

Coaching & Mentoring CONNECTIONS

ISSUE 1 • April 2025

Welcome to the Early Childhood Community Development Centre's inaugural edition of the coaching and mentoring services newsletter. This feature will be a monthly item that will hit your inbox in the middle of each month and is designed to support and connect our early learning and child care community. Each monthly edition will bring you valuable content, including regular highlights that include a 'Monthly Mindful Moment', updates on 'Early Learning and Child Care News' and an insightful article on a 'Hot Topic' relevant to educators and the early learning and child care community.

Our goal is to provide you with practical, inspiring resources to support your work and professional growth in the early learning and child care field.

Monthly Mindfulness Moment

Embracing mindfulness, the practice of being present and fully engaged in the moment, can be a game-changer for your overall well-being and productivity. Each month we will be sharing a different mindful practice, each offering a unique idea to bring focus, calm and balance into your life. Whether you're looking to reduce stress, enhance focus, or simply find a moment of peace in your busy schedule, these monthly activities can help you to cultivate a mindfulness routine.



Infuse Self-care into your routine

What comes to your mind when you hear the word self-care? Self-care implies nurturing your own body, mind, and soul.

We often forget to care for our own mental and physical needs despite our hectic schedules trying to balance personal and professional life. And not doing so often leads to poor health conditions, depression, absenteeism, and unproductivity at work. It can also damage relationships, bringing a communication gap.

Therefore, self-care therapy is a much needed one. You can always try these simple strategies to make self-care a priority:

- Sound healing
- Sleep well
- Read often
- Take up a hobby
- Follow your passion
- Take yourself out for a treat
- Go on a vacation
- Enjoy a bubble bath or a spa therapy
- Try mindfulness meditation exercises

A call to action

Try these tips to make the most of your workdays. Also, enjoying a relaxing weekend with self-care therapy will rejuvenate you and boost your overall well-being. Take a moment to reflect on your favourite self-care strategy.

Spotlight on Invitations to Play and Provocations for Learning



Many of us, me included, use the terms invitations [to play] and provocations [to learn] interchangeably, but they are different and an experience that educators offer to children can be one or the other depending on the context, and they can evolve from one to the other. An invitation to play can be described as an experience that educators intentionally set up to spark children's curiosity based on the children's interest, which enables children to learn through child-led play. Dr. Diane Kashin suggests that the invitation becomes a provocation to learn once the children engage with the invitation to play. She encourages educators to be reflective practitioners by reflecting on why an invitation to play is ignored by children.



For a further explanation of the difference between an invitation to play and a provocation to learn, click on the image at left or [here](#).



For examples of setting up provocations to learn based on children's interests and how to build on their interests, please click on the image at left or [here](#).

Invitations to play and provocations for learning are commonplace in inquiry-based early learning and child care programs.

Inquiry-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education – Structured Inquiry by Sara Abbara, Brock University, Student Intern with the ECCDC.

Definition

Inquiry-Based Learning is an approach that encourages children to explore, ask questions, and engage in problem-solving. It shifts the focus from traditional rote learning to active discovery, making children co-constructors of knowledge.

Structured Inquiry – Educators provide a question and method, but children analyze and interpret findings. Structured Inquiry is particularly valuable in early childhood education, as it offers guidance while allowing young learners to develop independence in problem-solving. Structured inquiry encourages critical thinking, language development, curiosity, connections between ideas, and collaborative learning.

Characteristics of Structured Inquiry in Early Childhood Education

- The educator sets a clear inquiry question.
- Children follow a step-by-step process to investigate the topic.
- Observations, hands-on activities, and discussions guide learning.
- Reflection and documentation help consolidate understanding.

Strategies and tips to implement Structured Inquiry for educators and families:

- Choose a theme or question and set a clear goal of the idea you would like to deliver.
- Plan the inquiry process and encourage the questioning attitude and discussions with children
- Provide materials or hands-on activities to get the children's interest and engagement.
- Document the observations to encourage children to draw, describe, or record what they see.

Connecting Resources to Support Structured Inquiry

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years emphasizes inquiry-based learning as a key approach. *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children* provides insights into how structured learning fosters engagement. *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* aligns structured inquiry with child development domains.

