

Quality indicators and dispositions in the early learning and child care sector: Learning from newcomer families ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

In spring 2020, MacEwan University and the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) collaborated on a research project that focused on the experiences of newcomer families and their children in child care. The research brings attention to a range of quality indicators and educator dispositions valued by newcomer parents. The researchers reviewed research on child care centers in Canada and around the world to frame the study and offer preliminary findings. The scoping review found the following results.

Indicators of Quality

- **School Readiness/Academics:** Families preferred child care settings with a traditional academic focus (math and science) over those focused on free play.
- **Language Supports for Parents:** Families sought out child care that employed bilingual staff to enhance communication and strengthen educator-parent contact.
- **Language Supports for Children:** Families favoured centres that promote communication and language skills for children. However, some families valued teaching of the majority language, while others desired access to their native language.
- **Smaller Group Sizes:** Families preferred centres with lower ratios to increase educator-child interactions. While exact ratio numbers were not negotiated, families appreciated more individualized attention for their children.
- **Cultural Match:** Most families shared that child care programming with similar cultural backgrounds –reflecting consistent beliefs and values– bridged connections and fostered a welcoming environment. Nevertheless, some families preferred the opposite and appreciated a centre that only focused on teaching the dominant culture.
- **Family Partnerships:** Families valued child care that encourages centre-family and family-family partnerships to build a support network. According to the findings, this can occur in meetings, field experiences, and community gatherings.
- **Environment and Space:** Most families desired child care that emphasizes health and safety.
- **Educator Qualifications:** Families desired educators that hold qualifications and credentials (e.g. bachelor's degree or training in child development). However, the preferred qualifications varied.

In general, families valued quality child care; however, many settled for environments that were affordable and accessible instead, giving insight into the challenges faced in choosing child care.

Educator Dispositions

- **Educator Dispositions:** Families desired staff who are affectionate and supportive. Additionally, families preferred educators who are flexible in their work and can adapt programming and activities to fit the needs of newcomer children.
- **Attitudes Towards Multilingualism:** Some families preferred child care that valued bi- and multilingualism to increase cultural safety. While the results were mixed, most families agreed that educators should embrace a flexible disposition towards language and view it in a holistic manner.

Region: Alberta ^[5]

Tags: quality ^[6]

[newcomer families](#) ^[7]

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[3] <https://www.eclcc.ca/publications-archive/quality-indicators-and-dispositions-final-report> [4]

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