

A Covid Check-In

Submitted by: **Christine McLean**

I recently spoke with early childhood educators in Prince Edward Island on the topic “Play in the time of Covid-19.” To begin, I asked how they are doing. As expected, they spoke of the increased work related to public health requirements and the decreased opportunity to connect with parents during drop-off and pick-up times. They spoke of fears about their own health and that of their families. We also discussed how this time has highlighted the essential role of educators. I thought that this would tumble down to a microsystems level so when I asked ‘do you feel more appreciated?’ – they responded that parents have regularly told them how vital they are to their child and to their family and that this remains the same. Of course. Any of us who have ever accessed childcare for our children can remember how the support of ECEs was a lifeline for our families.

When our conversation turned to how the children are doing, participants said that the children were doing fine. They were happy to be with each other and they adapted to their new play environments. This speaks to the resilience of children, but it also helps us to see the essentials necessary for healthy human



development. As we spoke of the loss of the communal sand box and water table, participants talked about the increase in imaginative play and the creativity being exhibited by the children.

At times like these, educators are being placed in positions where ‘what has always been done’ has been replaced with ‘what do we do now?’ They are cleaning house, literally and figuratively, by making decisions about play materials, redesigning play environments and creating new ways to communicate with children and families.

Your thoughts?

How are you and your program approaching play in times of Covid-19?

What values or principles are guiding your decisions about how to reimagine play during the pandemic?

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CAYC- October 2020

About the author

Christine McLean has been on faculty with the Department of Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia since 2016. Prior to this, she was active in the early childhood education community in Newfoundland and Labrador for 28 years. Christine is a provincial CAYC director for Nova Scotia and is the CAYC Membership Chair.