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## StrongStart BC Early Learning Programs

### Expanding to Reach More Families and Communities in British Columbia

The StrongStart BC early learning program will expand to 315 programs across the province in 2010. From 12 pilot programs in 2006 to over 195 programs today, StrongStart BC early learning programs continue to extend its reach to families and communities across British Columbia.

The first StrongStart BC program opened at Mountain View Elementary in Revelstoke in 2006. This small pilot program was an instant hit with the community, and the school district was pleased that StrongStart BC could assist them with their expanded mandate for early learning. Since 2006, several expansions of the program have occurred, including 13

StrongStart BC outreach programs.

StrongStart BC early learning programs have proven to be a success, with programs in urban, suburban, remote and isolated communities. The 2008 [evaluation](#) of StrongStart BC centres, conducted by the [Human Early Learning Partnership](#) (HELP), pointed out many achievements of StrongStart BC programs. The evaluation demonstrated that StrongStart BC programs are effective and meet many family, school and community needs.

The expansion of StrongStart BC early learning programs has provided more communities with a unique way to reach families,

some of whom may not have access to other early learning programs, and to provide rich early learning experiences for young children.

On April 9, 2009, Phase 5 StrongStart BC programs were announced with 94 new StrongStart BC centres and 17 additional StrongStart BC outreach programs.



### New!

### Early Childhood Learning Agency Report Available Online

Between April and December of 2008, the Early Childhood Learning Agency carried out a study of the feasibility of full day kindergarten for five-year-olds and the possibility of future full day pre-kindergarten programs for four-year-olds and three-year-olds. The feasibility report summarizes key information gathered by the Agency. The [report](#) and the Province's action plan were posted online in April 2009 on the Ministry of Education's website and can be viewed at: [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ecla/topics/ecla\\_report.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ecla/topics/ecla_report.pdf)

## New Partnership: 2010 Legacies Now and StrongStart BC

A new partnership has been formed that will bring both training opportunities and useful resources to StrongStart BC early learning programs. The Ministry of Education and 2010 Legacies Now Society are partnering to provide start-up funding via a credit for equipment and materials for Phase 5 StrongStart BC early learning programs. As well regional training sessions will take place for all StrongStart BC facilitators, beginning the fall of 2009.

This training will take place in 9 regions across the province, and there will be sessions in each region during the Fall of



2009 and the Spring of 2010. More information on the Fall regional training opportunities with 2010 Legacies Now will be coming soon.

The team at 2010 Legacies Now has experience in providing training and resources to early learning partners across the province. Resources include *Health Opportunities for Preschoolers*, *Food Flair*, *Move with Me From Birth to Three*, as well as workshops for parents, early learning practitioners, and communities. These resources are available online at the 2010 Legacies Now [website](#).

2010 Legacies Now/LEAP BC offers free resources and training for families and early learning practitioners:



**Download the  
HOP Resource  
in PDF**



**Download  
Food Flair  
in PDF**



**Download the  
MOVE Resource  
in PDF**

## BCeSIS: Friendly Reminder

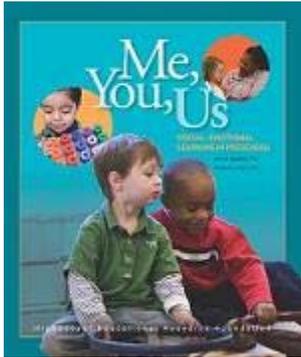
It's that time of year again... StrongStart BC reports are due soon. School districts should double check that all children attending their StrongStart BC early learning programs have been assigned a Personal Education Number (PEN) and that attendance records have been kept up to date. The next reporting date is July 10.

Recent StrongStart BC data submitted through BCeSIS has shown a high incidence of Kindergarten children attending StrongStart BC programs. School districts should keep in mind that StrongStart BC early learning programs are targeted to children who are not yet attending Kindergarten. School districts *should not* enter enrolment or attendance data in BCeSIS for children who are attending Kindergarten. If districts have already entered Kindergarten children, please stop entering the attendance data and withdraw them from BCeSIS for StrongStart BC programs. The data needs to accurately reflect the objectives and target audience of the program.



