



Educators Supporting Indigenous Families: The Flight Framework

In spring 2021, the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) and MacEwan University conducted focus groups with in-service educators who support Indigenous families. Many themes were derived from these conversations, including that **Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework influences centres' abilities to offer quality child care with qualified staff.**

Qualified Staff and The Influence of Flight

Educators and families agree that qualified staff are integral to a quality childcare experience. In regard to early learning, qualified staff can be defined as educators who take the initiative to engage in life-long learning experiences to grow as professionals. This learning may include participating in training events, workshop

opportunities, engaging with families, as well as learning and applying *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework*.

Educator Dispositions

In the focus groups, individuals identified various characteristics that guide educators in their practice with children and families. In relation to the specific theme – qualified staff and the influence of *Flight* – educators shared the following dispositions valued in the field:



Reflectiveness



Openness



Determination



Willingness to learn



Educator Voices from the Field

Many educators talked about the positive influence *Flight* has had on their practice. Acknowledging the significance of this learning, educators recognized how it “makes [them] so reflective as a centre” which fosters an inclusive childcare environment. Additionally, families appreciated educators who engage in learning experiences: “they’re really good and I think they’re more qualified than ever and I see them doing their training, they’re hands-on.”

Relationship to Flight

The purpose of *Flight* is to guide educators in early learning by promoting a holistic framework, encouraging play, strengthening relationships, and emphasizing the role of responsive environments (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, & Thomas, 2014, p. 10-13).

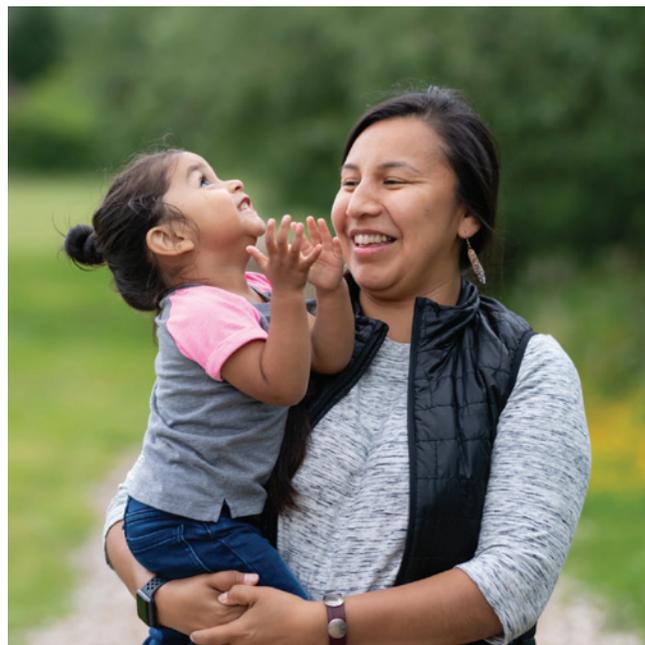
This framework acknowledges childcare as an extension of the greater social community (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p. 10-13, 28). *Flight* can influence the quality of care by providing a resource for centres to use to develop deeper understandings and honouring of children through the lens of a socio-cultural perspective (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p. 10-13, 28). Refer to the Flight website offered in the references section for access to additional information and teachings.

Barriers

In the early learning field, one barrier to life-long learning is access to resources, workshops and learning opportunities. Educators shared that lack of support in accessing these opportunities affects the training they receive.

Strategies

- Educators can access *Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Framework* online to learn more about the importance of fostering community, engaging with families, integrating culture, and more: <https://flightframework.ca>
- Educators can click on the resources link provided on *Flight's* homepage to learn more about how to implement the framework in practice, obtain reflection and planning guides, and gain access to family resources. Educators can also seek out professional development opportunities related to *Flight* in their communities. Visit the webpage for more details: <https://flightframework.ca/resources.php>
- Educators can approach learning with a level of curiosity and openness. Educators who are willing to learn new strategies and perspectives on childcare, are better prepared to meet the diverse and changing needs of children and their families.
- Educators can implement the *Flight* framework into their daily programming experiences within the learning environment. For instance, educators can create learning stories, integrate more open-ended experiences, and make use of space and materials to create a childcare experience that is responsive and reflective of the children and their families.



Recommendations

- Educators can read the additional “inspirations for practice” documents to fully understand the themes and how they work in conjunction with each other.
- Educators can seek knowledge from other organizations, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, professionals, and families to engage in the process of life-long learning.
- Educators 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>
- Educators can advocate for the implementation of *Flight* in the early learning environment. For example, educators can share this resource with co-workers, supervisors, and directors, to foster a space that is progressive and inclusive.

References

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