

EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE ANNUAL REPORT

February 2023



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 73
(Kamloops-Thompson)

Land Acknowledgement

The SD73 Early Learning and Child Care team is proud and honored to do the work they do on the traditional territories of the Secwepemc.

School District No. 73 (Kamloops-Thompson) is located within the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people specifically within seven Secwépemc First Nations:

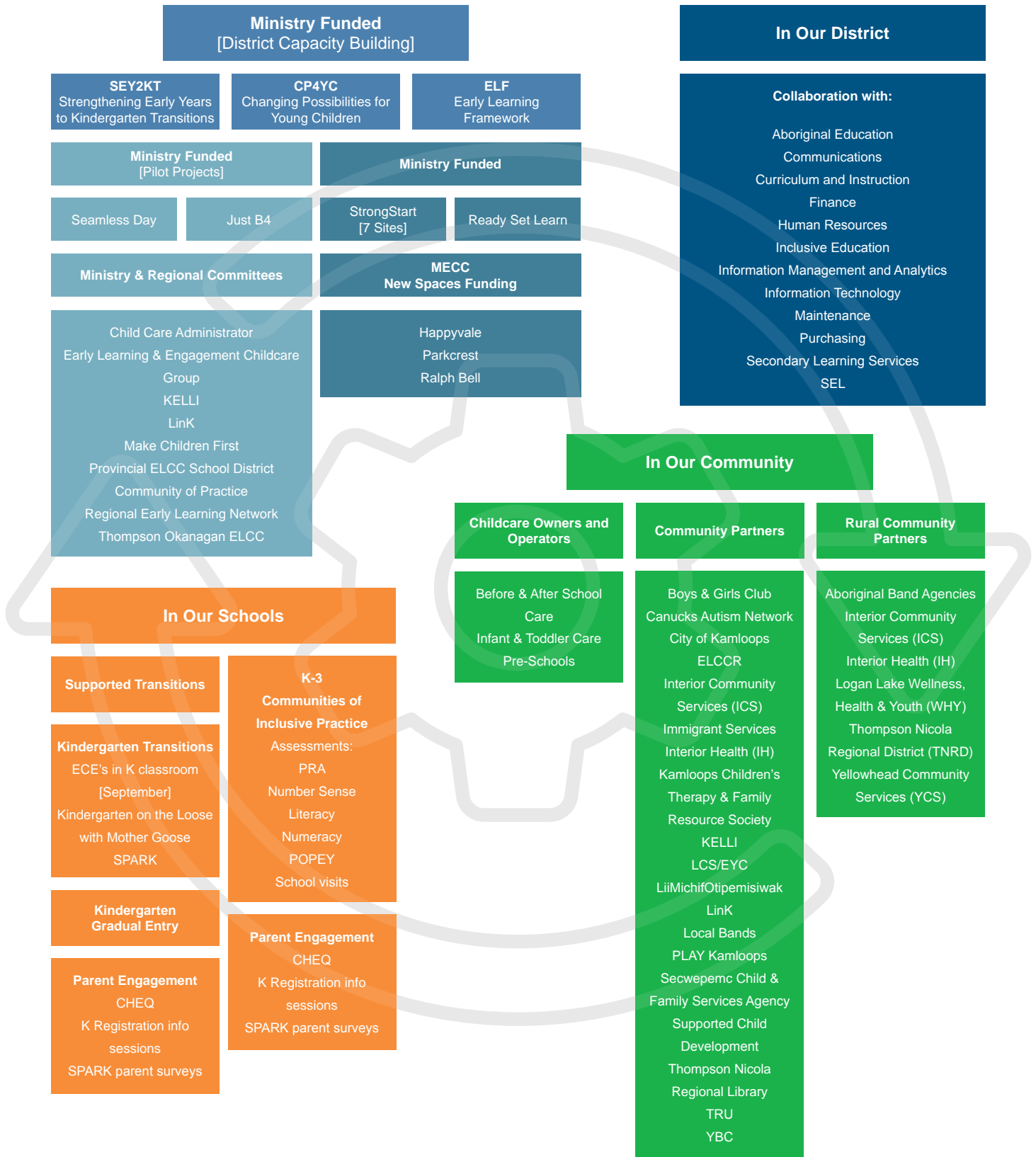
- Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
- Sexqeltqin (Adams Lake Indian Band)
- Quaaout (Little Shuswap Lake Band)
- Sk'emtsin (Neskonlith Band)
- Simpcw
- Pelt'iq't (Whispering Pines/Clinton Band)
- Skítsesten (Skeetchestn Band)



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Early Learning and Child Care



Executive Summary

In the Spring of 2022, the Ministry of Education expanded its purview to become the newly formed Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC). With this title came the opportunity for the education system to start supporting students from birth until their graduation in Grade 12. School districts were provided the opportunity to create and expand upon the Early Learning and Child Care Team (ELCC) through financial support. SD73's Early Learning team consists of a District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care and a District Coordinator of Early Years. The team is responsible for the development of equitable programs, opportunities, and early years educational success for SD73 children ages 0 - 8.

