BC Early Learning Network Newsletter

Winter 2008   **Volume 1, Issue 1**

Launch of the BC Early Learning Network

The *Provincial Early Learning Network* was created to support school district led early learning initiatives and specifically, StrongStart BC centres across British Columbia. The Network has four main goals: to promote information sharing; interaction; mentorship; and capacity building.

Information is shared via the Early Learning website which includes information for school districts, StrongStart BC facilitators, and parents. StrongStart BC facilitators will find tips to encourage parent participation, a suggested equipment list, registration and photo release forms, sample brochures and posters from other centers, FAQs, and other useful information. http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/

StrongStart BC Mentoring Project

The *StrongStart BC Mentoring Project* partners StrongStart BC pilot sites with new centres to build networks and relationships, coordinate ongoing communication, and share effective strategies.

The project will continue until June 2008, at which time it will be evaluated. For more information or to find your mentoring group, visit the StrongStart BC website: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/ss_mentoring_project.htm

The StrongStart BC Mentoring Project supports mentors and mentees to:

share ideas and advice
develop communication skills
gain new perspectives
reflect on best practices
stay up-to-date on current issues
create regional support networks
create various forums for dialogue
provide role modeling opportunities
highlight areas for future development
facilitate opportunities for continued learning

Did you know?

Newsletters, websites, e-mails, meetings and teleconferences - these are all ways information flows between the Ministry, the Early Learning District Contacts and StrongStart BC Facilitators. The Early Learning Unit often sends out information directly to District Early Learning Contacts by e-mail. We encourage district contacts to share relevant information with StrongStart BC Centre facilitators or anyone in their district that is not on our e-mail distribution list. It is also very important that you let Janet Powell know if your contact information changes (email any updates to janet.powelll@gov.bc.ca or phone 250.387.5615). Thank you.

StrongStart BC Centre Checklist
Does your StrongStart BC centre meet these requirements?

- ✓ Open 5 days per week in an elementary school
- ✓ Open 3-4 hours per day
- ✓ Staffed by a Licensed Early Childhood Educator
- ✓ Approved StrongStart BC sign placed in a prominent location
- ✓ Parents/caregivers attend with their children
- ✓ Parent sign in/sign out sheet
- ✓ Parent/caregiver completes registration form for each child that attends
- ✓ Every registration form is checked against valid i.d.
- ✓ For BCeSIS schools, requesting pens through BCeSIS
- ✓ For non-BCeSIS schools, request PENs through PEN web
- ✓ Positive attendance taken every day the StrongStart BC is open
- ✓ Contact with mentoring group
- ✓ Network with other community partners
- ✓ Elicit help from parents to participate in the program (i.e. clean-up, snack prep, sharing skills)
- ✓ Healthy snack served every day
- ✓ Posted program of planned and unplanned activities
- ✓ Parent information posted
- ✓ Aware of school anaphylaxis policy
- ✓ Invite community partners to StrongStart BC (i.e. public health nurses, librarians, nutritionists, First Nations leaders)
- ✓ Offer family-friendly environments for parents/caregivers
- ✓ Have fun with the families that attend!!

PEN Assignment and Collecting Attendance

Starting September 2007, districts are required to ensure each child attending a StrongStart BC Centre is assigned a Personal Education Number (PEN).

Districts are also required to collect enrolment and attendance information about the children attending the centre, including names, birthdates and ages of children, and other information necessary to request PENs from the Ministry.

Daily attendance must be taken and reported to the Ministry in the approved format.

For more information about **PEN Assignment** and **collecting attendance** visit:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/pen.htm

November 2007 Update
The November 10, 2007 and January 10, 2008 attendance reporting deadlines have been extended to April 2008, to allow more time for districts to implement BCeSIS. Afterwards, the reporting dates will resume to the dates posted in the StrongStart BC policy.
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/strong_start.htm

