



MY FAVOURITE SPOON!

CREATING HEALTHY EATING
& ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

CHEERS
FOR CHILD CARE

MARCH 2021

I notice several educators sitting with children during mealtimes and deeply engaged in conversation. Educators have been providing a relaxed eating environment that support children's choice of how much to eat. There is no pressure that children must eat most of their meal. Educators offer, children choose, and there is comfortable negotiation.

Working in a practice of relationships, educators have noticed that at first, children may not enjoy trying new meal options. Trying these new foods alongside children and having pleasant conversations in a casual atmosphere means there is no pressure to eat everything today. Children learn they can try again on another day as educators respect children's right to choose how much to eat.

One new family shared that a transition between home and program was difficult one morning. As the child cried while mom was leaving, there was a conversation at the door between the educator and the child about having breakfast with a favourite spoon.



Before mom arrived to work (only minutes from leaving our program), she received a call from the educator to say the child was happy, eating breakfast with a favourite spoon, and a dinosaur was sitting with him enjoying the meal too! The educator reassured the parent and developed a stronger bond by sharing a positive experience shortly after a difficult transition, helped the parent feel more connected to the program, and supported the child's positive experience of a mealtime with a favourite spoon and friend.

"Understanding how each child and family experiences transition rituals as they move between home and child care supports everyone in the early childhood community—children, families, and educators. Educators working within a practice of relationships are respectful of family rituals that form these transitions. Rituals and transitional objects such as a treasured stuffed bear, a photo of family, a shared story with dad before he leaves, wearing mom's scarf, or high fives at the door—are family rituals that reflect each child's family, social, and cultural practices and traditions." (*Flight*, p. 73)

The educator was making room for the child to have a transitional or favourite object to ease transition but also as part of the eating ritual. In this way, the educator places value on the child's choice.

"When educators work together with children and families to build continuity in the transition between early childhood programs, they help families and children build familiarity with these new circumstances."
(*Flight*, p. 74)

Our program routine encourages continuity by having the same educator in a room during the same time frame every day. This helps the family know who will be waiting for the child and makes it easier to build reciprocal relationships between the family and educator. The child will know who is waiting with his or her favourite spoon and dinosaur companion.

Well-being: belonging

Children develop a sense of place by becoming families with the sights, sounds, rhythms, and routines of new situations.

(Flight p.94)

The child is learning the routine of transitioning between home and program, and how the educator will be ready with transitional objects. Providing reassurance to the parent also shows mom how the child is adapting to new surroundings and is becoming more comfortable with the program and helps with building strong supportive relationships between the parent and the program

Well-being: Physical health

Children learn about food and nutrition by making decisions about food consumption, preparation, serving, and clean-up routines.

(Flight p. 95)

The child is learning that his or her favourite spoon will be available to support the mealtime ritual of having a dinosaur friend visit during the meal. This reassurance of something familiar will help with future transitions.

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

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