

update



Leading Learning through
Action-led Research and Innovation

THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE LAUREL TRUST

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Welcome
to Update

Note: this is a stock image

Amelie Thompson is Interim Co-Executive Headteacher of the Gipsy Hill Federation of Schools in South-East London.

Amelie is driven by leadership approaches that builds inclusivity in all aspects of school life and on how we build, leaders, teachers, systems and environments to enable this. Gipsy Hill's research project is a cross-sector one working with Merton Special Training Association they are exploring pedagogical approaches that allow all children to succeed and thrive. Below is a summary of an important article published by BERA with a link to the main article.



Towards Inclusivity

by Amelie Thompson, Interim Co-Executive Headteacher at Gipsy Hill Federation



Children and young people's right to access an inclusive education is incontestable. Our systems in education, however, can present barriers to achieving this.

The 'Inclusion Illusion' (Webster, 2022) is real and if we are to achieve meaningful inclusion, we need to consider not only children and young people's access to appropriate curriculum provision and progression but also their broader experiences of school life, their right to independence and a social life and what this means as they transition through different phases of their education and development as well as their transition to adulthood.

Throughout my career in education (both as a teacher and senior leader), I have had a keen interest in how we, as leaders, build systems and create environments that enable 'every teacher to be a teacher of SEND' – driven by leadership that builds inclusivity into all aspects of school practice. As a school leader, I seek to consistently challenge myself to reflect on the operational implications and implementation of this strategic vision. I feel strongly that to achieve

meaningful inclusion we need to work collaboratively across phases and across sectors. Engaging in a Laurel Trust action research project that has allowed us to engage in 'collaborative professionalism' (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018) with leaders of education from special schools to explore how we can translate special school best practice into the mainstream classroom has taken us on important professional journeys, both for the leaders and

the teachers involved. Collaboration between mainstream and special school colleagues has been a key requisite to this learning. It was an honour to be able to share some of our reflections from our project at BERA's British Curriculum Forum Spotlight on SEND event in March this year and to then be able to write a blog building on this. *Towards Inclusivity in the Mainstream Classroom* can be accessed [here](#). ●



Voice of the Child

The research project 'The Voice of the Child' began four years ago and through all the vicissitudes and challenges of Covid is still vibrant and dynamic. The research includes the eight nursery schools/centres across Northampton which have worked in collaborative and creative ways to create a highly successful project. This is now embedded into practice across the schools and has brought multiple improvements. An article about their earlier work appeared in Nursery World. Below Paula, the Community Engagement Lead, describes their continuing journey. It is a good example of moving research into practice.



Turning Research into Practice

by Paula Stafford, Community Engagement Lead, Nursery Schools Federation



A Hundred Languages – Eliciting the Many Voices of Children. Children have “a hundred languages (and a hundred, hundred, hundred more)” (Malaguzzi, 1996).

How do we ensure we listen to all those voices? Particularly if those voices cannot be heard – if the child is non-verbal, cannot explain or is choosing not to speak.

“Disregard for children’s voices diminishes their experiences of autonomy and self-regulation which in turn reduces their motivation to learn.”

Murray, J. and Cousens, D. 2019

How can we ensure that the child is still recognised and heard throughout their journey with us

in settings and is placed at the centre of everything we do?

This was the aim of an action-led research project undertaken by eight Maintained Nursery Schools situated in different contexts across Northamptonshire (including some located in areas of significant deprivation, high proportions of children with additional needs or English as an Additional Language). The project was developed in partnership with The Laurel Trust and other partners including Northamptonshire County Council Early Years Team, Specialist Support Services and Educational Psychologists; in addition we were

fortunate to have two respected academics from University of Northampton to help undertake the research.

The Voice of the Child (VoC) action-led research project evaluated current practice when capturing children’s voices through observations, questionnaires, data collation, interviews and discussions. This evaluation was then used to help identify further ways in which we could elicit the Voice of the Child throughout children’s time in our settings and also increase practitioners confidence in doing this.

Initially the research focus was on eliciting the voices of children with Special Educational Needs – many of whom were non-verbal. However, as the project progressed there was a growing realisation that the Voice of the Child should apply to all children – young children may not have the vocabulary or understanding to express how they are feeling but by tuning into their body language, behaviour, play or the marks they are making, we are listening to their 'voice'.

"Listening not just with our ears but with all of our senses."

Rinaldi C. 2001

Can you hear my voice?

