

CELEBRATE Feeding: A responsive approach to food and feeding in early learning settings

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Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research
<https://dcjournal.ca/doi/full/10.3148/>

Background

Early learning and child care (ELCC) settings in Canada follow nutrition standards that outline food provisions, with many also encouraging responsive feeding practices that help to create a supportive environment for children.

While there is a current emphasis on responsivity in relation to ELCC, caregivers who lack confidence in children's ability to regulate their own intake, or those who feel stressed about mealtime, may unknowingly engage in less responsive feeding practices.

CELEBRATE Feeding: A Responsive Feeding Approach

The **CELEBRATE Feeding Approach** is a theory-driven, flexible framework that builds on previous definitions and concepts of responsive feeding by highlighting the importance of **language, play, diversity, inclusion**, and the **celebration** of food and feeding.

It was developed through an iterative process involving a literature review, a scoping review, and a consensus-building process with advisory committee members.

This led to **13 target educator behaviours** categorized into **language, mealtime**, and **play**, emphasizing the interconnectedness and situational context of these behaviours.

Implementing these behaviours individually improves the responsiveness of the feeding environment, with a compounding effect when multiple behaviours are practiced.



The CELEBRATE Feeding Approach to Responsive Feeding

Relevance to Practice

Dietitians play a crucial role in bridging the gap between documented responsive feeding practices and their day-to-day implementation in ELCC settings.

Using **the CELEBRATE Feeding Approach**, dietitians can support early childhood educators by advocating for **varied food exposure in a supportive and pressure-free environment**.

This approach fosters a respectful, collaborative feeding connection that aligns with children's hunger and satiety cues, promoting their **confidence, self-regulation**, and **healthy development**, ultimately building a foundation for a positive lifelong relationship with food.