How are today’s children different than children of previous generations? What is the nature of modern childhood, and what does that mean for education?

As countries and societies develop and prosper, older, better educated parents are increasingly advocating for their children and playing an active role in their education. Safer environments have helped reduce child mortality due to accidental injury across all of the OECD. New technologies help parents to stay in constant touch with their children. On a number of measures children’s lives have clearly improved: better health care, public safety, and support for their physical and mental well-being.

At the same time, however, the modern world has created new stresses. Children and adolescents are increasingly pushed to do more, and they are reporting higher levels of stress and less sleep. Child obesity is increasing across the OECD, bringing with it a host of potential physical, social and psychological challenges. The new technologies that help parents stay connected to their children also mean that new risks (for example, cyber-bullying) follow them from the school yard into their homes. These transformations are occurring at the same time as inequality is increasing. In most OECD countries, the gap between rich and poor is at its highest level in 30 years.

A new project:

How does the transformed nature of childhood in the 21st century affect the role of education? How can schools work together with parents and communities to protect and guide children while still allowing them to be children, and learn by making mistakes? And how do these issues have an impact on school planning, teaching and learning at each stage of the education system?

21st Century Children will:

- Identify relevant multi-disciplinary research and develop an analytic framework to link to education research and policy;
- Share experiences and common challenges countries are facing and identify examples of good practice;
- Determine research gaps and issues in need of further study.

For more information:

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