Example of a StrongStart BC Centre Daily Schedule

Bridgeview StrongStart BC Centre

8:45 am – 10:10 am Free Play
10:10 am – 10:30 am Library or Gym
10:30 am – 10:45 am Circle Time
10:45 am – 11:00 am Snack (a healthy snack will be provided)
11:00 am – 11:35 am Creative Art / Quiet Free Play Activities
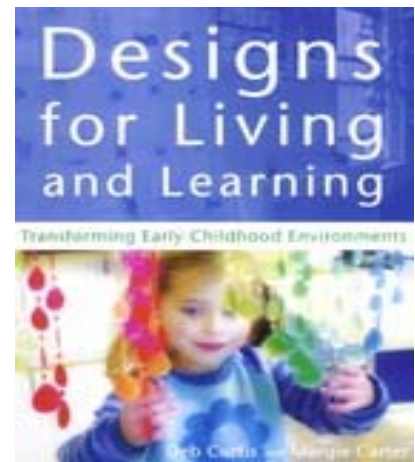11:35 am – 11:45 am Goodbye Circle and Story Time

Courtesy of Robyn Diakiw, Facilitator, Bridgeview StrongStart BC

Early Learning Book Review

"Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments" (2003) by Deb Curtis and Margie Carter. Published by Redleaf Press

Give children wondrous places to learn and grow! Drawing inspiration from a variety of approaches – from Waldorf to Montessori to Reggio – the authors outline hundreds of ways to create healthy and inviting physical, social, and emotional environments for children.

Full-color photographs of early childhood programs show that the spaces children learn and grow in can be comfortable for children, teachers, and parents alike. This book is highly recommended by StrongStart BC Facilitators.

Early Learning Success Stories!

"Creating Success & Making Connections: Provincial StrongStart BC Meeting"

On September 25, 2007, the first StrongStart BC provincial meeting was held in Vancouver. Over 150 participants from 59 school districts shared in a wonderful day filled with networking opportunities, panel presentations and information from the StrongStart BC evaluation team at UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership and Ministry of Education Early Learning staff. Many thanks to the StrongStart BC panel participants **Robyn Diakiw, Kathy Leonhardt, Minnie Harris, Jennifer Benoit, Mike Gordon, Anne Cooper, Patty Apps, Ellie Grant, Betty Switzer and Pam Auffray** for sharing their experiences on a full range of topics, including program set-up and curriculum, roles and responsibilities, and family and community connections.

We look forward to bringing everyone together for another successful meeting in 2008!

READY, SET, LEARN

Children who have their own books, and are read to by their families get off to a flying start as learners. At **Ready, Set, Learn** events, families and their 3-year-olds make positive connections with the school and learn about early learning programs and services in their community.

This year families and their three-year-olds who attend Ready, Set, Learn events will receive a copy of the book **Alphabetter** or **Les Couleurs** as well as a parent/family kit with a booklet of helpful tips for supporting their preschooler's learning and development

Did you know?
The parent/family booklet **"Helping your preschooler get ready for school"** has been translated into 12 languages and is available to download online at:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/rsl/

Give your child the gift of reading and have fun spending time together!

StrongStart BC Quick Quotes:

"Both our StrongStart BC centers in Nanaimo are so successful. We are very happy. This month we have used some of our early learning grant to enhance the centers by offering evening sessions. They have been a great success with many Dads and working parents coming to spend time with their children. We are enjoying the creative, enthusiastic energy of many toddlers at both centers." Elizabeth Pennell, Early Years Coordinator, School District No. 68.

British Columbia will soon have an Early Learning Framework

The development of the BC Early Learning Framework is being led by the Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Ministry of Health. The purpose of the framework is to articulate a common vision for children, families and communities with respect to early learning.

The framework sets out holistic and pedagogically sound approaches to early learning and development, which includes four areas of early learning:
- well-being and belonging
- exploration and creativity
- languages and literacies
- social responsibility and diversity

The framework will be available in 2008 and the development of training materials is currently underway. Watch for more information on the Early Learning Framework on the web:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/#el

Early Learning Activity: *Freeze Dance!*

Area of Early Learning: well being and belonging
Promotes: gross motor development, musicality, self-expression, enjoyment of physical activity, vocabulary development, social skills

Ministry of Education staff playing freeze dance!