**Reminder:** The Ministry extracts StrongStart BC attendance data from BCeSIS on the following dates:  
**January 10** (attendance for September through December)  
**July 10** (Attendance for January through June)

## Book Review: "Me, You, Us: Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool", by Ann S. Epstein, HighScope Press, 2009.



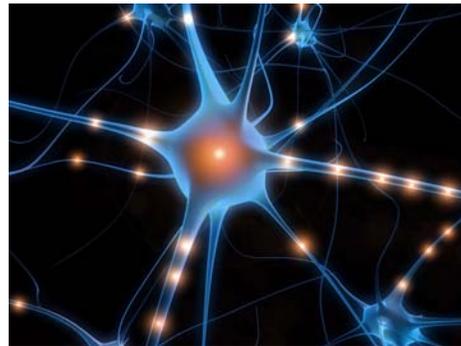
Social-emotional learning is essential to every child's ability to manage feelings and to interact successfully with others. Research has shown that strong social-emotional abilities are a key component to future success. This book covers 11 separate topics on social-emotional learning, from developing a positive self-identity, to valuing diversity, to resolving conflicts. One chapter describes various ways that parents can support social development at home, which will be of interest for StrongStart BC facilitators and district early learning contacts. Other chapters focus on how educators can further foster children's social-emotional learning through partnerships with parents and community. Sidebars throughout the book link components of social and emotional development to promising practices.

*Me, You, Us: Social-Emotional Learning in Preschool* draws on extensive research and discussion from the early childhood field, which can help educators support young children to develop the social-emotional skills they need to succeed in school and in life.

## Brain Research: How Early Experiences Affect Brain Development

Brain research has shown that all infants are born learning, and that a child's earliest experiences and relationships can have a large impact on the way their brain develops. The [Zero to Three](#) Organization has produced an excellent report entitled *Starting Smart: How Early Experiences Affect Brain Development*. This report examines how a child's early experiences from birth to 3 can influence and shape brain development.

Brain development is an ongoing process where the connections among neurons are being wired and re-wired. New connections between brain cells are constantly being formed, and connections that are not being regularly used are severed, or "pruned". This pruning process allows the brain to keep the connections that are regularly used and discard those that aren't doing anything. This improves the efficiency of the brain. This process of "use it or lose it" is the most intense in the early years, thus the importance of rich early learning experiences.



The power of early learning experiences can clearly be seen in the example of language development. Research has shown that young children whose mothers spoke to them frequently as infants learned more words by age 2 than young children whose mothers rarely spoke to them. Further studies have shown that exposing children to indirect language experiences such as the television provided little benefit to their language development. Infants require rich, interactive language experiences in order for them to maximize their brain development.

Families and communities play an important role in providing stimulating and nurturing environments and experiences that young children need for optimal brain development. StrongStart BC early learning programs can be a place for families to share in these experiences and to learn ways of continuing them at home.

A PDF copy of the Zero to Three report [Starting Smart: How Early Experiences Affect Brain Development](#) is available online.

## New Resource: Welcome BC

There is a new resource available for recent arrivals to British Columbia.

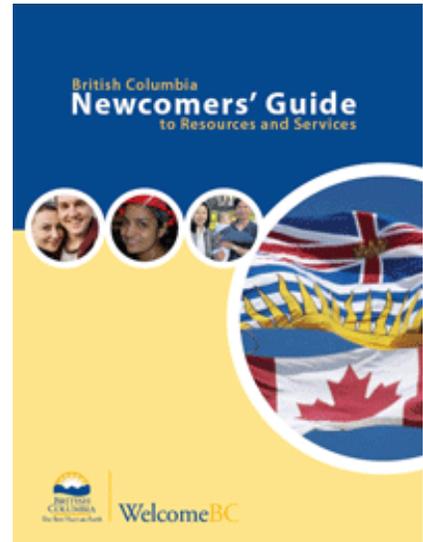
[Welcome BC](#) brings together a range of services and initiatives for immigrants to help make B.C. a welcoming place for newcomers. This program includes a comprehensive website that provides a single online source of information on how to immigrate to BC and settle into a new community.

Over 40,000 immigrants arrive in British Columbia every year and are searching for ways to connect to their new community. StrongStart BC early learning programs can

provide a vital connection to the community for immigrant families. Many StrongStart BC facilitators and district early learning contacts have used this website as a starting point for providing information to families new to BC.

