

Chapter 9

Salient Results

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter the most salient results will be presented regarding all research questions.

9.2 Presentation of salient results

Research Question: Will there be any differences found in the assessment of children's concerns and expectations before and after each part of the approach, as these are reported by children themselves? (Results by Chapter 5)

There was a positive change in the answers given by all students almost in all cases. Mostly students' choices show a rise of 1 'level' in the scale. In some cases there is a rise of 2 or more levels. There was not any negative change reported in relation to students' concerns and expectations but in few cases there was not any change at all. It is also noteworthy that sometimes students with C.D. tended to be more enthusiastic, as this becomes obvious by their answers, while mainstream students had the tendency to be more hesitant. According to the author's opinion, this is related to the fact that students with C.D. were functioning more immaturity in a more childish way.

Research Questions:

- i) Will there be found mutuality of expressed feelings between children of the Social Art Group?
- ii) If yes, will there be found mutuality of expressed feelings between students with C.D. and their mainstream peers? And
- iii) Will the relationships being developed in the Social Art Group in primary school be maintained in the new setting? (Results by Chapter 6)

In chapter 6 data analysis took place in the following ways:

- I. Comparing students' self-reports in 3 stages
- II. Analyzing video-recording of group sessions

I) Data by Comparing students' self-reports in 3 stages

Students were asked to give information about their peer relationships 3 times in this research process:

- in the beginning of SAG sessions in spring term (primary school),
- in the end of SAG sessions in summer term (primary school) and
- after the completion of the 3 SAG meetings in secondary school

In the beginning and in the end of SAG sessions in primary school students were asked to write the names of 2 children from the SAG under the following statements:

- “I would choose to play with these children.”
- “I would choose to work with these children.”
- “I would choose not to play with these children.”
- “I would choose not to work with these children.”

In the secondary school students were asked to fill in a questionnaire about transition which was created for this research project. More specifically they were asked to answer to the following questions:

- “Who is your favourite friend in secondary school?”
- “Do you keep contact with the other children from the SAG?”
- “Who are your favourite friends among children of the SAG?”
- “What activities do you share with these children in the new setting?”
- “How often are you with these children in the new school?”
- “Do you see these children outside the school?”

i) Students' self-reports in the beginning of SAG sessions in spring term (primary school)

There were many cases of mutual selection in the 2 subgroups. However, most of the times there was not reported selection of students belonging to the other subgroup, apart from Ashley (C.D.) who chose Addison (Mainstream). The pattern of choices in the first and second question (about choosing other children to play and work with) is either similar or exactly the same. Students with C.D. did not give any negative answer, apart from Wen. Again the pattern of choices in the third and fourth question is either similar or the same. Brody (Mainstream) and Addison

(Mainstream) were more open to work with children with C.D. than to play with them.

ii) Students' self-reports in the end of SAG sessions in summer term (primary school)

In this stage for the first time there is mutual selection between students belonging to different subgroups; this mutual selection is reported between: 1) Wen (C.D.)- Teagan (Mainstream) and 2) Bailey (C.D.)- Jerry (Mainstream). For Drew (C.D.), who came alone from the third primary school which participated in this project, there was also a positive finding; a mutual selection was reported between Drew and 2 other students with C. D., Ashley and Casey. There was a slight increase in the number of cases where there was mutuality of positive feelings between students belonging to the same subgroup. It could be noted that clearly most students preferred playing and working with other students who belonged to the same subgroup with them. Another positive remark was the fact that there was not even one negative peer nomination, which illustrates the better climate among the members of the SAG in the summer term.

iii) Students' self-reports after the completion of the 3 SAG meetings in secondary school

At this stage most students with C.D. chose as 'favourite friends' in the SAG other students with C.D. However, there was 1 case where there was a mutual selection between a boy with C.D. and a mainstream boy; in this case the mainstream peer also selected another mainstream boy as a favourite friend. Furthermore, the 2 girls of the group selected each other as favourite friends in SAG. A few mainstream peers chose mutually each other as the "favourite friend" in the SAG.

Therefore, mutuality of expressed feelings was reported in the following cases:

- Between students with C.D.: Casey-Drew, Casey- Ashley, Crane-Ashley
- Between mainstream peers: Jerry-Brett, Coby-Alexis, Blair-Conor
- Between students with C.D. and mainstream peers: Wen (C.D.)-Teagan (Mainstream), Bailey (C.D.)- Jerry (Mainstream).

A comment, which could be made, is that children with C.D. do not meet their 'favourite friends' outside school, while mainstream peers report the opposite; a finding which probably implies another quality of 'friendship' between mainstream peers.

Sustained Patterns of Interactions During Transition to Secondary School

There was great similarity between the patterns of interactions reported by children themselves in the end of primary school (peer nomination form in summer term) and in the end of the research project in secondary school (final questionnaire about their transition from primary to secondary school, question 9: "Who are your favourite friends among children of the SAG?"). This finding includes peer relationships which were developed between students with C.D. and mainstream peers (Wen- Teagan, Bailey- Jerry). In addition to these, Cameron in both cases was not selected by any other child.

II) Analyzing video-recording of group sessions

Eighteen (18) sessions of the SAG were recorded in primary school and 3 in secondary school. The duration of the meetings in primary school was 45 min. and in secondary school was 30 min.

Two criteria were used during the analysis of these videos:

- 1) Who were sitting next to each other?
- 2) If they talked to each other even for one time, while sharing materials or doing an individual or group activity?

The results in this case were presented in the forms of sociograms and these sociograms were divided in the following groups:

- Spring Term Sociograms (Primary School)
- Summer Term Sociograms (Primary School)
- Sociograms of Secondary School Meetings

i) Spring Term Sociograms (Primary School)

There were some rather stable patterns of interactions between some children in spring term sessions. At the first session about peer relationships there was the first pattern of interaction between a child with C.D. and a mainstream peer; this interaction was observed between the 2 girls of the group. At the session during

which Spence Test took place for the first time another such 'couple' appeared in a spontaneous way between Bailey (C.D.) and Jerry (Mainstream), which remained stable until the end of the spring term. One more partnership between a student with C.D. and a mainstream peer was formed in the final session of the spring term between Bailey and Alexis.

It could be mentioned that mainstream peers seemed to co-operate spontaneously in an easier way with each other, when they wanted this, than students with C.D. However, at the second session about the new uniform Casey (C.D.) and Drew (C.D.) achieved to work together during art activities without any kind of adult support.

As it is obvious in the sociograms, interactions were more often between the members of the team who belonged to the same subgroup (students with C.D. or mainstream peers). One more remark, which emerges from spring term sociograms, is the fact that as time went by an increasing number of students became more able to share materials and work with each other rather than just sitting one next to the other.

ii) Summer Term Sociograms (Primary School)

In the summer term the interaction patterns remained rather similar as those in the spring term. On the session during which Spence Test took place for the second time Cameron (C.D.) was not sitting next to anyone. On the same session Ashley (C.D.) and Brett (Mainstream) became partners for the first time. This was repeated one more time on the second session about new subjects. A sign of progress was that in a few activities students managed to work together in larger groups of 3 or 4, for instance Bailey (C.D.), Jerry (Mainstream) and Drew (C.D.) worked together on the second session about new subjects; another example is that Wen (C.D.), Teagan (Mainstream), Jerry (Mainstream) and Brett (Mainstream) achieved to work together on the first session about the interior of the secondary school building. However, mainly they were working in couples. Two very stable 'couples' were those of Casey (C.D.) – Drew (C.D.) and Blair (Mainstream)- Coby (Mainstream).

iii) Sociograms of Secondary School Meetings

During secondary school sessions there was a decline in interactions between mainstream peers and students with C.D. in relation to the final SAG session in

primary school. Jerry and Brett remained the most co-operative mainstream peers with students with C.D.

Results deriving by Overall Tables

i) Primary Spring Term

During the first 4 sessions of this period there were not any interactions at all across the 2 subgroups of students (students with C.D.- mainstream students). With the second group of mainstream students there was a greater number of interactions across the 2 subgroups of students (students with C.D.- mainstream students).

ii) Primary Summer Term

In 2 SAG sessions there were 2 students with C.D. who stayed alone and in 1 SAG session there were 3 students with C.D. who stayed on their own; however, in most cases there were not any students who stayed on their own. In this term the greater number of interactions across the 2 subgroups of students (students with C.D.- mainstream students) was observed during the topics of 'lunch time' and 'new subjects' and also in the session where the Spence Test was applied for the second time.

iii) Secondary School Meetings

During secondary school meetings only 1 student with C.D. stayed alone and this happened only in 1 SAG session. In all secondary school sessions there were interactions across the 2 subgroups of students (students with C.D.- mainstream students) and the number of these interactions was raised in the final 2 meetings of the SAG in the secondary school. Therefore, the relationships which were developed in the SAG in primary school were partly maintained in secondary school.

