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Full Day Kindergarten for All

Exciting changes are coming for young learners in BC next fall. The Ministry of Education is phasing in full day kindergarten (FDK) over the next 2 years.

About half of kindergarten children will be in FDK in September 2010. By September 2011, all kindergarten programs will be a full day in public schools.

With the longer school day, teachers can spend more time on the prescribed learning outcomes of the kindergarten curriculum. They will be able to revitalize play-based learning, and better address all areas of child development.

A new resource -- *Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide*—will assist teachers, principals, and other school staff in creating FDK programs. The guide will be available online in Spring 2010.

The existing *Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching (2000)* is being updated to include the latest research and effective practices to support children's optimum learning and development. The updated version will be ready for the 2010/2011 school year.

For information about where FDK will be offered in September 2010, please contact your local school district.

The Ministry Of Education's [Full Day Kindergarten](#) website has helpful links, useful questions and answers on FDK, and a pamphlet for parents.



Full Day Kindergarten Pamphlet

A new parent pamphlet explains the benefits of full day kindergarten and answers common questions. It may be useful in StrongStart BC programs, Ready, Set, Learn events and shared with early learning partners. The pamphlet can be found online on the Ministry of Education's [website](#).

StrongStart BC Facilitators and District Staff Focus on Working with Families



Last fall, over 400 early learning staff participated in a new approach to in-service training through regional workshops. This was the first in a series of four workshops that are being organized and facilitated by the 2010LegaciesNow Early Learning Team. The purpose of this year's workshop series is to build on StrongStart BC facilitators' success and assist them in working effectively with families. Workshop topics were determined based on the responses of facilitators to a survey, in which over 200 respondents asked for more opportunities to connect with other facilitators, share ideas, and learn ways to engage families in learning with their children. 2010LegaciesNow has created an [on-line Community of Practice](#) (COP) to continue discussions until facilitators and teams meet in the Spring of 2010.

Why an Online Community of Practice?

In the June 2009 StrongStart BC facilitators' survey for facilitators and district contacts, over 80% of respondents indicated that building a network for information exchange was important to them. Facilitators and district early learning staff are now using this tool to share ideas, post resources (in multiple languages), ask questions, and gain new ideas and information about StrongStart BC programs.



During the fall session, facilitators and district staff explored the following:

- Personal perceptions of family
- Inclusive definitions of family
- Image of the family and community
- Characteristics of healthy families
- Models for understanding families
- Engaging families

Topics for the spring 2010 workshop include:

- Case studies in communication and problem-solving
- Pedagogical narrations
- Strategies for school team building
- Engaging families in science based activities, and/or
- Engaging families in activities that promote health

The spring workshops will take place between March 4 and April 30. District early learning contacts have been sent information containing dates and venues.



Excerpts from the Early Learning Programs Transfer Under Agreement

(2.10) The Board must ensure that each child who attends each Centre is assigned a Personal Education Number (PEN), using the PEN request process the Board currently uses or the automated process built into British Columbia enterprise Student Information System (BCeSIS), as set out on the Ministry of Education's website at: <https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/exams/tsw/pen/>

(2.11) The Board must collect enrolment and attendance information about each child (by age) who attends each Centre, including the child's name and age and his or her family's contact information.

(2.12) The Board must ensure that days of positive attendance for each child attending each Centre is reported by entering that information into BCeSIS.

(2.13) The Board must ensure that all staff who are responsible for assigning PENs under paragraph 2.10 and entering attendance information under 2.11 have participated in BCeSIS training sessions, which is provided by the Ministry.

(2.14) The Board acknowledges that the Ministry will extract attendance reports in respect of each Centre from BCeSIS twice a year:

-January 10 (attendance for September through December); and

-July 10 (attendance for January through June).