Play – Singing – Dancing
Gestures – Signs – Actions
Facial expressions
Eye Contact
Gaze direction
Marks made
Body language
Wellbeing
Involvement

Some of the key findings of our Voice of the Child research were :

Eliciting the voice of the child enables staff to identify the children's needs more thoroughly so that those needs are more likely to be met, enhancing the outcomes for the children

Eliciting their voice makes a huge difference to children's wellbeing, involvement and development and to their place within the setting – they feel valued and part of a community

Listening to the voice of the child also makes a huge difference to parents, helping us to work together to understand and help achieve the best outcomes for their child

An understanding that children speak to us in so many ways and we need to be tuned in to "listen" to those different ways, including gesture, sounds, expressions, body language and behaviour

The need for clear guidance, policy and strategies for ensuring children are heard throughout their time at our settings and beyond and that ALL children should be included in these strategies to elicit their voice.

"...views of children that are actively received and acknowledged as valuable contributions to decision-making affect the children's lives."

J. Murray 2020



"...recognises pluralism in children's perspectives and puts the onus on not only hearing – but attending to – children's feelings, beliefs, thoughts, wishes, preferences and attitudes... views of children... are actively received and acknowledged as valuable contributions to decision-making affecting the children's lives!"

J. Murray 2020





But what impact has this project had on our practice? What do we now do differently in our settings to ensure that children are heard - a right enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989)?

The research project had a huge impact on our practice and continues to do so.

Strategies and supporting guidance have been embedded into all aspects of children's journey through our settings. Simple, 'living' documents have been developed to collect the child's voice, and these have evolved through use, based on feedback from practitioners, families and children, ensuring that they are flexible enough to meet the needs of the children and the different settings.

The Voice of the Child (VoC), in all its hundreds of languages, is gathered:

Before a child starts at our settings, during home visits and family meetings

During the child and their family's first visits to our settings

Every day of the child's time at our settings – but particularly at key points of review or times of change and challenge in a child's life

Before and after transitions within our settings

Before and during transitions to other settings

Do you know me? Do you hear me? Can I trust you? Is this place fair for me? Do you let me fly?

This approach recognises that children have multiple voices and that the way we capture them changes over time, reflecting the child, their interests, their learning, development and emotional needs and their families. Practitioners add to the VoC documentation throughout the year - has the child's family circumstances changed, does the child no longer 'visit' their comforter throughout the session, has the child extended their play into the outside area?

Training and sharing sessions were also held to develop practitioner confidence in finding ways to talk about the children's needs, interests and ideas; helping them with the

language and approaches to use to elicit and share these voices and to help communicate to families the reasons for this approach ("we want to really know your child – and put them at the centre of everything we do").

In July 2022, we held a celebratory event with all the settings and partners involved in the project – sharing experiences and recognising the progress made in eliciting the child's voice since the project's completion. Case studies presented, highlighted the strategies used to listen to children with significant delay, attachment disorders and changes in their home life; sharing knowledge and reflecting on our practice. These case studies demonstrated the huge difference that listening to the child's voice – in all its forms – has made, putting them at the centre of our practice. The strategies used included adapting environments and routines for a child who was struggling to cope in a busy Nursery setting and ensuring that a child's voice was front and centre during a challenging time for their family.

Examples of key strategies and approaches to embed the Voice of the Child into our practice:

Building trusting relationships with children and parents from the beginning

Finding and tuning in to the child's individual 'voice' – however that may present itself for each child

Prioritising what is important in this child's life – both at nursery and at home

Sharing the child's voice with other professionals

Ensuring the child's voice is heard during all transitions

Valuing what children can do and creating provision to build their skills and knowledge

Reading and responding to children's body language and behaviour

Adapting practice environments and routines to recognise children's interests, motivations and abilities

Going forward, we aim to continue refining our processes and our practice, actively working with children, families and other professionals to recognise the importance of the child's voice and 'collecting' it in realistic and pragmatic ways. We are also keen to disseminate our research findings further and to develop a professional 'toolkit' and training materials to help elicit a child's voice in different contexts and applications.

But most importantly of all, to continue to listen and observe all of the children in our settings, so we can truly capture their voice, and act upon what we see, feel and hear, ensuring that we do not "steal ninety-nine" (Magaluzzi, 1996) of their hundred languages. ●

If you would like to find out more about the Voice of the Child project, please contact paulas@croyland-nur.northants.sch.uk



Meet the Trustees

The Trust has recently welcomed four experienced and talented new Trustees from a rich variety of backgrounds. You will meet them soon when they join us on our visits to schools but here is a little about them by way of introduction.