Part of the Welcome BC program is the B.C.'s Newcomers Guide. This [guide](#) has information that may be helpful to families that have recently arrived in British Columbia. The guide is available as a PDF download in English, and will be made available in ten other languages in the fall/winter of 2009. Printed copies of this

resource can be ordered on the Welcome BC website, at <http://www.welcomebc.ca/en/index.html>.

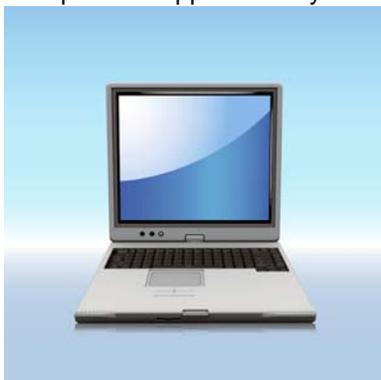


## New! Online ECE License to Practice Applications

Renewal applications for ECE licences to practice can now be completed on-line. There are now two ways to submit a renewal application to the ECE Registry, online and by mail using a paper application.

**Online** applications are recommended to speed up the processing time for applicants. When applying online, applicants can draft their application and return to it at any time prior to submitting. Applicants will also have the ability to update their contact information at any time and keep current with the ECE Registry. To apply online, applicants should visit the ECE Registry website at <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ece/renew.htm>.

If applicants choose to complete a **paper application** they can download a copy of the [Renewal for Early Childhood Educator Licence to Practice](#) form at <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ece/renew.htm> or request an application by email at [ECERegistry@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ECERegistry@gov.bc.ca) or by telephone at 1 888 338-6622.



When an application and all supporting documentation is received, it is reviewed in the date order in which it was received. If all requirements are met, a Licence to Practice Certificate is issued to the applicant by mail.

Additional information about the application process or renewal requirements can be answered by contacting the ECE Registry directly at 1 888 338-6622 or [ECERegistry@gov.bc.ca](mailto:ECERegistry@gov.bc.ca).

## Linking the Building Centre with the British Columbia Early Learning Framework



**Building Centres** in early learning settings typically include wooden blocks, a carpentry bench, soft blocks, a railway set and other building items. The focus of this learning centre is construction, creating, and assembling. There are many benefits to the building centre, including providing opportunities for the development of manual dexterity, hand eye coordination, problem solving, and imagination. A building centre in a StrongStart BC program can be used by children of many ages, including infants and toddlers. For younger children, large-scale blocks and soft materials can be easily and safely manipulated by the small hands of infants and toddlers.

Include items in the building centre that fit together in a variety of ways. This will help to develop cognitive flexibility and creative thinking. Items that are used or seen in every day life, such as traffic cones and construction levels, should also be included, as they support children in testing out roles that they see in their everyday world.

Wooden blocks, one of the most common elements in the building centre, provide opportunities to learn in all four areas of early learning, as identified in the [British Columbia Early Learning Framework](#):

- *Well-being and Belonging:* building with and balancing the blocks support children to develop coordination, balance, stability, locomotion and rhythm.
- *Exploration and Creativity:* Children can build, create, and design using different materials, and actively think, explore, and reason.
- *Languages and Literacies:* talking with adults and other children about their constructions provides opportunities for children to practice their language skills; children can use the blocks to represent and communicate their ideas to others .
- *Social Responsibility and Diversity:* children can work together and support each other when building their structures with the blocks, practicing cooperation and sharing.



### District Early Learning Contacts Now Listed Online

Contact information for District Early Learning contacts is now publicly available online on the [Ministry of Education's](#) website. Similar to special needs contacts, aboriginal contacts, and other district contacts, early learning contacts will be listed by contact type and by school district. As this information is now available publicly, it is important that districts provide the Ministry with up to date information. If your district has an update or a change in early learning contact information, a change request form is available at the above

noted site, or you can contact Janet Powell at [Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca) with the updated information.

## The Challenge of Behaviour in a StrongStart BC Early Learning Program

### ABC's of Analyzing Challenging Behaviour

#### A = Antecedents

Observe what events led up to and seem to trigger the behaviour.