Research Question: Were the relationships being developed in the SAG maintained in secondary school according to children themselves, their parents and the involved practitioners? (Results by Chapter 7)

Data by SAG Students

Data by SAG students were gathered through a questionnaire given to all SAG students to be completed in their home after the end of the research project (Appendix 51- Questionnaire 6). This questionnaire refers to peer relationships.

Students with Communication Difficulties

In the question whether they keep contact with the other children from the SAG all students apart from Bailey gave a positive answer. Bailey gave an inappropriate reply. The girl with C.D. selected the mainstream girl of SAG and a mainstream boy of SAG.

In the question about who are their favourite friends from the SAG all boys with C.D. of the SAG selected other boys with C.D. from the SAG. However, Wen (a child with C.D.) selected Teagan (a mainstream child).

In the question what activities they share with their favourite friends from the SAG in the new school 5 students with C.D. referred to computer games and lunch-time. Two (2) students, Bailey and Cameron, were not certain how to reply to this question.

In the question how often they are with their favourite friends from the SAG in the new school 5 students reported that they are regularly with their favourite friends from the SAG in the new school. Bailey gave the answer 'a couple of times' and Cameron did not reply at all.

Finally in the question whether they see their favourite friends from the SAG outside the school 2 students with C.D., Drew and Wen, answered that they sometimes see these children outside the school. All other students with C.D. replied that they don't see these children outside the school.

Mainstream Students

In the question whether they keep contact with the other children from the SAG all mainstream students gave a positive reply. Teagan referred more specifically to the girl with C.D. of the group and to 4 mainstream boys of the group.

In the question about who are their favourite friends from the SAG there was a mutual selection between 2 mainstream students, Blair and Coby. But Blair was also chosen by Brett (another mainstream student) and Wen (a student with CD). Another mutual selection was between 2 mainstream boys, Jerry and Brett. It is remarkable that Jerry selected not only Brett but also a boy with C.D. of the group, Bailey. There was also a mutual selection between the 2 girls of the group. Jamie selected Alexis, even though ALE was the mainstream student who had stopped taking part in the SAG in secondary school.

In the question what activities they share with their favourite friends from the SAG in the new school mainstream students mentioned computer games and generally activities during break-time and lunch-time.

In the question how often they are with their favourite friends from the SAG in the new school mainstream students replied that they are sometimes or regularly with their favourite friends from the SAG in the school.

In the last question whether they see their favourite friends from the SAG outside the school only Jamie gave a negative reply. All other mainstream students answered in a positive way. In this case there is a difference between the 2 subgroups of students; the majority of students with C.D. replied in a negative way, while the majority of mainstream peers gave a positive answer.

Data by Parents of SAG Students

Parents of students with C.D.

It was not feasible to have information by Cameron's parents. Parents confirmed contact between the following students: Casey- Crane, Drew-Crane, Bailey-Ashley. It is worth noting that all the above are students with C.D. They also reported that their child does not meet other children by SAG group outside the school.

Parents of mainstream students

Parents of 3 students (Alexis, Brett and Jamie) answered that they did not know. Parents of Blair and Coby reported their children's mutual friendship. Parents of Jerry answered that their child keeps contact with one mainstream SAG student (Brett) and one SAG student with C.D. (Bailey). Finally, parents of Teagan replied that their child keeps contact with 4 mainstream SAG students (Blair, Coby, Brett and Jerry) and with 1 SAG student with C.D. (Wen). In the question whether their children meet their favourite SAG friends outside the school, all parents gave a negative reply apart from the parents of Blair and Coby, who answered that their children meet each other outside the school, too.

Data by Practitioners

Data were gathered by the following practitioners:

- Main practitioner
- Debuty head teacher in first primary school

- Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school
- Educational psychologist in secondary school

Main practitioner

She reported that students with communication difficulties had formed a group in the secondary school. Therefore she believed that relationships remained between the members of this subgroup of SAG.

Deputy head teacher in first primary school

This deputy head teacher was able to watch students' interactions in one of her visits to secondary school. She reported that during this visit students with communication difficulties were together in their free time.

Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school

She believed that relationships developed in primary school had been sustained between students of SAG with communication difficulties. But she expressed the opinion that the programme did not have any intense effect on mainstream peers.

