



Educators Supporting Indigenous Families: Trust

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 **for some Indigenous families, the role of trust is key in their relationships with educators.**

Fostering Trust as a Pivotal Educator Disposition

Both families and educators believe that trust is pivotal for a quality child care experience. Trust in an early learning environment is built over time through consistent communication and is revealed when educators take a genuine interest in a child’s wellbeing and development. In addition to this, when families

trust educators with their children’s care, healthy relationships are fostered, and children’s safety and security are preserved.

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 – fostering trust as a pivotal educator disposition – educators shared the following dispositions valued in the field:



Compassion



Reliability



Self-awareness



Honesty



Educator Voices from the Field

Family members and educators shared that building trust is essential to maintaining relationships and offering a valuable child care experience. For example, one participant stated that a critical component to building trust is knowing that their child is “happy every day they go there.” Families agreed that seeing their children enjoying their childcare experience establishes that sense of trust.

Relationship to Flight

Alberta's *Flight* framework emphasizes the importance of fostering emotional health and positive identities in children through the development of self and belonging (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, & Thomas, 2014, p. 92). Educators must arrange experiences in childcare to encourage trust between children, families, and staff. This can be achieved through various methods such as: incorporating other cultures into the centre to create a relaxing space, inviting families to partake in activities, and building respectful and reciprocal communication to ensure others feel valued (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p. 92-96). According to *Flight*, a practice of relationships makes trust possible and, as a result, increases cultural safety, belonging, and the overall early learning experience for children and families (Makovichuk et al., 2014, p. 92-96). Refer to the *Flight* website offered in the references section for access to additional information and teachings.

Barriers

Establishing trust takes patience and consistency on behalf of both parties. Challenges to developing trust happen when misunderstandings due to a lack of communication occur. An open disposition and willingness to engage with others is integral to moving beyond these barriers and creating trust.

Strategies

- Educators can engage with families daily during drop-off and pick-up times to form relationships and build that foundation of trust. Families shared that they value educators who take the time to converse about their children's day; this effort shows that they care.
- Educators can develop learning stories - documentation about "the child's play and learning"- for the families to reference (Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, & Thomas, 2014, p. 144). Visit the *Flight* homepage for additional examples and strategies: <https://flightframework.ca>
- Educators can seek knowledge and information from Elders and Knowledge Keepers to expand their learning, engage with the community, and build trust.
- Educators can display children's learning in creative ways within the learning environment for families to see (for example, creating a poster board of activities and experiences the children participate in during the day). This creative use of space and materials help foster a safe and trusting environment for 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, 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 build trusting relationships with families by ensuring they approach conversations in a respectful and attentive manner to build a positive image of the family.

References

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