

Advancing assessment of responsive feeding environments and practices in child care



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Background

Child care environments offer an ideal setting for promoting positive early experiences with food and feeding.

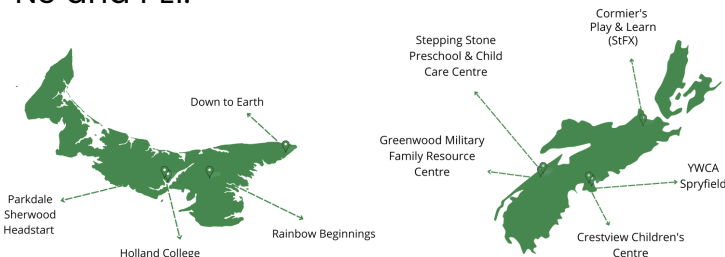
CELEBRATE Feeding is an approach that was implemented in child care environments in Nova Scotia (NS) and Prince Edward Island (PEI) to support responsive feeding (RF), which fosters children's self-efficacy, self-regulation, and healthy relationships with food.

This study aimed to describe RF in child care using established and enhanced scoring frameworks.

Methods

The Environment and Policy Assessment and Observation (EPAO) tool was modified to reflect RF environments and practices, resulting in a modified EPAO and a CELEBRATE scale.

Observations were conducted in 18 child care rooms in nine child care centres in NS and PEI.



Behaviours and environments were scored on both scales, creating 21 RF scores, with a score of '3' indicating the most responsive. Descriptive analyses of the scores were conducted.

Key Findings

Many responsive feeding practices were implemented in the child care centres, with most rooms scoring above 31.5 (out of 63), indicating positive practices but room for improvement through coaching.

While rooms excelled in avoiding negative feeding behaviors, they scored lower on desirable behaviors like encouraging self-serving.

Most Responsive Scores

Educators not using food to calm or encourage behavior

Educators not requiring children to sit at the table until finished

Least Responsive Scores

Educator prompts for children to drink water

Children self-serving

Enthusiastic role modeling during mealtime

Praise of mealtime behavior unrelated to food intake

Modified EPAO

CELEBRATE scale

Conclusions

The CELEBRATE scale captured unique observation information about RF to allow documented change over time with detailed measurement to inform and support nutrition interventions within child care environments.



Next Steps

The next aim of the project seeks to identify the impacts of the 6-month coaching intervention by comparing scores on the CELEBRATE scale before and after.