References

- Ministry of Education Ontario. (2007). *Early learning for every child today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings (ELECT)*. Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning.
<https://www.uoguelph.ca/childcare/sites/uoguelph.ca.childcare/files/public/documents/ELECT%20Information%20Booklet.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Ontario. (2013). *Think, feel, act: Lessons from research about young children*. Queen's Printer for Ontario. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-think-feel-act-lessons-from-research-about-young-children-en-2021-01-29.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Ontario. (2014). *How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years*. Queen's Printer for Ontario. <https://files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf>
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An Invitation to You

We invite you to share what is happening in your program with other communities in future issues of Coaching and Mentoring Connection. If you would like to highlight how you are offering invitations and provocations within your program, please **email Ginette Wilson**.

To learn more about the role of structured play in inquiry-based learning in early learning and child care programs, check out *Exploring Structured Inquiry*, session 3 from the series *Igniting Curiosity: Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning in Early Childhood Education* taking place on April 15 by **clicking here**.

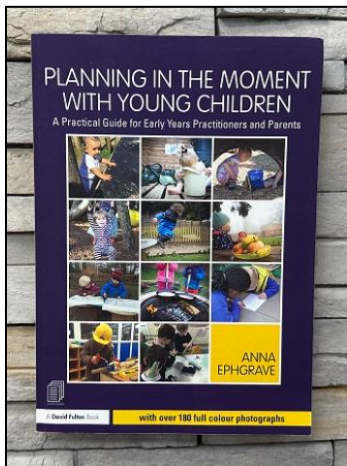
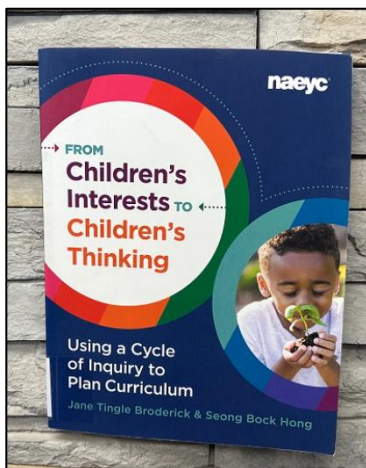


You may also be interested in the ECCDC blog *Designing Early Learning Environments to Support Children's Development and Sense of Wonder*. **Click here** to read.

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Inquiry-Based Learning Books

These books are available to borrow from the ECCDC lending library or for purchase on the ECCDC E-store. Click on the book covers below to purchase.



Coming Soon

ECCDC Podcast

Mark your calendars! The next ECCDC podcast drops on Wednesday May 14, 2025. This episode explores the question: *What is literacy, and what does it look like for the children in our programs?*

On this episode we will be joined by Stacey Benge, author of *The Whole Alphabet Child*, along with Rose Gentilcore and Andrea Stranges, Program Leads at Niagara Catholic District School Board, to discuss how we can support literacy in our early learning environments.

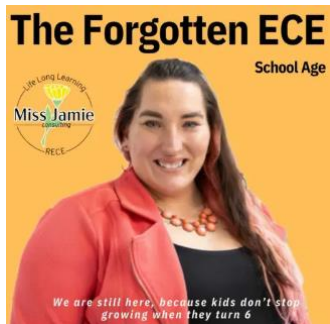
The ECCDC podcast is available on **Spotify** and **Apple** Podcasts! Stay tuned—you won't want to miss this insightful conversation! [Click here](#) to listen to other ECCDC Podcasts.

Microlearning Mondays

The first video will focus on Inquiry-Based learning.

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Of Interest



Calling all school-age educators!

If you are looking for a podcast that specifically speaks to school-age educators, this podcast hosted by Jamie-Lee Wagler is for you. The Forgotten ECE is aimed at Early Childhood Educators, Child and Youth Workers, and Recreational staff and unpicks the ins and outs of Before and After School, PD Days and Camp Programs. Conversation focuses on how educators can create inspiring, play-based school age programs. [Click here](#) or on the image at left to listen on Apple Podcasts.

What's Coming in the Next Edition of Coaching & Mentoring CONNECTIONS?

The next edition of the new coaching and mentoring newsletter will hit your inbox in mid-May and will highlight **Outdoor Play**.