

# Perspectives of Early Childhood Educators in Supporting Active Kids: A Qualitative Study

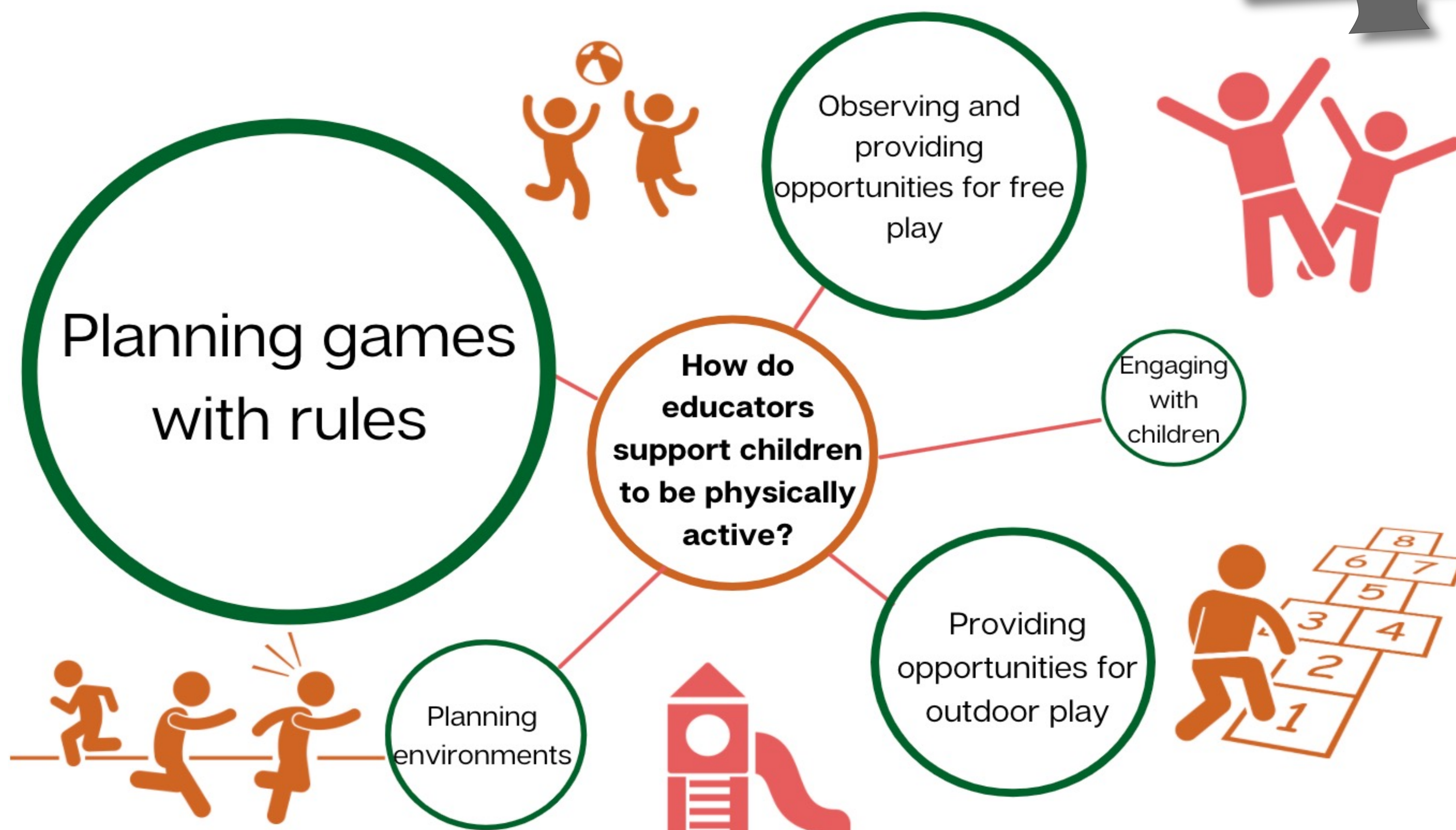
Qaisara Mohamed<sup>1</sup>, Nadine Van Wyk<sup>2</sup>, Ceilidh McConnell<sup>2</sup>, Alexis Webster<sup>2</sup>, and Lynne Lafave<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Child Studies and Social Work, <sup>2</sup>Department of Health and Physical Activity, Mount Royal University, Calgary, Canada

## Relationship to previous research works

Physical activity is of great importance to health, and the habits built in childhood are imperative to the continuation of regular physical activity throughout a lifetime. Educators must play a role in building these habits as providing time for physical activity is not enough. Previous reports indicate that children in child care struggle to meet recommended daily physical activity targets.

**Research aim:** To investigate educators' perspectives on ways in which they support children to be physically active at their child care centre.



## Theoretical and conceptual framework

- Physical literacy is a pedagogical principle within physical education that represents the knowledge, skills, and motivation to value and engage in physical activity for life.
- Professional development strategies can spark intentionality in educators towards enhancement of physical activity program delivery.
- Educators may act on their health knowledge and practices to contribute to the development of a child's lifelong relationship with activity.

## Methods

Within a qualitative study following an ecological paradigm, educators were invited to share their views on physical activity provision. This study took place with the approval of the Mount Royal University Human Research Ethics Board

Ninety-seven educators from 42 ECEC centres participated in this study with educators from:

- Medicine Hat
- Lethbridge
- Calgary
- Red Deer
- Edmonton,
- Fort McMurray
- Grand Prairie

## References

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## Discussion

**Results indicate that educators are more likely to support physical activity through supervisory activities rather than actively participating with children.** This may be because educators face difficulty in balancing their obligations towards maintaining children's safety, documenting experiences, and participating directly with children. Games with rules may be an attractive avenue to support activity as it balances the educators' competing interests and allows them to participate directly while ensuring children are well supervised. This study may provide the basis for future research as little to no studies have been conducted on the difficulties educators face in modeling and engaging with children.

## Implications, practice or policy

This study may offer insight into gaps within Educator's ideal practice and the reality of working in childcare. This could perhaps lead to future studies on what exactly these gaps are, and policies on how to rectify the situation to ensure children are receiving the highest quality of care.