Educational psychologist in secondary school

The educational psychologist was in the position to give detailed information about students with C.D. Some conclusive remarks about each student's interactions in secondary school are being presented synoptically, according to the information given by the educational psychologist:

- Ashley: Has contact with students with C.D. and mainstream peers
- Bailey: Has a lot of contact with another student with C.D.
- Cameron: He is alone in free time.
- Casey: Has contact with students with C.D.
- Crane: Has a lot of contact with some other students with C.D. and a mainstream SAG student
- Drew: Prefers being on his own in free time.
- Wen: Has a lot of contact with other students with C.D. but also with mainstream peers

Research Question: Were these relationships helpful in the transition of children to secondary school, according to the perspectives of children themselves, their parents and the involved practitioners? (Results by Chapter 7)

Data by SAG Students

Research data were gathered by 2 sources.

- Firstly, by the questionnaire given to students in the last session of SAG in secondary school (Appendix 47- Questionnaire 3b).
- Secondly, research data were collected by group interviews which took place in the secondary school after the end of SAG sessions. All SAG students were divided into 4 groups. The interview schedule of the group interviews can be found in Appendix 50.

i) Data by Questionnaire 3b (Appendix 47)

Students with Communication Difficulties

In the question what were the things in the programme that had helped them, four (4) students with CD mentioned that they made new friends.

Mainstream Students

In the same question only one mainstream student, Jerry, referred to the fact that in the group JER met new people.

ii) Data by Group Interviews

Students with Communication Difficulties

In the question whether they could help children of the SAG, if they had a problem, such as homework or finding a room, 4 students (Ashley, Bailey, Cameron and Wen) gave positive answers. Two (2) students Casey and Drew said that they didn't know if they could help other children of the SAG group, if this was necessary. One student, Crane, was absent.

In the question if they could help children of the SAG, if they were bullied, 4 students (Bailey, Cameron, Drew and Wen) gave a positive answer. ASH replied in a very sincere way that ASH would not do anything, because this would protect ASH from becoming a victim of bullying as well and Casey answered again in a very sincere way that CAS would ignore such incidents.

In the question if it would be easier to help a child from the SAG than any child in their school, Wen answered that WEN was going to be helpful in any case. Bailey replied that BAI did not know. One other student (Cameron) gave a negative reply. Drew did not give any answer at all and 2 students, Ashley and Casey, focused on the matter of obedience to teachers, even though this answer was not very relevant. Therefore, on the whole, students' answers in this question cannot be regarded as particularly positive.

In the question if being part of the SAG made it easier for them to feel that they can seek help from other children, 2 students (Bailey and Wen) gave a positive answer. Two (2) students (Drew and Cameron) said that maybe they could ask easier help from other children and 2 other students (Ashley and Casey) replied that they didn't know.

In the question in what ways had the SAG encouraged them to feel that they could seek help from other children, 3 students (Cameron, Casey and Wen) referred to peer relationships. Cameron's answer was remarkable, as CAM mentioned that this group had helped CAM to develop the skill to understand more people in the new school. Two (2) students (Ashley and Drew) answered that they did not know and Bailey's answer was irrelevant.

Mainstream Students

In the question whether they could help children of the SAG, if they had a problem, such as homework or finding a room, all mainstream students replied in a positive way, apart from Brett who was absent.

In the question if they could help children of the SAG, if they were bullied, 4 students (Alexis, Coby, Jerry and Teagan) gave positive answers. Two (2) students (Blair and Jamie) reported that they were not certain what they were going to do.

In the question if it would be easier to help a child from the SAG than any child in their school, 5 mainstream students (Alexis, Blair, Jamie, Jerry and Teagan) replied in a positive way. Coby answered that Coby's response would be influenced by the character of each child, if he/she was easy-going or not. Consequently, in this answer the majority of mainstream students gave a positive reply, while in the same question the majority of students with C.D. did not reply in a positive way. However, there is the possibility that this question was rather complicated for students with C.D.

In the question if being part of the SAG made it easier for them to feel that they can seek help from other children, apart from Blair, all the other present mainstream peers gave a positive answer. By the answers of students with C.D. in the same question becomes obvious that they face a greater social difficulty. However, the majority of students with C.D. gave a positive answer, as well.

In the question in what ways had the SAG encouraged them to feel that they could seek help from other children, 4 mainstream students (Alexis, Coby, Jerry and Teagan) referred to peer relationships. One student, Jamie, did not give any answer. In the same question, 3 students with C.D. highlighted the factor of peer relationships; however by the answers of the other 3 students with C.D. it becomes evident that it was more difficult for this subgroup to understand this question and answer to it.