Archana Mohan

Archana believes in creating a world where we can walk bravely, share freely and love fiercely so that we can learn and connect for good. Through her work in teaching and business, Archana understands the power of education.

She began her career as a teacher for children with SEND in the New York City school system where she also served as a diversity coordinator. Archana witnessed how inclusive classrooms that adapt to different learning styles facilitate educational progress and thriving among young learners.

Following a decade in the role, she returned to university to obtain an MBA in Finance. With over two decades spent in various roles in finance, Archana currently works at an independent investment manager, focused on protecting and growing the wealth of individuals for the long term. With a focus on being well to do good, Archana aims to cultivate an environment in which each person can engage fully because they feel seen, heard and appreciated.

Whether in business or in teaching, Archana has always focused on unlocking opportunities for all learners. She believes that change starts with each of us. Each step is significant. By unlocking collective brilliance, she knows that we can create ripples that transform the communities, organisations and systems in which we live.

Archana works informally in schools in her local community and teaches whenever possible. When she's not working, she can be found spending time with family and friends. Her daughter serves as inspiration for the work that remains to be done.



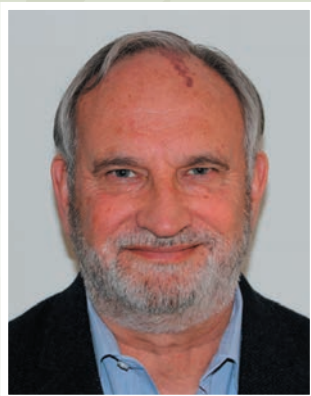
Tomas Thurogood-Hyde

Tomas Thurogood-Hyde is the Assistant CEO and Company Secretary for Astrea Academy Trust, which serves communities in Cambridgeshire and South Yorkshire through its family of twenty-six schools.

Tomas leads on governance and, as Assistant CEO, oversees a range of Trust-wide functions including safeguarding, communications and fundraising. An alumnus of the Open University, where he read Law, Tomas has worked at the Prince's Trust and Ark Schools before joining Astrea in March 2018. Tomas became a Trustee of the Laurel Trust in July 2022 and is also a Member of the multi-academy trust, Education for the 21st Century ("E21C").

Tomas lives in Nottingham where, outside of work, he enjoys walking and interests in history, politics and, most importantly, Star Trek.

Meet the Trustees



Dr David McPhail

David is passionate about all aspects of education and is particularly interested in finding strategies to ensure that all students thrive and reach their full academic and personal potential.

David is interested in addressing issues that can lead to underachievement, and to unregulated behavioural issues. Finding “the key that unlocks the door” and enabling such students to go on and have successful careers is a key challenge, especially post-covid.

David is a qualified PGCE teacher and has had over thirty-five years’ experience in the education sector having taught in Schools, Colleges and Universities. Much of his career was spent at Imperial College where he became Deputy Director of the Graduate school and had responsibility for quality assurance across the Business, Physical Sciences and Engineering Faculties. He chaired high level College committees and had a significant input into strategy and course development in those domains. He was a trustee at The Institute of Physics. He maintained a large research activity in surface analysis and conducted educational research. He has received four grants to facilitate work on transferable skills, international students and student exchanges, he has several publications in the educational literature, and he has given invited talks on his educational research.

Having left the tertiary sector, David has embraced a new career as an academic tutor in Maths, Physics, Chemistry and GAMSAT. This tutoring includes projects for gifted and talented students from deprived backgrounds aiming for Kings College Cambridge (with The Profs) and for future leaders in sub-Saharan Africa on the Ashinaga program for orphans (based in Kampala). He is a governor at two schools, one secondary (where he is Chair of Council) and one primary, and he is a director of the Woodard Trust.

In his spare time, he likes to swim, exercise in the gym and kayak. He also loves to travel and has lived and worked in Singapore, Sydney, Dallas and on a short placement in the Punjab. He supports London Irish and Brentford, more in hope than in expectation.



Matthew Tiplin

I am delighted to be a Trustee of The Laurel Trust, an organisation that has for some time supported teachers, leaders and wider school communities through sustainable projects that underpin school improvement.

As a school and multi-academy trust leader I have seen first hand how challenging it is for schools nowadays to manage the factors within and outside the gates to ensure that they help children thrive. Leading a special needs charity’s schools and children’s services to a point where they all carried good or better Ofsted ratings was a huge achievement from all involved, resulting from teamwork and focus on the key levers that encourage change.

