that there was a market for it. I was in my aunt's house one day, and we were looking up earrings online for her to buy and we realised that they were really expensive and not to her liking!. So, out of curiosity, I looked up "How to make earrings". It is actually very simple. I would consider myself artistic and I enjoy doing crafty things, so, I just decided because it was a lockdown and there was nothing else to do other than to invest in materials to start making earrings. That's when it all really started!. Then, some of my friends were interested in buying some and I went to a few markets and gave out my business card. I then thought that I could expand my business by creating a website.



**What skills did you already have when you started 'Dartraí Designs' and what did you have to learn?**

Unfortunately my skill set was not too great apart from doing creative things and I love doing arts and crafts. For example, you are working with different types of materials and equipment like pliers, resin and poly merkules. Resin is quite toxic, so I had to learn the procedure for putting on the correct mask and the different temperatures for setting it . I learned the process by trial and error. If I realised that if I done something wrong , I would do some research on Youtube as to how to it properly and what were the best materials to buy. So, I didn't have a lot of skills for specifically making jewellery. The skill I did have was persistence! I am a perfectionist so I really wanted to get it done right. So, it did take a while for me to get used to it. Some people just do gem, resin or clay earrings but me being me I decided to do everything!. It did take awhile to develop the skills, but now I feel that I have definitely gotten better. I often compare the earrings I used to make to ones I make now and I can really see how those skills have changed the earrings I make.

**What type of selling outlets are your products in? Shops, craft shops/fairs or online?**

I began selling just to my aunt and my friends, and that was basically it! Then, I decided to go to the local craft market (Rathcormac craft market in Cloneen, County Sligo) . It was fantastic, but it cost twenty-five euro every time I had a stall there. I was getting a lot of business there but I also gave out my business cards for my Instagram and people were asking me if I had a website. Everything is online now ! So, I researched this and it costs between twenty and thirty euro per month to run my website, so, I decided that this would be better rather than paying twenty five euro to run a stall for three hours. I am definitely getting more business through the website and instagram promotion. I can see advantages of both the craft fair and online. The market was great way to spread the word about my business to people who were coming to visit Sligo.

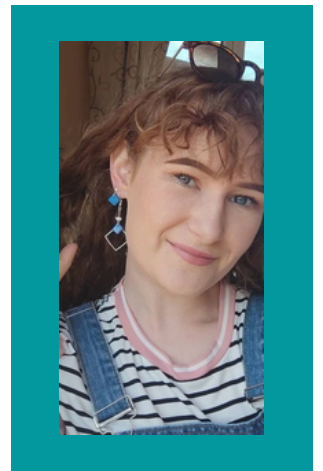
**How might you bring the skills that you have learned into the classroom?**

It is a big Froebelian principle to use the child's interest when planning lessons and it's crazy to see the amount of children, boys and girls, that comment on my earrings when I am on placement ! They have such an interest in the process of how I make my earrings. In art it directly links to the clay strand because a lot of the earrings I make out of clay, it links to materials aswell as working with resin could link to materials and change in heat so it links to science. There is actually a lot of integration with the earrings. I was thinking that If I wanted to make earrings in the classroom, I could incorporate it easily as part of the investigation table. The children would be able to make their own earrings. So, I hope to do that in my next placement which is going to be 4th class and up. Unfortunately, I can't do it in January with Junior infants as it is too dangerous. I definitely do see that children have an interest in how easy it is to make their own jewellery.



**What made you decide on jewellery?**

At first, it was the earrings, but also designing cards. I got asked to design cards a lot, before I began making jewellery. So, I tried to do the both of them at same time. I realised that it was a too much work for me to do because the demand for the earrings was so high!. I have now decided to take a break from designing cards now that I am in college and to continue on with the earrings. I chose to make jewellery mainly because of the support and inspiration from my aunt! I believe that there is a market for necklaces, earrings and bracelets aswell. If I get the chance, I hope to expand my business to include these products.



