

BC Early Learning Newsletter

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Smooth Transition to Full Day Kindergarten



September marked the beginning of full day kindergarten for over 20,000 children across British Columbia. Teachers, principals and school districts, in partnership with families, are working hard to support smooth transitions for children attending full day kindergarten.

School District No. 59 (Peace River South) started preparing months in advance for the full day program. Professional development

opportunities were offered during the summer months resulting in stronger relationships between kindergarten teachers and StrongStart BC facilitators. "There is a new sense of team emerging in our schools and communities that is delightful to witness," says Gloria Cleve, Early Learning Project Manager for School District No. 59. "The local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency is now on the SD 59 loop for resource pick-up and drop-off to all StrongStart BC programs and Kindergarten classes. The Words on Wheels (WOW) Bus is partnering with community agencies to offer the Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) program. Pairing up Kindergarten teachers and StrongStart BC facilitators for future workshops is also in the works."

Schools across B.C. are working closely with families as they implement the full day program. It takes time for both children and families to feel comfortable in a new setting. At Lochside Elementary in School District No. 63 (Saanich) parents have been invited into the classroom to see how learning takes place through play. "It is so much fun but very busy," says Helen Adami-Hawley, Kindergarten teacher at Lochside Elementary. "The students are starting to feel like this is their school and soon they will feel more confident and relaxed and so will their parents." The teachers are spending quality time getting to know each child so they can plan the schedule and activities around the needs of the children. One Kindergarten teacher said she has never known her students so well, so soon. "Teaching 20 students a day rather than 40 really makes a difference."

Play-based learning in action—New Full Day Kindergarten Exemplar Videos

Do you want to see play-based learning in action? Interested in discussing self-regulation with your colleagues? If so, check out the Ministry of Education's new full day kindergarten [videos](#). These 4 videos for teachers, principals and district staff were developed in partnership with the [British Columbia Principals' and Vice Principals' Association](#) and the [British Columbia Primary Teachers' Association](#). As a supplement to the [Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide](#), the videos provide insightful examples of age-appropriate activities and learning environments for kindergarten students.

Video 1: The Learning Environment

Video 2: Teaching and Learning in a Play-Based Environment

Video 3: Inquiry-Based Learning and Development of Self Regulation

Video 4: Extending and Deepening the Learning Experience

Watch the videos at: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/exemplar_videos.htm

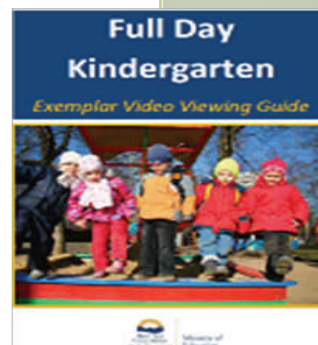
Full Day Kindergarten Exemplar Video Viewing Guide

As a companion resource, the [Full Day Kindergarten Exemplar Video Viewing Guide](#), supports further reflection about the ideas presented in the [videos](#).

Teachers can engage in their personal reflection or share with colleagues.

A special section of the guide explores the critical role that principals and vice principals play in supporting successful full day kindergarten programming.

Download the viewing guide at: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/fdk/exemplar_videos.htm



FUNDING

Districts received 70 percent of their 2010/11 early learning operating funding in August this year. The remaining 30 percent will be transferred to districts after April 1, 2011.

Please see your district Early Learning Agreement (Transfer Under Agreement—TUA) for further information.

TUAs should be shared with all relevant staff to ensure a thorough understanding of expectations and deliverables.

StrongStart BC Expansion

This fall, the Premier announced an expansion of StrongStart BC early learning programs. This expansion will occur over the next five years. Districts will be notified regarding the procedure for submitting proposals in the upcoming months.

Early Learning Programs by the Number

Thousands of young children across British Columbia attended Ministry of Education Early Learning Programs last year. Both early learning initiatives provide opportunities for young children and their families to participate in a range of experiences that support early learning.

Since 2004, Ready, Set, Learn has helped elementary schools influence school readiness for three-year-olds, in partnership with participating community-based early childhood service providers and other community agencies.

Last school year, 1,092 public school schools, 25,085 preschoolers and 24,438 adults participated in Ready, Set, Learn. This was an increase of 1,800 children over 2008/09. More than 300 schools involved StrongStart BC programs, to either coordinate and/or participate in events.

StrongStart BC programs began in 2006 with 12 pilot programs and have since grown to 315 programs, including 31 Outreach programs. StrongStart BC had its highest participation rate ever in 2009/10.

Almost 25,000 children aged birth to five visited StrongStart BC programs last school year, making close to 500,000 visits to the program. Sixty percent of the children attending StrongStart BC were under three years of age, with almost equal number of girls and boys attending.



Building Relationships: Stories from StrongStart BC Facilitators

By Linda Jang, StrongStart BC Facilitator, Nestor Elementary

I have been the StrongStart BC facilitator at Nestor Elementary in School District 43 (Coquitlam) since it opened in September 2008. I have been very fortunate to have formed wonderful relationships with families, community members, and school staff. One of the most mutually beneficial relationships is with the school principal. From the first time I met Darren Macmillan, Principal at Nestor Elementary, I felt instantly welcomed. Over the last two years, the StrongStart BC program has been invited to several school assemblies and I have been included in numerous staff functions (staff meetings, social gatherings, etc.). Our StrongStart BC families even got to join in on a visit from the fire department. Recently, I invited the principal to read a story at circle time and I was thrilled when he accepted. I'm sure I heard gasps come from the parents when I introduced our guest story reader. Not only did he do an amazing job reading, but his presence in the StrongStart BC program sent a strong message of support for the program and further strengthened the connections we're building between StrongStart BC families and the school community.



By Sharon McGavin, StrongStart BC Facilitator, Eagle Harbour Elementary

Preparing preschool-age children for success in kindergarten is an important role of StrongStart BC. In order for a child to be comfortable in the school setting, the child must feel a connection to the school. Eagle Harbour StrongStart BC families have been welcomed to participate in school activities such as concerts, presentations, sports days, and fire drills. The Eagle Harbour Parent's committee has set up a Community Relations position that liaises with the StrongStart BC program. This allows us to be aware of even more activities going on in the school that are suitable for preschool-age children.



The kindergarten teacher and I have implemented a "buddy system" with the children in her class and the StrongStart BC children. The goal is for the preschool children to become more interactive with the older children, allowing them to build up their confidence and to be more comfortable when they transition into kindergarten. Meanwhile, the kindergarten class develops their ability to empathize, and it also gives the children confidence and a feeling of responsibility. The relationships that are built between the children help them to feel valued and connected to each other and to the school.

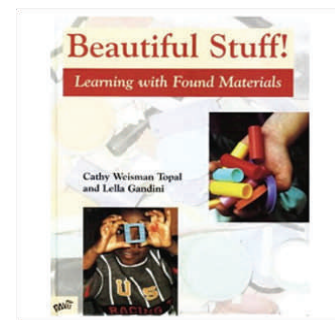
BC Early Learning Framework

If you haven't had an opportunity to introduce natural materials in your learning environment, autumn is a great time to incorporate these fallen materials into play experiences for children. Bringing the natural world inside the learning environment is a great way to facilitate children's connection with nature. Natural materials help reinforce children's understanding of their community and the world they live in. A number of learning goals from the British Columbia Early Learning Framework are addressed, as children interact and explore with natural materials:

- develop an understanding of the natural world
- develop a growing respect for their community and culture
- develop their sense of well-being and belonging
- build, create, and design using different materials and techniques
- develop a sense of wonder for natural environments

Natural materials can be incorporated in a variety of learning centres and in facilitator guided activities. Consider adding acorns and rocks to the water table to allow children to experiment with the concepts of sinking and floating or try placing pine cones and various leaves in an art centre for clay impressions. The possibilities are endless! When making natural materials available to children, consider the age of children as some materials may pose a choking hazard. For more information on promoting children's well-being and belonging, and exploration and creativity, refer to pages 18 and 23 of the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* (http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/pdfs/early_learning_framework.pdf).

To learn more about introducing and using natural materials with children check out *Beautiful Stuff!: Learning with Found Materials* by Cathy Weisman Topal and Lella Gandini.



Resources that Support Early Learning Programs

Success by 6: Grampy and Grandma Connections box: This interactive tool kit can be used to raise awareness of the importance of the early years in the healthy development of young Aboriginal children by illustrating how culture and language are critical aspects in caring for, teaching and raising young Aboriginal children.

<http://www.successby6bc.ca/projects/aboriginal-connections-box>

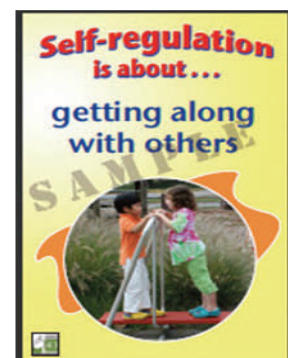
Coquitlam Self-Regulation posters:

What is self-regulation all about? What does it look like for a young child?

School District No. 43 (Coquitlam) has developed a set of posters that helps describe aspects of self-regulation in young children.

These posters can be ordered from the district's early learning website

<http://teachers.sd43.bc.ca/kindergarten/pages/Self%20Regulation.aspx>

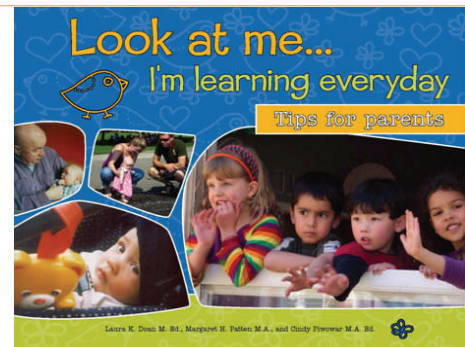


Look at me ...I'm learning everyday: Tips for parents:

This easy to read book for parents, primary caregivers, family members and educators offers strategies to support children's social and emotional learning. The pedagogical narrations highlight how adults can become involved in children's everyday experiences to promote social and emotional development related to attachment, communication, play and challenging behaviours.

The authors, Laura K. Doan M. Ed., Margaret H. Patten M.A., and Cindy Piwowar M.A. Ed., are faculty members in the Early Childhood Education Diploma Program at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC and are dedicated to supporting families and educators in raising healthy children.

Look at Me...I'm Learning Everyday! Tips for Parents can be ordered through the Thompson Rivers University bookstore website at www.thebookstore.tru.ca. Follow the link to TRU authors and scroll down to *Look at Me...I'm Learning Everyday! Tips for Parents*.



The Ministry of Education hosts a website that contains current information on all its Early Learning Initiatives:

[Full Day Kindergarten](#)

[Pre-Kindergarten](#)

[StrongStart BC](#)

[Ready, Set, Learn](#)

[British Columbia Early Learning Framework](#)

[Early Learning Research and Publications](#)

We would appreciate your feedback and new articles for the BC Early Learning Newsletter. Please send your comments and ideas for future issues to Janet Powell via email at:

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