Registering Children in StrongStart BC



StrongStart BC is an education program, enabled by the School Act, whose purpose is to support the learning and development of children ages 0-5. Children attending a StrongStart BC program must be assigned a Personal Education Number (PEN). StrongStart BC Early Learning Programs are also required to record the attendance of each child. Through a signed agreement with the Ministry, school districts commit to working with the facilitators, early learning contacts, BCeSIS contacts and other relevant partners to

collect registration information, assign PENs for all of the children who attend their StrongStart BC programs

Q and A on Registration, PENs and Attendance:

Q: How does the ministry use the attendance data from StrongStart BC programs?

A: The Ministry reviews the StrongStart BC attendance data patterns at the district and program level. This data supports future planning and evaluation. Programs with low attendance and registration numbers are contacted by the Ministry and may be asked to submit a plan to increase their attendance and registration numbers.

Q: How do I find the time to enter all the attendance data?

A: Many districts have reported that they enter the data immediately after their StrongStart BC sessions. Some districts have closed their StrongStart BC programs once a month, in order to input all their PEN requests and attendance data. These planned closings allow for the data to be entered in a timely and cost effective manner. Districts that have been successful in entering all their attendance data have reported that the key to their success has been planning and strategizing with everyone involved (facilitators, secretaries, principals, district contacts and parents).

Q: Can a child's care card be used as valid identification for the registration form and to assign a PEN?

A: No, a care card is not considered valid identification. A list of valid identification can be found on the Ministry of Education's [website](#).

Q: Do school districts receive a summary of attendance data for their StrongStart BC programs?

A: Districts have the ability to run multiple reports from BCeSIS, including their StrongStart BC program attendance. Districts should contact their district BCeSIS contact for assistance with this.

Q: Some of our StrongStart BC programs have families attending with out-of-country passports and visitor visas. Can these families attend StrongStart BC programs?

A: All families with children younger than kindergarten age are welcome to attend StrongStart BC early learning programs, even if they are not permanent residents of BC or Canada. All children need to be registered, so the family will need to provide valid identification for the child so a PEN can be assigned and attendance tracked.

Q: Where can I find information on tracking the attendance for a child who attends more than one StrongStart BC program?

A: Information on cross-enrolling children and further information on BCeSIS and StrongStart BC programs can be found on the [ISW](#) site, specifically in the StrongStart BC reference guide which is posted on the site.

The Importance of Dramatic Play



Extensive research has documented the value of dramatic play in children's development. Dramatic play can be thought of as how children prepare for and practice life. Children who participate in dramatic play are practicing many of the skills and dispositions that they will need throughout their lives: sharing, problem solving, self-regulation, cooperation, and negotiation. Through dramatic play, children can represent real-life challenges and practice solving them. Repeated practice of problem solving skills deepens a child's understanding of the world around them, supports their sense of well-being and belonging, and provides them with opportunities to be flexible and creative in their thinking.

Dramatic play is vital for optimal brain development. Research has shown that rich dramatic play experiences in early childhood help to develop the pre-frontal cortex, the area of the brain that helps to regulate behaviour.

Self regulation can be defined as the ability to control and direct one's own feelings, thoughts, and actions. It also includes emotional control, planning, self-reliance, and impulse control. Self-regulation is key for children to be successful in school and in life.

Creating a quality environment for dramatic play in early childhood settings sets the "stage" for children to practice roles and situations that are meaningful to them and helps to develop self-regulation skills. Initially, the dramatic play centre is often set up to look like a home, as children are most familiar with themes relating to their life with their family. Dramatic play centres should offer a rich variety of materials, to invite the children into the centre. To be responsive to the children, facilitators can help extend the play by adding props and materials that are of interest to the children. Pictures and props that represent and are relevant to the cultures of the children that attend the program, provides additional meaning for the children. Ensuring that the dramatic play centre is safe, clean, and well organized shows respect for all the children that attend.

Questions to consider when reflecting on the dramatic play centre:

- Are there materials in the centre that promote creativity and flexibility of play?