# Sport Stars in the Froebel Department

Read on to find out more about some of Froebel's star athletes...

## Clodagh Jackman (Final Year B.Ed Student) *All-Ireland Camogie Champion*

**Hi Clodagh! Great to chat to you. Can you tell us how you came to win an All-Ireland?**

This year, I played on the Wexford Camogie team that won the Premier Junior All Ireland. From the beginning of the year, we had a special belief that we were going to win the All Ireland. That was our main goal, and everybody bought into it. It was an unreal feeling! We felt like we couldn't be beaten!

**That sounds amazing. From your own experience, do you think playing sport in school has an impact on primary school children?**

I do think that playing sports in primary school has a really positive impact on primary school children. Children who play sport feel part of a team and have a sense of belonging. Speaking of my experience in primary school, I felt playing sport gave me a level of confidence that I didn't have before I started playing sport for the school. I also felt my relationship with teachers in the school developed positively as a result of playing sport for the school team, as you share a common interest and goal.



**Do you have any advice for Froebel students struggling to balance sport and college life?**

I am very lucky in that my college friends have also been a part of sports teams, so they understand the struggle of balancing both sport and college. If I was to give any advice to students who were struggling to balance sport and college work, I would say to use sport as a break away from study or assignments. Time to rest and recharge is so important, so I find sport is a great distraction from the college work and I get a sense of enjoyment to go out to training with my friends when the college work is finished!

**Do you think the skills and experiences you've gained from playing camogie will help you in the classroom?**

I really do think the skills and experiences I've gained from playing camogie will help me in the classroom. As is with playing any sport, you build resilience and character which are so important to the primary school teacher. In my own experience, I feel you also build a confidence through playing sport that really helps you to stand up and take on challenges in the classroom.

Thanks Clodagh!



## Ethan Dowling (Second Year B.Ed Student)

Ethan is a second year Froebel student with a love for Kayaking. The Longwood native started kayaking 9 years ago and has never looked back. He has represented Ireland for three years and next year will be his fourth to represent his country



### Can you tell me about some of your sporting achievements to date?

I've been competing internationally for three years now. I've done several European championships and a few world championships as well. I've gone to the youth Olympic qualifier in Barcelona in 2012 which is one of my biggest achievements. Unfortunately, it did not progress from there, but the ultimate goal is to travel to Los Angeles in 2028 for the Olympics and furthermore to the Olympics after that.

### Is there a coach or athlete you look up to and why?

My biggest inspirations would have to be the people I train with and the people I compete against. My coach is also a great motivator, he is a three- time Olympian. It is a tough sport so I think it is important to have training partners and competitors that are better than me so that I can strive to catch up to them.



### Do you notice any similarities between kayaking and teaching?

I think kayaking and teaching in the classroom are very similar. Kayaking is not a sport that can be learned from reading a book or watching others. You very much have to do it yourself and get involved. To be good at kayaking you need to spend time in the kayak. Similarly, I think in order to become a great teacher, it is important to practice in the classroom itself. Placement is an important opportunity for us to get stuck in and learn from experience. Both in teaching and kayaking, if something does not go to plan, you must be adaptable, reflect and learn from your mistakes.

## **Ráiteas Misin na Roinne Froebel**

**Agus muid á dtreorú ag fealsúnacht Friedrich Froebel agus ag prionsabail agus luachanna Ollscoil Mhá Nuad, is é ár misean oideoirí cineálta a ullmhú agus inspioráid a thabhairt dóibh agus iad ar lorg sármhaitheasa sa teagasc, san fhoghlaim agus sa taighde i dtreo oideachas iomlánaíoch gach páiste in Éirinn atá ag athrú. Is iad seo a leanas ár mbunluachanna: cúram, ionchuimsiú, athmhachnamh, cruthaitheacht, barr feabhais, oideachas iomlánaíoch agus comhoibriú.**