Invite children to move to the music (e.g. walk, skip, roll, twirl, jump, sway). Stop the music and call "freeze!" The challenge for the child is to stay perfectly still, until you start the music again after 3-4 seconds. Play freeze dance differently by calling out different animals or different movements. For example, move like an ice-skater spinning, or a snake slithering! This activity is included in LEAP BC Family Resource *book "HOP: Health Opportunities for Preschoolers*". For more information on training opportunities, or information on LEAP BC, go to
http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/leap_bc/

New Child Care Licensing Regulations

New Child Care Licensing regulations were released on November 13, 2007. While StrongStart BC programs do not provide licensed child care, all the facilitators must hold a current ECE license to practice. In the new regulations, new ECE graduates will be given one-year certificates to work as fully qualified staff immediately upon graduation. The new licence increases the flexibility of graduates to get the required 500 hours of experience while employed as a fully qualified ECE. The license will also be available to ECE's trained out-of-province who meet BC standards.

Another change in the regulations concerns Licence to Practice renewal. The professional development requirement for ECE renewal has increased from 12 hours to 40 hours. However, there is a 2 year transition period for this part of the regulation.

These new regulations may make it easier for school districts to recruit Early Childhood Educators immediately upon graduation from a recognized program or from ECE's trained out of province. New grads and out of province ECE's will have one year to complete 500 hours of work experience relevant to early childhood education. As well, they will have to provide a written reference from a Licenced ECE stating that they are personally satisfied, from their own observation of the applicant, that the applicant is competent, of good character, and demonstrates the skills necessary to be an educator.

School districts should also be aware of the significant increase in the number of professional development hours needed for ECE renewal. Please ensure that you provide your facilitators with training opportunities throughout the year. Facilitators who participated in the StrongStart BC Provincial meeting in September were provided with a certificate of participation for 8 hours of professional development.

More information on the new Child Care Licensing regulations can be found at:
http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/C/CommuCareAssisted/332_2007.htm

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StrongStart BC Facilitator Focus

Minnie Harris
Conrad StrongStart BC Centre, Prince Rupert, BC

Minnie is Tsimshian from the Gitxaala Nation and has over 15 years of ECE experience in various fields including group daycare, preschool, infant/toddler care, and now StrongStart BC. Minnie has been the facilitator at Conrad Elementary since it opened on November 28, 2006.

The photo shows Minnie during circle time while the children and parents listen to the story, "The Old Lady who Swallowed a Trout". Minnie made the dress to tie in with the First Nations culture in her community.

The Conrad StrongStart BC program also offers Kindermusik through the volunteer efforts of a community parent. Every Friday a Sm'algyax teacher drops by to sing songs, read stories and learn about language.

Way to go Minnie!

StrongStart BC Facilitator Tip

Found Materials!

Often we forget that in our own homes, we have the very best of supplies available to encourage young children's creativity and brain development— for *FREE!*

Take your vegetable bin for starters! Potatoes make wonderful stamping utensils—together with some thick poster paint, paper towel and paper. You can fly with your imagination—either through favourite old stories and rhymes –just cut out the shapes and go to town! Modern parents sometimes confuse current (and expensive) technology with being the best for their children's activities—when it is the least 'pre-structured' or 'defined' materials that are truly the items that foster open-ended learning and creativity.

This kind of activity encourages lots of conversation (new vocabulary!), sensory exploration as well as eye-hand and motor skill ability! And you thought it was just old potatoes!

This activity does need some adult supervision to get it going—but once started—takes on its own energy.

Reprinted with permission from Kathy Leonhardt, Facilitator, John Tod Elementary StrongStart

New Anaphylaxis Framework:

To protect students with life-threatening allergies, the Ministry of Education is requiring school districts to establish school-based anaphylaxis policies and practices that meet rigorous provincial standards. District responsibilities include identifying individuals at risk, storing and administering medication, and creating an allergy-aware school community.

This direction is outlined in the new Anaphylaxis Child Health and Safety Framework, http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/health/bc_anaphylactic_child_safety.pdf the result of a Ministry of Education-led comprehensive consultation process with major stakeholders, including Anaphylaxis Canada, the Allergy/Asthma Information Association, the BCMA, health authorities, health officers, educators, trustees and parents.

Boards of education are responsible for ensuring that every school in their district is taking action to protect students with life-threatening allergies. Boards will be required to report on their policy in their annual achievement contracts with the ministry.