As an Ofsted inspector of over 5 years, I was privileged to see a wide range of inspiring and impactful approaches to school improvement, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation. The work by the staff, leaders and community involved in projects that underpinned great education demonstrate a triumph over almost unbeatable odds in some cases.

Today I am chair of governors of a primary school and run an EdTech business that focuses on supporting teacher development at scale through smart, empathetic technology. I love reading, playing golf, taking my children to their clubs, and running.

In April 2023 I run the London marathon for the first time, which is a daunting prospect! But compared to the achievements made by teachers and students up and down the country despite the challenges that they face, I am humbled.

I look forward to working with Trustees and schools through the Laurel Trust’s work to support action research that makes a real difference to children’s lives.

Congratulations!

to our Masters Hockey World Cup Champion



Our Trustee Pippa Bull recently participated in the Hockey Masters World Cup in Cape Town, South Africa representing England O60s.

England were reigning Champions so were looking to defend their title. England beat all the teams in

their section and faced Argentina in the semi final. England overcame Argentina in the final quarter winning 1-0 to progress to the final to meet their old adversary Scotland. England started well with Pippa opening the scoring, the team completing their unbeaten run, putting five goals past Scotland to retain their title. ●

Girls on the Run was a successful pilot project led by an Olympian. It fostered girls' confidence and achievement through participation in sport.



LOOKING AHEAD

In 2023 the Trustees will invite applications from collaborations and networks of schools in areas of deprivation and need to apply for funding for innovative research.

The applications will need to demonstrate that it will have an impact on children's achievement and well-being. Details will be published on The Laurel Trust website and in the media during the Spring Term.



Also in 2023 the second edition of *Research that gets Results* will be published. It will showcase the six projects which were badly affected by Covid with repeated disruptions. However, they have still achieved considerable success. ●



Celebrating
Research
that gets
Results

A collection of evidence-based research
2021



WHAT'S COOKING?

The cookery contributions in this edition come from two of our new Trustees - Archana and David. Archana gives us easy to make delicious muffins and David a savoury family favourite. We hope you enjoy them.

Pumpkin Muffins

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon table salt
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin-pie spice
- 1 cup canned solid-pack pumpkin*
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 2 large eggs
- 1¼ cups plus 1 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon



* 1½ cup makes it even more rich. Best not to use pumpkin pie filling because it's sweetened and spiced

This recipe is adapted from the American club, in Kohler, Wisconsin via Gourmet Magazine

- Heat oven to 180 degrees. Put liners in 12 standard-sized muffin cups. Stir or whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and spice in small/medium bowl.
- In a larger bowl, whisk together pumpkin, oil, eggs and 1¼ cups sugar. Add dry ingredients to wet and stir until combined. Divide batter among muffin cups (each about ¾ full).
- Stir together last tablespoon of sugar and teaspoon of cinnamon. Sprinkle over each muffin.
- Bake until puffed and golden brown and wooden pick or skewer inserted into the centre of a muffin comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes.
- Cool in pan on a rack five minutes, then transfer muffins from pan to rack and cool to warm or room temperature.

Do ahead: Most muffins don't keep well, but these are excellent on Day 2 (after being stored in an airtight container at room temperature) and not bad at all on Day 3. If longer, I'd keep them in the freezer until needed.

Klops (Polish meatloaf)

- 1kg of lean minced beef, turkey or a mixture of both
- 2 x medium onions chopped
- 2 x eggs beaten
- 2 tsp of dried parsley or oregano
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 x tbs of medium matzo meal/breadcrumbs
- Paprika
- 500g of new potatoes - washed, not peeled



(If your potatoes are very small then put them in after the klops has been roasting for 30 minutes otherwise they will turn into charred crisps.)

The recipe below is the Jewish version and so it is made with beef mince and/or turkey mince. Every family has its own version. This is the one our family uses.

Pre-heat the oven to 190°C.

Mix all the ingredients together well and form into an oval shape. Place in a roasting pan and sprinkle with the paprika. Place the potatoes around the klops and roast at 190°C. It will take about 1.5 hours to cook. Baste the klops every 30 minutes. Turn the potatoes at the same time.

Check that the klops is fully cooked with a fork. Push the fork into the centre and press down a little - the juices should run clear. If they don't then put it back in the oven for another 15 minutes and test it again.

Tip: If at any time the top looks like it is burning, cover (just the top) with a piece of tin foil.