Press Release

“Play Education Extending Positive Energy from Kindergartens to the Community”
HKU Jockey Club “Play n Gain” Project Participates in the Learning & Teaching Expo 2021

The Jockey Club “Play n Gain” Project, implemented by the Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education (CAISE), Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, participated in the Learning & Teaching Expo (LTE) from 8 to 10 December 2021 at the HKCEC. The Project’s exhibition booth provided a Play Theory Corner and interactive games for visitors to learn more about the successful play stories in kindergartens, and how it could be adopted in early childhood learning and teaching. Members of the Project also conducted two presentations at the Early Childhood Education Theatre.

The Project is derived from a research-based play education programme that has been used effectively for over 10 years. This Project adopted the “Social Star Mirror Model” (Liu, 2015) which served as the conceptual framework in improving children’s social-emotional learning through playing face-to-face interactive games systematically. Fourteen kindergartens have adopted a whole-school approach in which parents partner with teachers to create holistic learning experiences, and parents who become game trainers will be able to apply the skills at home and in community settings.

During the presentation, Dr Sylvia Liu, Project Director of the Project, shared practical implementation experience of play education, play-based learning and project evaluation. Dr Liu said: “We have worked together to extend social-emotional learning from kindergartens to the community. Teachers apply their play skills in daily teaching whilst trained parents become ambassadors and apply skills in daily life and continue to contribute to school activities. Participating parents have continued supporting school activities throughout their children’s three years in kindergarten regardless of the format. For instance, they participated in birthday parties, which were first held face-to-face and later via online platforms.”

Dr Mantak Yuen, Principal Investigator of the Project, said: “During the school suspension/half-day schooling, the team made use of this period of time to develop online training. The content and activities were redesigned based on the theme planned. Online training brings insights on innovative means of making best use of its functions to enhance attendance and effectiveness. For example, ‘face-to-face’ without mask is made possible via online platforms whereas participants’ facial expressions would be ‘masked’ during on-site training. Online play sessions allow play opportunities in remote settings even under the constraints of social distancing.”

Dr Liu added: “During the pandemic, a number of online play sessions were held for families. This small-scale, intensive approach of public engagement was born in this difficult time. Surprisingly, very positive feedback was received from the participants. Both parents and children have never imagined that they could play interactively with friends ‘face-to-face’ on the online platforms, but not with the computer. As the pandemic begins to ease, the Project has begun to resume some face-to-face play activities under proper social distancing.”

Children’s daily life during the pandemic has been disrupted by the school suspension/half-day schooling from time to time. It is essential for teachers to apply the skills of interactive play so that children could keep up with and get used to interpersonal communication. It also helps children to resume school social life rapidly. Dr Lilian Chau, Ex-Co-investigator of the Project presented the objectives, content and
procedures of the teacher professional development (TPD) programme, and identified common obstacles that teachers encounter when implementing “learning through play” in kindergartens. Dr Chau also presented successful cases to illustrate how the TPD team has assisted kindergarten teachers to make sense of play and free play in the curriculum guide, to effectively integrate play in the school-based curriculum, and to create sustainable play corners in kindergarten.

About the Jockey Club “Play n Gain” Project
The Jockey Club “Play n Gain” Project is a play education programme funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and implemented by the CAISE in the Faculty of Education of HKU.

To learn more about the Jockey Club “Play n Gain” Project and the upcoming game education activities and community class, please visit www.jcplayngain.edu.hku.hk and its Facebook page.

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