Why the expansion and why now? The expansion speaks to fundamental Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, values and understandings in that children are a gift and that all people have an “inherent and sacred” responsibility for children and families¹. The work we do as the ELCC team will create educational environments where all learners can be successful due to their strong starts as learners. Having a dedicated early learning portfolio in SD73 supports this - not only for Indigenous students, but for all students. In working with community partners, existing child care providers, and K-3 educators, early years education is pivotal in closing the gap of inequity and the improvement of graduation rates. This starts with access to quality early child care opportunities for all families. The ELCC team's work provides a bridge for successful connections and transitions from birth into school for families with a wide variety of programs and opportunities.

Research on the value of quality early learning programs comes from a variety of sources, including research and articles from outside of the education realm. Some noteworthy examples come from the Chief Economist for the TD Bank Group - [Craig Alexander](#)² as well as The Conference Board of Canada 2017³ report. Both state that greater investments in early childhood education springboards success for children, their families and the communities they serve. Alexander finds that “expanding early childhood education in Canada would increase female labor market participation, improve child outcomes (especially for disadvantaged children) and reduce Canada's income inequality” thus helping create a healthier Canadian society as a whole. Of particular interest, and where the ELCC team expertise intersects, is with regards to the fact that “children who receive effective curriculum and play-based early years education develop better cognitive abilities, and math and reading skills, which in turn, boosts skills development and earnings later in life” (Alexander). What we invest in with our youngest learners, pays positive dividends to the 0-Grade 12 system as a whole.

In reviewing SD73's work in the realm of early learning over the last year, we continued to provide quality supports, opportunities, and insights into a variety of programs, teacher workshops, and district assessments. Furthermore, the ELCC team has actively sought additional ways to meaningfully participate in community partnerships and district and Ministry initiatives. Much of the previous year's work continued to focus on the kindergarten transition programs and K-3 directions. However, with the addition of Ministry funding for the two pilot programs (Seamless Day Kindergarten and Just B4) as well as the expansion of the UBC Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) assessment (which provides a snapshot of life experiences and well-being over the years prior to entering kindergarten), involvement in the child care world truly began.

The funding model has largely remained unchanged over the past year when considering five of the seven sources of funding have continued forward. Additions to the Transfer Under Agreement between SD73 and the Ministry for this past year included the funding for the pilot programs: SDK and JB4 which are run out of Arthur Hatton Elementary. In addition, last spring SD73 applied for and received New Spaces funding for two new

¹ Early Learning Framework, (2019), p.38

² Alexander, Craig. “Why early childhood education is important for you, yes you.” Online Document Catalogue. 8 Apr. 2021.

³ The Conference Board of Canada. “Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care.” Oct. 2017

childcare sites at Ralph Bell and Happyvale Elementary Schools. The Request for Proposal (RFP) process for these two sites closed in October 2022 and the successful applicant was confirmed in January 2023 with a tentative opening date of September 2023.

Working from the established work of previous years, the ELCC team plans to continue to solidify existing work and action items outlined in the previous report while moving forward and expanding the ELCC portfolio. Action items moving into the 2022-2023 school year specific to the area of assessments have included expanding the districts involvement in the CHEQ assessment (14 elementary schools participated this year), participating in EDI - Wave 9, continuing to improve upon existing assessments (K Survey, Primary Reading Assessment) and creating a focussed Number Sense Assessment (K-3). Numerous additional action items involve the continuation of existing initiatives and collaborations within the district and community. New items include collaboration with SD73's Literacy Team specific to updating the district's Reading Strategies Bookmark, supporting the implementation of an early years phonics program, and implementing a workshop series with the Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years (POPEY). ELCC has also initiated work with the Aboriginal Education Council specific to including early learning aspects within the soon to be updated Aboriginal Education and Local Enhancement Agreements. Numerous community meetings have occurred in which discussions specific to SD73s newly expanded role into child care has been addressed and questions have been raised and answered in support of the importance of community partnerships and engagement as all support a child care system focused on what is best for the children in Kamloops-Thompson communities.