Data by Practitioners

Data were gathered by the following practitioners:

- Main practitioner
- Deputy head teacher in first primary school
- Deputy head teacher in second primary school
- Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school
- Educational psychologist in secondary school

Main practitioner

According to the main practitioner, this programme was mostly beneficial for 2 students with C.D., Drew and Casey, who were better integrated in secondary school that they would have been without their participation in the group. These were 2 students with C.D. who did not belong to the main feeder primary school but to 2 different primary schools.

Deputy head teacher in first primary school

This practitioner was not in the position to give much information about this research question. However, she made the comment that the group was mostly beneficial for Drew, because it provided to this child the opportunity to meet children who would be going to the same secondary school.

Deputy head teacher in second primary school

According to the deputy head teacher in the second primary school, all SAG students definitely benefitted by their participation in SAG, because by the time they were in secondary school, they already had an established group and they could build in that in the secondary context.

Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school

The principle teacher of pupil support stated that it was “really beneficial” for Drew and Casey that “they met each other before school”. She also added that “it was successful this year that many children came together with CD”. However, she believed that the peer support concept had not “worked”, because mainstream students did not have many interactions with students with CD. She attributed this to the following reason: “Children at this stage become selfish. They are interested about themselves”.

Educational psychologist in secondary school

The educational psychologist reported that students with C.D. had formed a bond with each other. This may not have been the ‘typical friendship’ but it was obvious that they were functioning as a group in secondary school.

Data by Parents

Parents of Students with C.D.

Again it was not possible to have information by parents of Cameron. Parents of all other children with C.D. replied that the relationships which were developed in the SAG in primary school were helpful in the transition of children to secondary school.

Parents of Mainstream Students

Parents of 3 students (Alexis, Brett and Jerry) highlighted the factor of social interactions/ meeting new children as beneficial regarding the activities of the SAG and helpful in the children’s transition to secondary school.

Research Question: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of all SAG students? (Results by Chapter 8)

All SAG students replied that they liked their participation in the SAG. Students with C.D. as a group enjoyed more their participation in this research project than their mainstream peers. It is also noteworthy that the average of the emotional level for students with C.D. is higher than 9 and the average for mainstream peers is higher than 8.

Research Question: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of the professionals involved? (Results by Chapter 8)

Data were gathered by the following practitioners:

- Main practitioner
- Debuty head teacher in first primary school
- Debuty head teacher in second primary school
- Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school
- Educational psychologist in secondary school

Main Practitioner

The main practitioner answered that the SAG has assisted in transition and that she found enjoyable observing interactions during sessions.

Debuty head teacher in first primary school

The debuty head teacher in the first primary school expressed the opinion that the SAG was helpful for students with C.D. but she also reported that it was difficult for her to organize the fulfillment of this programme, because this was not going to take place in her own school. Furthermore, she highlighted the fact that it is not often to have many students with C.D. who will go to the same secondary school.

Deputy head teacher in second primary school

The deputy head teacher in the second primary school said that she did not find challenging the participation of the school in this research project. Additionally, she said that she would be willing to arrange something similar in the future, because she believed that the SAG was very beneficial to students; but in this case, she

would have had more speakers from secondary school, if they would be willing to do this.

Principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school

The principle teacher of pupil support in secondary school reported that organizing the SAG in secondary school is rather challenging, because it is difficult and time consuming to organize a lunch time activity; it is not also easy to get the permission to do such activities and that it is challenging to distribute questionnaires to students and afterwards to gather the completed questionnaires by them. More generally, she regarded that this was good as a research idea, but she would not include it each year, because there are already many activities in place in relation to transition to secondary school and students settle in the secondary context. However, she made the positive remark that SAG was beneficial for students with C.D. at the time it took place, because there was the coincidence that year many students with C.D. to come together to secondary school.

Educational psychologist in secondary school

The educational psychologist in secondary school reported that the group was very successful, because this extended programme during transition helped all children to explore their feelings, as it was pitched at the right level, the tasks were appropriate and it was pupil friendly. The educational psychologist described the climate of the SAG session as relaxing, but the students were also clear about what they were doing and focused. Therefore, the educational psychologist in secondary school perceived as positive the experience of taking part in the SAG.

Research Question: Was the experience of taking part in the SAG perceived as positive, according to the views of parents of all SAG students? (Results by Chapter 8)

Parents of all SAG students gave a positive answer.