Families of students who have severe allergies can now have more confidence that B.C. schools will be prepared to deal with an anaphylactic emergency.

Early Learning Facts - Did you know?

- The more words a child hears by age two, the larger his/her vocabulary will grow.

- Toddlers taught simple math ideas, like bigger or smaller, and more or less, do better in math when they are older.

- Early exposure to music helps develop skills which improve a child's ability to think through and make decisions.

- Daily exercise increases nerve connections in the brain. This makes it easier for children to learn. The brain develops rapidly when all pathways are being stimulated.

- A child read to while sitting with a parent or family member learns more than language – they develop important emotional responses, such as learning to trust and feeling a sense of safety.

Information courtesy of Child and Family Canada: http://www.cfc-efc.ca/index.shtml

Do you have any ideas, tips or information for the *BC Early Learning Network Newsletter*? Contact Janet Powell via email: Janet.Powell@gov.bc.ca or phone (250) 387-5615.

StrongStart BC Mentoring Initiative
2007/2008 Mentoring Groups

Ministry of Education - Early Learning Unit
Susan Kennedy, Carolyn Henson, Melanie Gordon, Janet Powell

Monthly conference calls with Phase 1 StrongStart BC Facilitators and the Early Learning Unit

Phase 1 StrongStart BC Facilitators (Mentors)

Betty Switzer SD 19 Revelstoke	Patty Apps SD 28 Quesnel	Pam Auffray SD 33 Chilliwack	Jennifer Benoit SD 43 Coquitlam (2 pilot sites)	Robyn Diakiw SD 36 Surrey	Trish Dillabough SD 41 Burnaby (3 pilot sites)	Minnie Harris SD 52 Prince Rupert	Dana Bedard SD 53 Okanagan-Similkameen	Betty Cavanaugh SD 57 Prince George	Ellie Grant SD 71 Comox Valley	Marilyn Lavack SD 73 Kamloops-Thompson	Diana McCall SD 75 Mission
SD 5 Southeast Kootenay (2 sites)	SD 27 Cariboo-Chilcotin (2 sites)	SD 33 Chilliwack (Watson Elem)	SD 38 Richmond	SD 34 Abbotsford (2 sites)	SD 44 North Vancouver	SD 50 Haida-Gwaii-Queen Charlotte	SD 23 Central-Okanagan	SD 57 Prince George (Carney Hill Elem)	SD 47 Powell River (2 sites)	SD 22 Vernon	SD 42 Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows
SD 6 Rocky Mountain	SD 49 Bella Coola	SD 78 Fraser Cascade	SD 39 Vancouver (2 sites)	SD 35 Langley (2 sites)	SD 45 West Vancouver	SD 52 Prince Rupert (Pine Ridge Elem)	SD 51 Boundary	SD 59 Peace River South (2 sites)	SD 64 Gulf Islands	SD 74 Gold Trail	SD 68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith (2 sites)
SD 8 Kootenay Lake			SD 40 New Westminster (2 sites)	SD 36 Surrey (Cougar Creek Elem)	SD 46 Sunshine Cst (2 sites)	SD 54 Bulkley Valley	SD 53 OK-Similkameen (OK Falls Elem)	SD 60 Peace River North	SD 69 Qualicum	SD 83 North Okanagan-Shuswap (2 sites)	SD 79 Cowichan Valley (2 sites)
SD 10 Arrow Lakes			SD 93 (CSF centre in Port Coquitlam)	SD 37 Delta (2 sites)	SD 48 Howe Sound	SD 82 Coast Mountains	SD 58 Nicola-Similkameen (2 sites)	SD 81 Fort Nelson	SD 70 Port Alberni		
SD 20 Kootenay-Columbia					SD 61 Victoria (2 sites)	SD 87 Stikine	SD 67 Okanagan-Skaha		SD 71 Comox Valley (Puntledge Park)		
					SD 62 Sooke	SD 91 Nechako Lakes (2 sites)			SD 72 Campbell River (2 sites)		
					SD 63 Saanich				SD 84 VanIsland West (2 sites)		
									SD 85 VanIsland North (2 sites)		