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## Fall 2009 Professional Development for StrongStart BC Programs

A new series of professional development is underway for StrongStart BC facilitators. The Ministry of Education has partnered with 2010 Legacies Now to provide workshops for StrongStart BC facilitators this fall. The focus of the training was selected in response to the StrongStart BC Learning Community electronic survey from June 2009. Facilitators overwhelmingly indicated they wanted professional development on working with families and caregivers in the program.

The content of the workshops address this.

Twelve regional sessions are being held across the province in October and November this year. District early learning contacts have been sent the registration materials and information to pass on to facilitators.

Workshops are being facilitated by Fiona Morrison, Director of Family Literacy, and Pat Holborn, Director of Early Learning, both at 2010 Legacies Now.



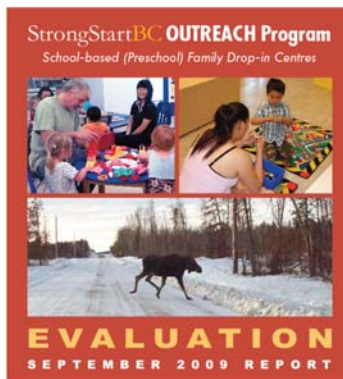
Region	Dates	Host District/Location
Lower Mainland South	October 5-6	Surrey
Lower Mainland North	October 15-16	Coquitlam
BC Northeast	October 29-30	Dawson Creek
BC Central	October 26-27	Quesnel
East Kootenays	November 2-3	Cranbrook
Bulkley Valley Corridor	November 2-3	TBC
West Kootenays	November 5-6	Castlegar
Northwest Coast	November 5-6	Prince Rupert
Vancouver Island North	November 16-17	Courtenay
Vancouver Island South	November 16-17	Saanich
Okanagan-Shuswap-Kamloops	November 26-27	Vernon
Fraser Valley	November 26-27	Chilliwack

## It's Complete! StrongStart BC Outreach Program Evaluation

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*[The facilitator] really cares for all the children and does not focus on one parent and child. She is wonderful at supporting us all and encouraging us to support each other. I really enjoy StrongStart BC as much as my child!*

- Parent



*I love working in StrongStart BC Outreach – it is like working in a Norman Rockwell painting*

- Facilitator

An evaluation of the four initial StrongStart BC Outreach programs was completed this summer. Starting in 2008, the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia studied parent, educator, and community response to the StrongStart BC outreach pilots.

The evaluation findings were very positive. Parents cited the importance of the program for rural communities. The researchers found the program provided valuable socialization opportunities for both children and families. Another positive outcome of the outreach program is the knowledge about early learning gained by parents. Parents directly attributed gains their children had made to the program.

The evaluation report makes a number of recommendations to government, school districts, and facilitators including:

- When the site is located in a school, implement procedures to ensure that the principal is well informed about the goals of the program and the importance of engaging the facilitator, the parents and the program in the culture of the school.
- When the school district has contracted the program services to another agency, ensure that the district staff person responsible for early learning programs meet regularly with the contractor to review program offerings, budget expenditures, staffing issues or any other topics of mutual concern.
- Expand efforts to locate and examine all possible clients for the program using more efficient methods and ask for assistance, from Health Authorities for example, for reaching potential families.

The StrongStart BC Outreach Policy has been updated as a result of these findings and is available online at:

[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/strong\\_start\\_outreach.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/strong_start_outreach.htm).

The full text of the report, entitled *StrongStart BC Outreach Program: Evaluation September 2010* is now available on the [Ministry of Education website](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/resources_links.htm) at: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/strongstart\\_bc/resources\\_links.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/resources_links.htm).

## From the StrongStart BC Operations Guide

### Identifying Families

One of the responsibilities of StrongStart BC programs is attracting families to participate. Programs may need help from community organizations or services to identify families. This is especially relevant for StrongStart BC Outreach programs where there are very few children in a community. The local health unit may be able to assist by forwarding information on StrongStart BC programs to first time parents.



Other organizations that may be able to assist with connecting with families include:

- [BC Family Resource Programs](#)
- [Child Care Resource and Referral](#)
- [Success by Six](#)
- [Local friendship centres](#)



## A New Guide for StrongStart BC Programs

The StrongStart BC Operations Guide is now available to support StrongStart BC early learning programs. Full of suggestions, examples and useful links to support districts to run and improve the quality of their StrongStart BC programs, this resource contains materials for StrongStart BC facilitators, district early learning contacts, principals, and superintendents.

The *StrongStart BC Operations Guide* can be used in:

- Setting up and planning the StrongStart BC program
- Building connections with the community
- Stimulating dialogue between early learning partners
- Supporting professional development
- Monitoring program quality.

The Guide is organized into seven sections:

- Facility Set Up
- Working with Families
- Program Delivery
- Role of the Facilitator
- School District Responsibilities
- Communication
- Health and Safety Practices

Copies can be downloaded from the Ministry of Education's website at:

[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/strongstart\\_bc/operation\\_guide.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/strongstart_bc/operation_guide.htm).

## Coming Soon: Full Day Kindergarten

Starting in September 2010, full day kindergarten will be expanded to up to 50 percent of eligible students, with full implementation expected in September 2011. The Ministry of Education is working with Boards of Education and independent schools to determine where the first phase of expanded programs will be available. Information has been sent to districts to support their planning including a process for them to propose where full day kindergarten will be implemented in September 2010. Families should be encouraged to contact their local school district in January 2010 for further details.

For more information, please visit the [Ministry of Education Full Day Kindergarten](#) website:  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/full\\_day\\_kindergarten.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/full_day_kindergarten.htm).



## Stress and Early Brain Development

“Everything in the infant environment contributes to brain development” (Early Years Study 2: Putting Science into Action, McCain, Mustard, Shanker, 2007). This includes stress. Prolonged exposure to stress can have detrimental effects on children’s well-being and learning.

When the body is faced with a physical or emotional stress,

the hormone cortisol is released. Cortisol is often referred to as the “stress hormone” and provides the body with a sudden burst of energy, decreased sensitivity to pain, and heightened memory, in order to assist the body’s “fight or flight” response to stress. Constant and prolonged exposure to stressful situations results in a higher than normal level of cortisol in the system. This can negatively affect brain cells. The connections made between brain cells in early childhood are also reduced when exposed to high levels of this hormone.

Another negative impact on the brain when exposed to stressful experiences in early life is the development of a hyper-sensitivity to stressful situations. This hyper-sensitivity causes the brain to repeatedly activate the “fight or flight” response. A child that is regularly exposed to stressful experiences is soon conditioned to this as a

“normal state” of fear and anxiety, making it difficult for the child to learn and thrive. In 2003, researcher Martin Teicher concluded that enduring effects on brain function and structure occurs as a result of severe stress. These effects can often present in adult life as depression, anxiety, aggression, impulsiveness and other negative behaviours.

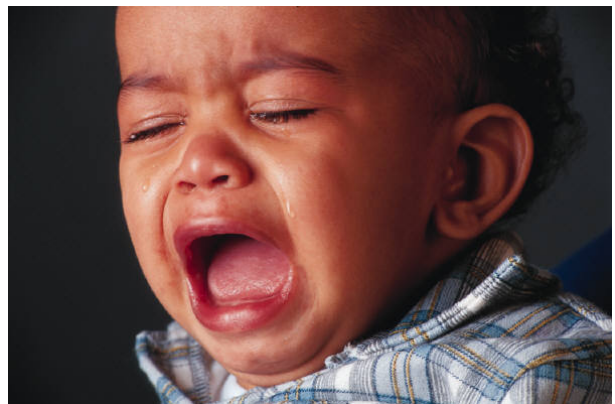
Quality early childhood programs, such as StrongStart BC, can reduce children’s stress by providing positive experiences, meaningful bonds with adults, and nurturing environments. Equally important, StrongStart BC programs can also help parents to learn how their stress affects their children and new strategies to reduce the stress of parenting. As a result, then children can develop a sense of self, resiliency and learn strategies to cope with challenging situations.

### Additional Resources on Stress:

Encyclopedia on Early Child Development: “*Stress and Early Brain Development*”, Megan R. Gunnar, Adriana Herrera, Camelia E. Hostinar, (Published online June 10, 2009)  
[http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/ECLKC/encyclopedia/Enc09\\_Gunnar-Herrera-Hostinar\\_brain\\_en.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/ECLKC/encyclopedia/Enc09_Gunnar-Herrera-Hostinar_brain_en.pdf)

Neuroscience and Behavioral Review, “*The Neurobiological Consequences of Early Stress and Childhood Maltreatment*”, MH Teicher, SL Andersen, A. Polcari, CM Anderson, CP Navalta, DM Kim, January 2003.  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12732221>

Anxiety Insights, “*Prenatal and Early Childhood Stress Impairs Brain Development*”, July 2006.  
<http://www.anxietyinsights.info>.



## Linking Painting with the Early Learning Framework

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*"I have 3 girls: age 4, age 2, and a newborn. I have been taking my children to StrongStart regularly for the last few years, in Burnaby when we lived there and now that we live in Port Moody, I've been taking them to Riverview Park Elementary for the last year. I just wanted to commend the BC Government for instituting such a wonderful, wonderful program!! It is very well utilized by me, and countless other parents out there. It's such a valuable resource...my girls love going to school and seeing "Mrs. Jennifer". And, though we cannot afford preschool for our 4 year old, I don't feel she is missing out because StrongStart will give her a similar experience..."*

*Thank you once again for providing such an excellent program. Please pass this message along to anyone who is involved!"*

Letter to the Ministry of  
Education  
From a Parent

The creative art area in any early learning program is one of the most popular (and messy) areas in the room. Art activities like painting encourage children to express emotions, plan and follow through on plans, make representations of their thoughts and ideas, and problem solve.

Paint provides opportunities for learning in all four areas of early learning:

- **Well-being and Belonging:** Providing paint brushes and feathers of various sizes lets children gain confidence and control of their bodies.
- **Exploration and Creativity:** painting with natural materials encourages children to discover new ways of expression.
- **Languages and Literacies:** expressing their own ideas visually and discussing their creations with others.
- **Social responsibility and Diversity:** practicing positive regard for shared materials and working harmoniously alongside others.



The painting area may contain a variety of materials to stimulate their creative expression and exploration. Suggestions for unique materials include:

- Cotton balls
- Juice lids
- Spools
- Leaves and twigs
- Foil
- Combs
- Eyedroppers
- Paint rollers
- Feathers
- Kitchen utensils

## Strength in Numbers: StrongStart BC Statistics 2008/09

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Approximately **15,000** children registered at a StrongStart BC early learning program last year. Almost **276,000** visits were made to StrongStart BC programs in 2008/09. How do we know this? These statistics were obtained from the attendance information extracted from BCeSIS on January 10 and July 10, 2009.

Strong evidence confirms that where services are funded and sustained over many years it can be attributed to the collection of good data. A core responsibility of school districts is to ensure PENs (Personal Education Numbers) are requested for all children who attend StrongStart BC early learning programs and to accurately record attendance.

District early learning leaders and StrongStart BC facilitators need to work together to set protocols for who is responsible for the various aspects of attendance reporting. **All children** (from birth to age five) who attend a StrongStart BC early learning program must be registered and have their attendance recorded on BCeSIS.

## Early Learning Contact Information

For information about **PEN requests**, visit [PEN Web](#). If you have any **PEN related questions**, please contact: [PENS.Coordinator@gov.bc.ca](mailto:PENS.Coordinator@gov.bc.ca)

For information about **implementing BCeSIS to request PENS and submit attendance**, please visit the [BCeSIS Frequently Asked Questions](#) document, online at: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/pdfs/bcesis\\_faq.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/bcesis_faq.pdf)

For information about **BCeSIS implementation and training**, please contact your BCeSIS Level 1 contact or email: [learning@isw-bc.ca](mailto:learning@isw-bc.ca).

To organize an **official opening** or for **information on signage** for your StrongStart BC program, please contact the Ministry of Education's Public Affairs Bureau at:

Joanne Whittier, Manager  
Communication  
Public Affairs Bureau  
Ministry of Education  
Phone: (250) 356-9888  
Email: [Joanne.Whittier@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Joanne.Whittier@gov.bc.ca)

For information on obtaining an **ECE Licence to Practice**, or to **verify an ECE Licence to Practice**, please contact the ECE registry:

Phone: (250) 356-6501  
Toll-Free: 1-888338-6622  
Fax: (250) 952-0765  
E-mail: [ECERegistry@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ECERegistry@gov.bc.ca)  
Website:  
<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ece/index.htm>.

For a **list of open StrongStart BC sites**, and to verify that site information is correct, please visit the [Ministry of Education's website](#) at:  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/pdfs/strong\\_start\\_contacts.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/strong_start_contacts.pdf)

For information on **StrongStart BC funding, policy or programs**, please contact Janet Powell, Early Learning Coordinator.

Phone: (250) 387-5615  
E-mail: [Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca)

# READY, SET, LEARN

## 2008/09 Summary

In 2008/09, 1,081 public schools participated in Ready, Set, Learn, a school readiness initiative led by the Ministry of Education. Approximately 23,200 preschoolers and approximately 23,800 parents attended RSL events at public schools. This represents an increase of over 700 children attending RSL events compared to the 2007/08 school year.

Feedback from the public schools on their events was very positive, with 95 percent of schools rating RSL events as good or higher. Over 200 schools involved StrongStart BC programs to either coordinate and/or participate in Ready, Set, Learn events. StrongStart BC program facilitators provided coordination, promotion, facilitation of activities, and offered information on StrongStart BC and other early childhood programs to families.

Ready, Set, Learn events in 2008/09 included school tours, family nights, interactive activities for the children and parents, presentations by community partners, play stations for the children and, literacy activities. Many schools engaged older students in hosting the events.



## StrongStart BC and H1N1

With the 2009/10 school year underway, the topic of H1N1 is on many people's minds. The Ministry of Education Pandemic Response Framework (available online at:

[www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/attachments/pandemic\\_response\\_framework.pdf](http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/attachments/pandemic_response_framework.pdf))

has been developed to guide school districts in the development of their district pandemic plans. This framework applies to StrongStart BC programs as well.

Government's H1N1 website

[www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1](http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1) has all the latest up to date information including specific information for students, parents and educators about how to protect yourself and others from contracting the virus.

As found on the website here are six simple, common sense precautions that can help safeguard everyone's health:

- 1) Stay home when you're sick or have influenza symptoms. Get plenty of rest and check with a health care provider as needed.
- 2) Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.
- 3) Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue away immediately. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- 4) Wash your hands. Washing your hands often will help protect you from getting sick. When

soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers.

5) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. You can become ill by touching a surface contaminated with germs and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

6) Practice other good health habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious foods, and avoid smoking, which may increase the risk of serious consequences if you do contract the flu.

You can call [Health Link BC](http://HealthLinkBC.ca) at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or if feeling ill.

## Links Between BC's Early Learning Framework and the Primary Program

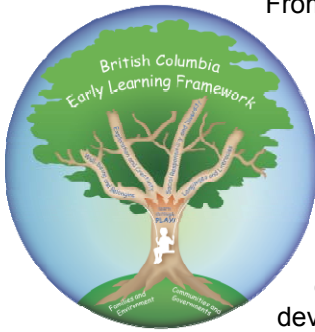
The Ministry of Education has a new resource available to primary educators and early childhood educators who together can create a seamless path of learning for children. [Making Linkages](#) was created to enhance and identify the connections that extend from the [British Columbia Early Learning Framework](#) to the [Primary Program: A Framework for Teaching](#).

School districts and other partners are encouraged to use the *Making Linkages* resource to facilitate dialogue between primary teachers, early childhood educators and other early years professionals about the importance of early learning and the continuum of development in and transition to the primary schooling years. Kindergarten teachers can use the resource as children transition into kindergarten.

Making Linkages is available on the Ministry of Education's website at: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/making\\_linkages.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/making_linkages.htm).



## Early Learning Framework Training



From January to June, 2009, over 1,000 people received training on how to use and apply the Early Learning Framework in their practice. The Ministry of Education partnered with three post-secondary institutions (the [University of Victoria](#), [Northern Lights College](#), and [Selkirk College](#)) to deliver professional development on how to implement the Framework. Training was held in regions across British Columbia from January to June, 2009.

Although these training sessions are now complete, field leaders and college instructors are available to offer additional professional development on the British Columbia Early Learning Framework. Field leaders are Early Childhood Educators with specialized training and a minimum of 5 years of experience working with young children.

School districts that would like to organize training sessions on implementing the British Columbia Early Learning Framework can now contact a field leader or college instructor in their region. A list of field leaders and college instructors is available online at: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/elf\\_imp\\_proj.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/elf_imp_proj.htm)

### Learning Together at School District No. 44

School District No. 44 (North Vancouver) is leading the way with their “Early Learning Foundations” series of professional development events. The school district held a three part series of workshops that took place over two months last year. Participants included StrongStart BC facilitators, kindergarten teachers, preschool teachers, family neighbourhood services providers, and family day care providers. The sessions were facilitated by Dr. Laurie Kocher from the University of British Columbia and

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw from the University of Victoria, and were organized by Gowa Kong, former early learning coordinator for School District No. 44.

The workshops focused on becoming familiar with the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* and pedagogical narrations. Pedagogical narration is the process of making children’s learning visible. This process involves observing, recording, and individually and collectively, interpreting a series of related ordinary moments.

A great deal of shared learning happened during these sessions. Attendees said that they valued the opportunity to spend time with their early learning partners and learn how the Framework is used in different early childhood settings. The workshops were so successful, that a study group was formed to continue their discussions.

For more information, please contact Gowa Kong at [GKong@svsd.bc.ca](mailto:GKong@svsd.bc.ca).



## Science World Helps StrongStart BC Get Messy



Thirty-one StrongStart BC facilitators from SD 39 (Vancouver) and SD 44 (North

Vancouver) spent time at Science World last month getting messy and learning about science themes for young children. Katie McMahon and Sandy Eix from Science World shared the three existing themes and the two new themes: "Size

Matters" explores growing and shrinking, and "Mysterious Mixtures" explores dissolving, separating, mixing and combining.

Science World's Big Science for Little hands provides activities for 3-5 year-olds that can serve as inspiration for scientific explorations. These theme-based small and large group activities can be adapted to any environment, including StrongStart BC programs.

In addition, Science World has activities for home use. These free materials require few, easy-to-find supplies and are ideal for parents/caregivers and preschool-age children to explore science together. All these materials can be downloaded for free from the Science World website at: <http://www.scienceworld.ca/pr-eschool.html>.

### Don't Forget ...

The Ministry of Education hosts a website that contains current information on all its Early Learning Initiatives. Please visit the website for information on:

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

We would appreciate your feedback on the Early Learning Newsletter. Please send your comments and ideas for future issues to Janet Powell, via email at: [Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca).