

# InterPlay in Education:

## The Cynthia Winton-Henry Fund

**Bringing increased community, connection, creativity, ease, de-stressing tools, affirmation, joy, resilience and leadership to all levels of education.**

As InterPlay has grown over its 30+ years, InterPlay leaders have applied its ideas and practices in educational settings at all levels, from elementary school classrooms to graduate-level courses. We are seeing concrete ways that InterPlay transforms educational settings into thriving, positive, and supportive communities, creating cultures where students learn about themselves and each other. The InterPlay Tools are a valuable resource for helping students and teachers deal with the complexities of our systems of learning.

This fund honors the vision of InterPlay co-founder Cynthia Winton-Henry and her long-term commitment to expand InterPlay's service to the educational community.

Here are four particularly powerful issues that InterPlay addresses:

### **Whole-person engagement**

Educators know that students learn in many different ways and that a variety of educational tools increases and deepens learning. Using the power of play—involving and engaging activity with “room to move around in”—teachers and students gain respect for the multiple ways that people learn (metacognition). InterPlay allows space for integration of and reflection on information. InterPlay accesses the wisdom of the whole body, releasing **energy**, potential and possibility. InterPlay is also rewarding and fun. Bringing joy back to education inspires students to follow their curiosity and continue their educational journey with enthusiasm. Students respond eagerly to opportunities to express themselves through movement, storytelling, voice, and stillness. Interactivity, which is an important element of InterPlay, increases their social-emotional skills.

## **Decreasing stress**

In our current education paradigm, educators and learners are under an immense amount of stress. With the pressure of testing and funding, educational institutions are under scrutiny about how well they perform. Especially during the pandemic, students are experiencing these pressures and many feel unable to meet the high expectations being asked of them. Many educational cultures are embedded with a culture of competition, stress, and a success-failure dichotomy. We know that stress and stress-filled situations interfere with learning while teaching individual and collective creativity are underrated skills that are useful in school and throughout life.

InterPlay provides tools for releasing stress and increasing ease that can be helpful for both students and teachers, offering personal de-stressing toolkits for coping and navigating challenges.

## **Understanding self and others**

Learners creatively explore their strengths and find strategies for socializing and navigating change both online and in person. As students of all ages become familiar with the InterPlay tools they demonstrate greater confidence, self-resiliency, self-assertion, and a better ability to express themselves. Students steadily experience being listened to and become listeners and respectful witnesses to their peers. They gain both a sense of community and confidence, leading to greater engagement.

Students and educators get a container where students develop respect for differences for example of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, etc. They are helped to appreciate the variety of gifts that each person brings to the group. They also learn to connect with others based on a variety of shared experiences and interests.

Students develop a growth mindset (Carol Dweck) where learning requires continuous effort and they often report that the effort feels fun! They learn to use an emotional vocabulary to express what they've observed and experienced through an InterPlay practice called "noticing" (known as "reflecting" in some educational settings).

Higher education learners achieve clarity through listening to their inner voice in choosing a career and navigating future prospects. Undergraduate

and graduate students become able to quiet their judgmental minds in order to renew their fun in learning. Students experience themselves as moving from “a head on shoulders” self-identity to a full body intellectual.

### **Need for knowledge-based education**

InterPlay teachers are part of a broader shift away from education models that used to focus on downloading information (The Information Age) to the new learning arenas needed in the 21st century (The Entrepreneurial Age). The need today is to help students grow their unique bodies of knowledge. Knowledge-based learning values the knowledge that students already have and supports them to research and apply their growing knowledge in real life. To accomplish this, InterPlay methods are based in creative individual and group practice which significantly quicken perceptions, strengthen multiple intelligences, advance presentation and negotiation skills, and foster the social and emotional know-how needed to collaborate in increasingly multicultural environments.

### **The Cynthia Winton-Henry Education Fund**

With the Cynthia Winton Henry Fund we will be building up resources to support teachers and students to bring the InterPlay tools and forms into educational settings. The aim of this project will include the visions of educators as collaborators.

This fund will support the first phase of a longer-term strategy to share the benefits of InterPlay with educators. It will build on actions and activities that are already taking place, and help spread the word about InterPlay.

The initiatives could include:

- Stipends for educators to research, write and publish about the use of InterPlay in educational settings with a focus on different developmental ages.
- Hiring InterPlay educators and/or students to organize events and partnerships demonstrating the use of InterPlay.
- Designing and leading anti-racism programs that deepen the understanding of the students' needs. These programs can address equity, inclusion, and microaggressions of all kinds.

- Exploring the intersections between InterPlay and Restorative Justice models that can transform school cultures from punitive practices into affirmation-based environments.
- Offering a Life Practice Program for Educators to explore InterPlay tools and forms as they can be applied in educational settings at various levels. Continuing Education Credits would be available to participating educators.
- Partnership Projects with school administrations and/or school districts to offer training for educators to implement InterPlay tools and techniques district-wide or building-wide.
- Providing InterPlay classes for kids—on-line or in person (when permitted)—to build resilience among young people and/or for students with special needs, and to develop models that can be replicated by InterPlayers and educators.
- Provide scholarships to make events and programming accessible to community leaders and the underserved.

### **Join us in making this creative vision a reality!**

We are imagining a world where education is rooted in the ethic of play which enhances creativity and curiosity. We believe this will bring joy back to learning—offering fun, active, and enlivening forms for self and group expression.

We view affirmation as the touchstone of the relationships between teacher and students as well as between and among peers. With the well-structured art-based system of InterPlay as the foundation, students will uncover a new meaning of success: one where their whole beings are honored and celebrated. We have seen this cultural shift within the educational settings where InterPlay has been introduced and we are dreaming and advocating for more! We wish to build programs that support individual teachers as well as institutional change.

Help us by supporting InterPlay in Education through the Cynthia Winton-Henry Fund so that Cynthia's dreams for education can become a reality, with an initial launch goal of \$10,000.

### **Let's create less stress and more learning and creativity!**