- Do the materials in the centre reflect the children's ideas?
- Are the materials appropriate for all ages of children who attend the program?
- Is the centre large enough for several children and adults to participate at one time?
- Are new materials provided on a regular basis?
- Do the materials in the centre include some "real" items?
- Are children and families actively involved in choosing ideas for the centre?
- Are the materials in the centre continually assessed and modified to ensure prolonged interest and age appropriateness?

"Whenever children are invited to pretend, they seem to be able to access skills and concepts that are more difficult for them to grasp when they are in the middle of a real situation." Learning Together With Young Children, Curtis and Carter, 2008.

How to Build an Airport

By Maureen Wagner,
StrongStart BC Facilitator,
Brooklyn Elementary, SD 71 (Comox Valley)

Photos from the Brooklyn Elementary StrongStart BC Airport



What started as a suggestion from a parent, because their child was interested in planes, blossomed into a month of emergent play and exploration of airports and airplane activities.

In one of my weekly newsletters to families I asked for ideas and topics of interest to their children. In December I received an email from one of the families that participate in the StrongStart BC program saying that their son was very interested in planes and that they regularly go to the Air Force Museum.

Before Christmas, I put a note on the parent board asking for ideas of what we would need to make an airport and/or airplane here in the centre. It became a very long list so I began asking families that I knew either worked for an airline or at the airport to donate certain items.

Over the Christmas break, I gathered materials and built a pilot cockpit with steering wheel, headphones, and lots of switches and buttons to use.

I had large cardboard boxes that another family donated and made the side of an airplane with windows. I put in a few seats, found belts to use as seat belts and bags to hold the 'behind the seat items'. We had the emergency cards and magazines from local airlines.

A table was set up for the check-in area of the airport. It had a keyboard, phone, rubber stamps and baggage tags. Daily flights were made to México, New Zealand, Arizona, Lethbridge, and more.

Each day, more and more ideas were added...

It extended to the block area where an airport and landing strip was built. The number of people, both adult and child, in that play area at one time was amazing. It has been, by far, the most involved and enjoyed play and learning space of our StrongStart BC program.

StrongStart BC Good News Story

From a StrongStart BC Early Learning Centre in Burnaby:

“Some South Asian grandparents didn’t quite understand what our centres were about and were hesitant to get involved. One granddad came and sat outside the door the first day and watched his grandchild inside. Shortly thereafter I saw this granddad inside stretched out on the pillow reading to his grandson, and I realized how far we’d come in gaining trust and acceptance.”

Janey Talbot, SD 42 early learning coordinator.



Early Learning Happenings in SD 68



School District 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) has developed a set of posters for the early learning community. These posters are currently being shared and used by a number of Vancouver Island districts and have even been placed on the local ferry system. The messaging and posters are a direct result of local early years teamwork. The school district also sponsors two *Healthy*

Start to Learning fairs (Ladysmith and Nanaimo), for families, in partnership with the Vancouver Island Health Authority and other organizations and agencies. Children go home with their own picture to put inside a “Early and Often” magnetic photo frame.

For more information on early learning initiatives in school district 68 and the “Early and Often” posters, please contact Elizabeth Pennell at: EPennell@sd68.bc.ca

New Aboriginal Early Childhood Resources

Eight early childhood education resource kits containing hands-on materials and curriculum reflecting First Nations traditions are available on loan to early learning programs in British Columbia. The resource kits contain puzzles, activities, artwork, matching games, videos and books. All the materials in the kits reflect a First Nations perspective. Kits include resource manuals for educators on each topic, learning objectives, including a description of activities corresponding with each objective, suggestions for language activities and community/parent involvement, as well as a resource list of books and videos.

The themes include: Animals and the Environment, Aboriginal Family and Community, Food and Nutrition, School Readiness, Music and Movement, and Language and Literacy. The activities in the kits can complement an existing program or provide ideas and resources for additional themes.

