

## A Passion for Dinosaurs and Early Learning

A profile of an early childhood education dual credit program and student

### Meet future educator Will Cardew

“Some people look at teachers who work with young children and think all we do is play all day,” said Will Cardew, who is about to complete a new early childhood education training program created in Vernon thanks to B.C.’s Early Childhood Education Dual Credit Project.

He can understand why people have that impression, especially in his case, since he wears playful clothes showcasing his love of dinosaurs.

“But kids learn through play—with problem-solving, co-operation, collaboration, and creativity—making play the most important part of a child’s development.”

Will has only started his post-secondary training but talks with the passion of a seasoned professional because he has long been determined to be an early childhood educator.

“The opportunity to accelerate my education and start working sooner was a big part of my interest in dual credit.”

### Provincial investment inspires local design

Dual credit empowers grades 11 and 12 students to take tuition-free college and university courses that count toward both their high school diplomas and future post-secondary credentials. While school districts and their post-secondary partners choose what dual credit to offer, the Ministry of Education and Child Care directed an additional \$6.3 million between 2022 and 2025 to enable them to design and launch



early childhood education programs to serve local students for years to come.

In response, School District No. 22 (Vernon) partnered with Okanagan College. Their resulting local program includes twelve courses, covering the entire first year of the two-year Early Childhood Education Diploma program, including practicums in which student’s benefit from hands-on experience.

### A local program finding success student by student

Corinne McWhinney, Principal of Career Programs, oversees the school district’s contribution to the Early Childhood Education Dual Credit Project. She explained that she and district career coordinators get to know the students applying so that they can better support them as individuals during the program.

“Our job is to not only make sure they are on a solid graduation path and are ready to do post-secondary work, but also to meet them wherever they’re at, and each student is unique.”

“Not everyone learns the same way,” she said, “and some students benefit from personalized assistance.”

While dual credit courses are post-secondary courses, complete with post-secondary level content, learning outcomes, and expectations, K-12 educators can provide or arrange supports for their high school students, including tutoring at the on-campus Success Centre.

“We are tied in with each student, and we set each one up for success.”

### **Following up with Will**

For Will, the program was challenging. “It was the first time I had set foot on a college campus, and what was expected of me was overwhelming. There was a lot to learn, and it took a lot of effort and dedication to keep up.”

But Will had the support of Corinne and her colleagues, and he had his determination to become an early childhood educator.

“No matter how hard it felt, I knew I was doing it to help families with their children.”

And, with that perspective, he learned a lot: “Now, I would be able to speak to them about the child care tax benefit, or direct them to a young parent program, contributing to those families and this community in a practical way.”

For Will, his next steps are high school graduation and entering the workforce. While he may return to post-secondary in a year or two to complete his early childhood education training, he first wants to work in a daycare without delay.

“I’m ready to go,” he said. “These clothes, the dinosaurs, create an immediate connection with young children, who tend to like dinosaurs, too. It lets them know that we have something in common, and it builds trust, which allows me to help them learn. I can’t wait!”



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To learn more about dual credit in British Columbia, visit:

[www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/dual-credit](http://www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/dual-credit)

To learn more about early childhood professionals, visit:

[www.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ecestrategy](http://www.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ecestrategy)