Co-Constructing the Pedagogy of Outdoor Play



Erin Cameron and Dawn Danko want to help Early Childhood Educators get kids back outside. Throughout their Co-Constructing the Pedagogy of Outdoor Play project, the researchers used an action research methodology to better understand how to embed the pedagogy of outdoor play into Mohawk's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. They were joined by two student partners, and aimed to incorporate their voices in helping to co-construct the curriculum, which must be innovative and meaningful.

"It's an opportunity to do with college students what we'd love to see them do in childcare settings and kindergarten programs but then also at the same time, have that lens of outdoor play and give them a framework around what we would produce," said Erin, adding the topic is timely because they've seen the design of outdoor play spaces shift away from traditional climbing apparatus and stationary playgrounds in the community.

Erin Cameron, Curriculum Development Specialist, Centre for Teaching & Learning and Professor of Early Childhood Education

Part of Dawn's and Erin's work was in mentoring their student partners and incorporating their voices to make recommendations for collaboration with students in developing the curriculum of the Early Childhood Education program.

"The co-construction of pedagogy is much larger than just outdoor play. It's everything that we do when we're engaging a learner, whether you're a two-year-old or a five-year-old or you're 45, you have to have some sense of investment. That's where the co-construction comes in," said Erin.

"If I can share with an educator or an educator can share with a student, what they know and what they don't know, that dance actually can make the educational process more engaging...you get more buy-in and higher student engagement in the college classroom and in an early childhood education classroom."

IDEAWORKS offered valuable support in terms of providing a project framework as well as assistance on initial setup and structure, a mid-term check in, advice about how to define the research itself, ideas for measuring results, and establishing goals to ensure they stayed on track.

Embarking on a research project independently can be intimidating and seem "like this massive amount of work...to do it completely on my own, it just wouldn't happen. It didn't happen. By working with IDEAWORKS, they help you to make it a manageable project...Just having the opportunity, having the supports, the time, was instrumental in us even taking it forward," said Dawn.

"That research in action, that iterative process where you try something and you take what worked, and you adapt it and try it again, that's a very useful process. IDEAWORKS can support making that something that's a little bit more

formal, then you have the ability to present back to your peers, your colleagues in the broader education community. That's something that a lot of faculty miss - that opportunity to (showcase) their work and to be recognized for it."

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