The resource kits were developed by the [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society](http://www.bcaccs.ca) (BCACCS) and are available on loan for members of BCACCS. StrongStart BC facilitators can become a member of BCACCS for \$25 per year by contacting them at 604-913-9128



Connections from StrongStart BC Programs

Working Together in StrongStart BC

Duane Jackson, Prince Rupert's Success by Six Aboriginal Coordinator and Early Childhood Educator, leads story time for a Ready, Set, Learn session held in the StrongStart BC Centre at Conrad Elementary School.



READY, SET, LEARN

Success By 6
Helping all children succeed for life.

By Linda Dyck, Principal, Blue Mountain Elementary School, SD 42

We have a StrongStart BC centre at Blue Mountain Elementary and are now into our second year. One fond memory that springs to mind is the day a mother came out of the StrongStart BC room, sobbing and shaking, saying "I just can't do it any more". I watched the facilitator take the little baby from her arms, ask the other mothers in the room if they could watch the mother's two year old child, and take the sobbing mom to a private room.

I asked the facilitator several weeks later how things were going with this little family, and she told me that she had connected the woman with a community program for post-pregnancy stress support. The mom had found friendship at the StrongStart BC program. I marveled at how this program and the participants became the support system when extended family was not there.

StrongStart BC Facilitators Leading Professional Development

Lillian Kocmaruk and Lorie McDonald, facilitators from two Burnaby School District StrongStart BC Early Learning programs presented a "Songs and Rhymes" workshop for a district professional development day in January 2010.

The workshop on play for primary teachers, educational assistants, and StrongStart BC facilitators and other Early Childhood Educators attracted 50 participants.

Lillian and Lorie shared songs and rhymes that promote literacy and oral language. Participants left with a new repertoire of songs to take back to their programs.

Kindergarten Teachers Praise StrongStart BC Programs

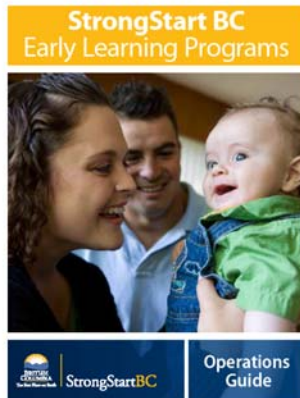
"The modeling the facilitator does for parents on playing and reading is a high priority. We believe we are seeing a difference in kindergarten as a result." (Comox)

"The children are more confident about starting school; and their parents – especially new immigrants – it increases their confidence and gives them ideas for and tips about child development." (Surrey)

"It is now rare for me to see a child in kindergarten that needs additional support that had not already been previously identified and already receiving some support." (Revelstoke)

"The StrongStart BC children segue into kindergarten much more readily". (Burnaby)

Printed Copies of the StrongStart BC Operation Guide Available Soon



The StrongStart BC Operations Guide, which has been available [online](#) since August 2009, will soon be available in print. Many facilitators and district contacts have indicated that they would appreciate having access to a printed version of the guide, as they refer to it so often in their practice. A copy of the guide will be sent to each StrongStart BC early learning program, and to each district early learning contact. Since its publication in 2009, the guide has proved to be useful in increasing the quality of programs, in sharing information on StrongStart BC with early learning partners, and in offering professional development. For example, some facilitators have used the section on the role of the principal and used it as starting point in discussions with their school principal.



Torch Tales from a StrongStart BC Facilitator



Patty Apps, StrongStart BC facilitator at Riverview Elementary in Quesnel carried the Olympic torch on Friday, January 29, 2010. What an honour. Many StrongStart BC families lined the route, holding their own home made torches and cheering Patty on. Patty is pictured after the run, with one of the new families from her StrongStart BC program.



The Ministry of Education's [website](#) contains current information on all its Early Learning Initiatives:

- [Full Day Kindergarten](#)
- [StrongStart BC](#)
- [Ready, Set, Learn](#)
- [British Columbia Early Learning Framework](#)
- [Early Learning Research and Publications](#)

We appreciate your feedback. Please send your comments and ideas for future issues to Janet Powell via email at: Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca.