



Learning, Reflecting and Being Curious

*In spring 2021, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) and MacEwan University conducted four case studies with childcare directors and senior staff to learn how support for newcomer and Indigenous families can be realized in the Edmonton region. Many themes were derived from these conversations, including that for all sites **educators who seek opportunities for learning, reflection, and curiosity are valued in the early learning field.***

Educators Who Seek Opportunities for Learning, Reflection, and Curiosity are Valued in the Early Learning Field

In the case studies, all centres shared that they value and actively seek to employ educators who invest in their learning (attend workshops, schooling, and training), reflect on their practice with children and families, and approach situations with a disposition of curiosity and a willingness to learn. All the centres strive to create an environment that encourages this learning to take place in a safe and respectful manner. Each centre shares what this learning may look like in their practice:

At the **newcomer-focused centre**, life-long learning is an essential disposition valued by families and directors:

- Educators are encouraged to learn from families and share their own cultural beliefs to foster an inclusive community. The centre also offers many workshops on specific themes (migration, immigration, trauma-based care, etc.) to support the children and families they serve.

At the Indigenous-focused centre, emphasis is placed on educators who are open to new perspectives and willing to learn from others:

- The centre strives to honour families' funds of knowledge (beliefs, values, and experiences) to foster an inclusive and safe environment. Additionally, the participant shared that openness and eagerness to learn are two essential dispositions they look for in educators during the hiring process.

At the **Indigenous focused centre**, a relational approach is at the forefront of programming as educators are encouraged to engage with families on a personal level:

- Individuated support requires a position of curiosity, where educators are willing to learn from families. Additionally, the Executive Director shared that educators who are “constantly in a state of learning and unknowing” are valued in the field. Therefore, educators who engage in self-reflection, who are open to new ideas, and who are respectful of families' funds of knowledge contribute to a quality childcare experience.

At the centre with experience working with Indigenous children and families, educators are encouraged to engage in a reflective process to ensure they provide support to children and families based on their culture, values, and experiences:

- One participant stated that a “willingness to learn and to grow and to change” is an educator disposition sought after in this centre. The centre emphasizes that understanding social-cultural perspectives is equally as crucial as understanding child development. The willingness to learn from others is foundational to this centre's practice.

Relationship to Flight

Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework, encourages educators to participate in life-long learning opportunities to better meet the needs of children and their families (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, & Thomas, 2014, p. 12-13). Educators who engage in self-reflection and approach new experiences with curiosity are valued in the field. The purpose of *Flight* is “to engage educators as co-learners, co-researchers, and co-imaginers of possibilities with high regard for children’s potential” (Makovichuk et al., p. 13). Childcare environments that emphasize a willingness to learn offer a flexible approach that supports and fosters a strong image of the child and their family (Makovichuk et al., p. 144). Refer to the *Flight* website offered in the references section for access to additional information and teachings.

Recommendations and Next Steps

- Childcare centres can support educators in developing their practice by connecting them to various workshops, certifications, and learning opportunities. For instance, centres can refer their educators to multiple websites and resources such as the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (AECEA) and Alberta Resource Center for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE): <https://aecea.ca/ece-professionals/professional-learning> and <https://arcqe.ca>
- Childcare centres can implement *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* into programming, encouraging educators to download the curriculum and expand their knowledge on early learning and development: <https://flightframework.ca>
- Childcare centres can create a safe space for learning by fostering an environment that welcomes questions, respects

various perspectives, and invites new approaches to early education. When educators feel secure and supported in their workplace, they are more willing to learn and likely to seek and share knowledge.

- Childcare centres can foster a positive space of learning and interaction by creating a positive image of the child and their family. For instance, centres can encourage their educators to engage with families and learn more about their experiences. Centres that promote a disposition of learning from families are valued in the field.
- Childcare centres can create opportunities for learning during staff meetings by incorporating early learning articles or documents for skills training, referring to *Flight* when problem-solving, and referring to resources. Staff meetings are great opportunities for centres to implement a specific amount of time devoted to reflection, team-building, learning, and growth.
- Childcare centres can refer to the additional “inspirations for leading” documents to fully understand the themes and how they work in conjunction with each other.
- Centres can search the Edmonton Council of Early Learning and Care website and click on the ‘resources’ link to gain additional knowledge and learn more about different organizations/partnerships in the area: <https://www.ecelc.ca/resources>

References

Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. (2014). *Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework*. Retrieved from flightframework.ca