#### B = Behaviour

Describe the behaviour clearly and specifically so that anyone can recognize the behaviour.

#### C = Consequences

Observe what happens after the challenging behaviour occurs

Either change the antecedent or the consequence to address the challenging behaviour.

Challenging behaviour can be defined as any behaviour that interferes with children's learning, development and success at play, and is harmful or puts the child at higher risk for later problems. A positive approach to challenging behaviour is about investigating why behaviours occur and what can be done to prevent them from occurring.

Challenging behaviour is often considered a communication tool. The child is attempting to communicate through the behaviour and has learned that the behaviour serves as a way to meet a goal; for example, hitting makes another child give up a toy.

The main objective for parents and StrongStart BC facilitators is to support and show the child another way to get his or her needs met, to provide opportunities to learn from the situation, and to develop the skills that will enable them to do things differently another time.

One of the most important tools that adults have in

addressing challenging behaviour is information. Finding out where the behaviour comes from, why it is happening at a particular time and in a particular place and the function it serves for the child.

Facilitators can reflect on the following to address challenging behaviour in StrongStart BC programs:

- Reflect on the environment – How are the learning centres or areas organized? Noise level? Duplicates needed of favourite toys?
- Reflect on the program – Are the children's challenging behaviours escalating just before snack? During circle? During transitions? How do you involve children in considering rules of group behaviour and responsibility?
- Reflect on the families that attend the program – Have you considered the cultural context for each child? Are you aware of the variety of cultural and familial expectations in regards to child behaviour? Is value placed on assertiveness or compliance? How do you

exhibit sensitivity to varying parenting styles and cultural values?

Facilitators can share their knowledge with parents around addressing challenging behaviours.

- Have realistic expectations which are consistent with each child's developmental stage. For example, toddlers frequently test limits and express disagreement as part of developing a healthy sense of self and independence.
- Engage parents in brainstorming possible causes and solutions to challenging behaviour.



### Resources for addressing challenging behaviour

#### Web-based Resources

Canadian Child Care Federation Workshops and Resource sheets (Resource Sheet #87 and #48)  
<http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca/>

*Guiding Children's Behaviour*, Ministry of Health Publication <http://www.hls.gov.bc.ca/ccf/publications/index.html>

#### Books

*Meeting the Challenge – Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviours in Early Childhood Environments* - Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky  
*Developmentally Appropriate Practice, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* - Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp, Editors

#### Training

Nobody's Perfect – [BC Council for Families Partnerships in Planning](#) – Challenging Behaviour Workshop, from the Partnerships Project

## Tips for Parents/Caregivers on Guiding Behaviour

These tips suggest ways for parents/caregivers to guide their child's behaviours. Not every tip will work in every situation or with every child. If one idea doesn't work, try another, and keep trying! Using multiple methods can sometimes be more effective.

### Before there are challenging behaviours.....

**Set limits** – Limits tell your child what is acceptable and work best when your child understands the reasons for them. Young children will need many patient reminders. Example: "I need you to sit down when you eat so you won't choke."

**State your expectation clearly** – Let your child know what you want them to do. Offer choice only when there really is one. Give children time to get ready for a change. Example: "We will clean up the toys in 10 minutes. You can choose to clean up the blocks or the puzzles."

**Decide on your priorities** – Pick your battles. If your child's behaviour does not harm themselves, others, or property, you might choose to say nothing about it and focus on something that is more important for them to learn.

**Show your appreciation** – Let your child know when you are pleased with them. Give children positive attention and encouragement for desired behaviours when they occur. These positive interactions help build self-esteem and pave the way from more positive moments. Example: "Thank you for helping me set the table."

**Be aware** – Being aware of your child's activities and mood can help prevent problems. Catching the problem at an early stage can help avoid a bigger problem. Example: If you notice that your child is becoming bored, you can suggest another activity.

**Investigate** - Put yourself in your child's shoes and try to figure out what he gets from his challenging behaviour. Does he get your attention? Does he avoid something he dislikes or isn't good at? Does the atmosphere become calmer or more exciting? Once you know what the challenging behaviour does for your child, you can help teach more appropriate ways to meet that need.

### When challenging behaviour occurs.....

**Stay calm** - By showing your child that you can handle the situation with a cool head, you become the best role model.

