



What We Heard: Educators Supporting Newcomer Families

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Executive Summary

In 2020, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) and MacEwan University began a joint research project aimed at examining the following research questions:

1. For newcomer families, what are indicators of quality in early learning and child care?
2. What are the essential dispositions child care educators demonstrate that meet the needs of newcomer children and families?

In addition to a scoping review of relevant literature, researchers undertook a series of focus groups with current educators with relevant experience in order to answer to these questions. These focus group conversations revealed the following themes:

- Theme 1: Multimodal and multilingual communication with families is paramount
- Theme 2: Educators value the funds of knowledge of families and children...
- Theme 3: ... But, there is tension between home language and majority language use in centres
- Theme 4: Openness and flexibility are the most important dispositions
- Theme 5: Educators can always grow, seek, and co-learn

Findings from these focus groups indicate that educators believe that a practice of relationships is essential for high-quality support of newcomer families and children (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, & Thomas, 2014). At times, though, educators faced barriers in implementing such a practice.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that:

- In-service educators receive continual support in their understanding and use of *Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework*
- Future research that centres the voices of newcomer families specifically be conducted
- Immediate research into how child care centres currently conceptualize, act on, and respond to the ideas presented here is conducted