

This is a reflection from Susan Whyte, on her participation in the EIS's Action Research Grants Scheme from 2021-22.

*From professional peace to professional voice*

Scottish teachers are well placed to develop as professionals. There are many systems in place designed to promote growth and development as a practitioner, challenging complacency and asking us to be the best we can be for the children we serve. One example of this is the EIS practitioner enquiry scheme. My ongoing engagement with the scheme started in 2021 when I was supported to undertake a class-based enquiry. I wanted to find out how I could support Primary One children to tell their stories better. Despite being an experienced practitioner, one of the children helped me to see that I needed to do more to help them get it right. They were keen and determined and chose to share stories with an audience regularly, yet my support was proving not enough to help them do this independently. I needed to do more, and practitioner enquiry seemed like a good way to find out how to do that.

*In search of professional peace.*

I've always been in search of the 'why', throughout my career. I've been lucky to have benefitted from many hours of professional discussions with mentors both official and unofficial. This has helped me to explore reasons why something was happening and usually led to me finding professional peace. Teaching is a demanding job but when I found professional peace, I felt I could bring just a bit more to the job. The EIS practitioner enquiry scheme took that further. I was prompted to look more critically at my practice, exploring literature and adding rigour to my practice.

Links between literacy and personal, social and economic success are widely recognised. The enquiry reminded me of an early language intervention being delivered across nurseries within the local authority which aimed to build on these links. I had been involved in delivering the intervention while working in a nursery class and wanted to explore whether it would translate into a primary one classroom. The intervention is built around the repeated use of 4 cues: 'When?'; 'Where?'; 'Who?'; 'What happened?'. The cues are introduced progressively to the children using an image, supported by sign language. This is done through games and is generally a lot of fun. At the end of the sessions, most children can make up their own oral stories supported by the cues. The child I was working with in Primary One had experienced this intervention in nursery. I used the enquiry to explore what impact revisiting the cues in Primary 1 would have for them.

*Helping the child find voice helped me find mine*

The EIS practitioner enquiry scheme had been promoted through SEJ just about this time. For me, applying to take part firmed up my commitment to this pupil. Competing demands in busy schools made it difficult to focus attention on one area for too long, sometimes leading to less depth in my practice. Engaging in this scheme stopped that drift happening, and Rob Henthorn and other staff at EIS remained committed to supporting me through to completion. Maintaining momentum is challenging but a sense of community and accountability helps. Being invited to write this article forms part of that too. I engaged with the Practitioner Enquiry scheme to help a child in my class find their voice and it ended up helping me find my own professional voice too. I would recommend getting involved.

If you would like to participate in the EIS's Action Research Grants Scheme, the next intake will be Spring 2026. To read more about other practitioners' research, please visit the ARG page on [our website](#).