**Acknowledge your child's feelings** – Your child will respond more positively if you recognize the feelings that might have led to the behaviour. Example: "I can see that you are angry, but it's not OK to hit."

**Problem-solve** – The following steps can be used to model positive problem solving skills.

- Begin by acknowledging the problem. Example: "I can see you are upset. Hannah has the toy and you want it."
- Talk with your child about possible solutions. Example: "Have you asked Hannah if you can have the toy when she is finished?"
- State a solution if the child can't find one. Example: "Hannah can have five more minutes with the toy."
- Summarize the situation for the child. Example: "Next time you can ask to have a turn next."

**Offer Choices**- Give the child a real choice about what he can do. This is particularly effective in a reducing the likelihood of a potential problem. Make sure the choices are both meeting the needs of the child and the situation. Example: "Do you want to put your shoes on or your coat on first?"

**Natural Consequences** – Consequences are different from punishment. Sometimes consequences happen naturally. Example: "If you don't put on your coat, you may get cold." The child will realize that they have made a poor decision on their own.

**Setting Consequences** - Sometimes the parent needs to decide what will happen as a result of the child's behaviour. Remember that the consequences needs to "fit the crime", and don't say it unless you plan to follow through. Example: "When you throw your blocks across the room, you will not be allowed to play with your blocks for the rest of the day."

**Redirecting Behaviour** – This works well with very young children. Sometimes it is helpful to distract the child from the unwanted behaviour by offering another toy or activity. The alternative should fit with the child's interests at the time. Example: "Throwing blocks is unsafe. Let's throw this softer ball instead."

## Involving Adults at the Hollyburn StrongStart BC Program



*"The adults are quite excited to add new words to the Language Wall every day."*

Kelly Botz, Hollyburn Elementary StrongStart BC Facilitator



*"A few children and adults were curious as to how a volcano worked, so we made one during circle time."*

Kelly Botz, Hollyburn Elementary StrongStart BC Facilitator

## Involving Parents in the StrongStart BC Early Learning Program

At the StrongStart BC early learning program at Hollyburn Elementary in West Vancouver, parents are busy chatting with their children and each other and writing on the black board. This is a busy program with many families from a variety of different cultures that attend on a regular basis. What keeps these families returning day after day? Facilitator Kelly Botz knows why. "Families feel comfortable in this program because of all the opportunities they have to participate, not just with their children, but with the planning of daily, weekly and monthly activities."

Simply by looking around the room, one can see the expression of the many cultures that are present in the community. On the parent's board, there is a sign up sheet for the monthly potluck. Items that will be brought by families include homemade Sushi, Korean dumplings, Chinese noodles, Iranian rice, pasta, Thai and Mexican dishes and a variety of

desserts. There is always enough food so that families who are dropping in, or don't bring food with them, can participate in the meal.

One of the black boards in the StrongStart BC room is used as a "Language Wall". "There are so many different languages spoken in this program, I wanted to learn how to say a few basic words like "hello, goodbye, and thank-you", says Kelly. "So I put up a column of English words, then the adults can fill in the other columns with those words in their own language." This helps the families who are learning English as their second language, and also helps Kelly communicate with the families in their own language. Kelly can now say hello in many languages, including Thai. Families are continually adding to this wall of words.

Families at the Hollyburn StrongStart BC program also help to shape the weekly program of activities. "Last year, we

had weekly themes that I planned well in advance. This proved to be a bit limiting. This year, the themes are based around letters of the alphabet and are much more open ended," explains Kelly.

There are many other activities at the Hollyburn StrongStart BC program that involve families, from translating letters from "Pen Pal Schools", to sharing recipes, to a skills registry list. "The adults have so many ideas, sometimes I just can't do them all" says Kelly. She encourages the adults take it on their own to work with each other, sometimes in the program and sometimes outside of the program.

Kelly says that this kind of involvement by the adults in the program has proven to be quite successful at Hollyburn. The families have developed a sense of ownership of the program and are happy to help out with whatever needs being done. The families and the facilitator are learning new things everyday.

## 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:

- [StrongStart BC](#)
- [Ready, Set, Learn](#)
- [Early Learning Framework](#)
- [Research and Publications](#)
- [Early Childhood Learning Agency](#)

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