In connection to MECC initiatives moving forward, existing programs continue to be strong and active. However, there have been numerous additional child care specific initiatives. In September 2022, MECC charged ELCC teams with the task of completing Environmental Scans of child care specific to those within or on school district properties (final scan report due July 2023). Other actionable items have included pursuing child care licenses for afternoon programs in existing StrongStart spaces (which only run in the mornings), working in collaboration with various SD73 departments such as Human Resource and Finance to create additional early childhood education positions and funding models that will support current programs as well as the possibilities of expansions as Ministry funding allows. Both members of the ELCC team participate in Provincial and Regional ELCC committees and meetings that support the implementation of child care in the expanded education system.

Included in this report are highlights from the ongoing work and new initiatives in the ELCC portfolio. Highlights include the positive implications the SDK and JB4 pilots are having on the students, staff and families involved. Initial provincial level EDI-Wave 8 data is showing the necessity of district commitments to values such as connection, relationships, equity and well-being as 33% of kindergarten students are showing vulnerability in one or more areas that are critical to healthy development. June 2022 PRA data highlighted the ongoing importance of equity in our district to close the achievement gap that exists in Grade 1 reading between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students as well as between diverse and non-diverse learners. These highlights also reinforce the necessity of the targeted work the ELCC team is doing to intervene earlier and more often with our youngest learners, including before they enter kindergarten. An additional highlight involves the growing connections and collaborations being expanded upon with both local and rural community partners that are outlined in this report.

Culmination of the work outlined throughout this report is determining next steps as we continue to expand and decide in what new ways we can support the important work that is encompassed in the ELCC portfolio and the import of what this new portfolio means to SD73 staff, children and families. Based on the

information collected in the Environmental Scan, and in collaborative discussion with district and community partners, what and where are the priorities for expanding childcare, what is the active role SD73 can play in child care in our community and what is the five year vision for developing further the ELCC portfolio. We know a targeted intervention approach with early learning will reduce inequities, create stronger transitions into kindergarten and ultimately positively impact graduation rates in the district.

Foundational documents that support the work of the ELCC team and are referred to throughout this report continue to be the District Strategic Plan, the First People’s Principles of Learning, and the provincial Early Learning Framework. The ELCC team actively works to engage in opportunities that highlight the necessity for all people in SD73 to see the value and recognize the important role that early learning plays in *supporting learning opportunities and environments which inspire students to thrive*.

Throughout this report, ties to **SD73’s District Strategic Plans - Value Commitments** are embedded within the work of early learning.

Connection/Relationships

Building meaningful relationships that support and strengthen learning and growth.

Equity

Removing barriers and creating environments that provide accessible and empowering opportunities for all students and staff to thrive.

Well-being

Fostering opportunities to promote emotional, psychological, and physical, well-being for all students and staff.

Sustainability

Embracing our responsibility to contribute to a sustainable environment.

The priorities of SD73 are achieved through our youngest learners accessing equitable, high-quality learning opportunities prior to transitioning into kindergarten and strengthening these opportunities throughout their primary learning years. When this is achieved, SD73 students graduating will truly cross the stage with dignity, purpose, and options for the future.



IN REVIEW: ACTION ITEM UPDATE FROM THE 2021 - 2022 REPORT

ASSESSMENT/SURVEYS

- Participation in Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)
 - SD73 - 74% of eligible families from participating schools participated in the UBC CHEQ (September 2022)
 - Supported principals, kindergarten teams, school support teams, and community partners from the CHEQ participating schools to read, interpret and discuss the data and develop plans to support the learners.
- Participation in the Early Development Instrument (EDI)
 - Elementary schools are participating in Wave 9 (February 2023).
 - EDI Wave 8 data for SD73 will be released at the end of February 2023.
- Kindergarten (K) Survey Development
 - Continued to collaborate with a working table to give feedback on the SD73 Kindergarten Survey. The working group made recommendations on the mathematics section and developed a tool that met the needs of French Immersion learners.
- Primary Reading Assessment (PRA)
 - PRA June data provided summative information for teachers, schools, and the district to identify needs for additional instructional support and resources.
 - June 2022 results were entered into the SD73 data dashboard.

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

- **STRONG, PREPARED AND READY for KINDERGARTEN (SPARK)**
 - Continued to support the SPARK program as a centralized model at the district level to ensure equity and access to quality resources for all families.
 - SPARK continued to be represented in every school last year. Due to COVID-19, a modified delivery system was supported. A mixture of virtual and in-person events occurred with 35 schools having at least 1 in-person event with their new K students and families. An estimated 1131 children were provided SPARK bags and resources.
 - Ensured all elementary schools were supported with a SPARK program

- Supported and built resources for SPARK to reflect the needs of French Immersion schools and Indigenous families.
- With the District Literacy Team:
 - Reviewed and updated the Primary Reading Assessment protocols and proficiency scale references to align with the new PM Benchmark.
 - Collaborated on professional development opportunities to support Heggerty Phonemic Awareness implementation.
 - Collaborated on research into potential phonics resources; recommended Jolly Phonics for Kindergarten because it is play-based, multi-sensory, comprehensive, accessible, and could be cataloged. One resource per school was supported.
- Continued to collaborate with the SD73 Numeracy Team and the District Library Coordinator:
 - Provided Loose Parts Toolkits and professional development opportunities for early numeracy teachers and Teacher Librarians in eight schools.
- Continued to develop professional development opportunities for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and kindergarten teachers. Examples of pro-d offered:
 - Book Study: Inquiry-Based Early Learning Environments - by Susan Stacey which takes an in-depth look at children's inquiry.
 - Professional Development - ½ day workshop Exploring Our Image of the Child, Educator, and Learning.
- Supported the seven StrongStartBC schools with access to an early childhood educator in kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry to kindergarten during the month of September 2022.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

- Continued to collaborate with the early years' community partners with virtual and in-person meetings and sessions and printed materials for kindergarten readiness for families, preschools and daycare professionals.
- Continued to collaborate with early years' community partners on community programming such as Mother Goose, One-to-One Reading, and 1001 Books Before Five to increase awareness about the importance of early literacy.
- Continued third year of Kindergarten On the Loose with Mother Goose sessions that targets kindergarten literacy readiness skills.
- Continued building a collaborative service-learning resource with Thompson Rivers University (TRU),

in which nursing students and early childhood educators establish positive relationships with families to foster children's healthy development.

MINISTERIAL INITIATIVES

- Working with StrongStart facilitators on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF) in monthly Administration and Professional Development meetings.
- Continued participation in year four of Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) research. New reports and summary of findings are published each year in the fall.
<https://cr4yr.com/2022/10/03/summary-of-learning-2021-2022/>
- Continued participation in year four of Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) and in year three of the Ministry of Education series, Compassionate Systems Leadership.
<https://www.compassionatesystemsleadership.net/sey2kt>
- **StrongStartBC**
 - Supported and built resources for these programs to continue delivering early learning services including the development and delivery of supply kits.
 - Supported all seven StrongStartBC schools with access to an early childhood educator in Kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry to Kindergarten during the month of September 2022.
- **Child Care**
- Supported Seamless Day Kindergarten (SDK) and Just B4 (JB4) pilot programs which launched in January 2022.
- Supported kindergarten teachers and ECEs in SDK in building foundational teaching practices around the Early Learning Framework (ELF). The ELF:
 - Provides children and families with quality early care and learning experiences in a single location, for the full workday, with the same caring adults in their local school;
 - Improves children's transitions to Kindergarten, support their continuity of learning, and enhance communication with families;
 - Enables ECEs to work collaboratively with classroom teachers in providing high-quality early learning experiences;
 - Identifies areas that create barriers for schools to successfully operate Seamless Day models;
 - Promotes an inclusive education system so that students with diverse abilities are full participating members of a community of learners;

- Increases the number of affordable, accessible, and high-quality child care spaces offered in schools, while helping to build the future of child care required to move BC towards an inclusive universal child care system.
- Continued to develop ECE and Kindergarten teacher partnerships.
- Continued to support Just B4 Preschool and continued to work with ECEs and families on developing a seamless transition into kindergarten.

Introduction

Learning is a fluid process, particularly in young children. It is important to have inclusive and adaptable programs to allow every child to find success in early learning programs. In doing so, it is evident that our work does not happen in isolation. It is the result of a community coming together to **build meaningful relationships that support and strengthen learning and growth** in our youngest learners. Through this process, we continue to strengthen partnerships to enrich the way we lead, learn and work. To better illustrate that SD73 partners both between departments and within the larger community, a section on community partnerships is included. By working in partnership we are better equipped to create sustainable supports and programs.

Each year, SD73 plans for system improvement. The addition of the ELCC portfolio supports system improvement. Several of the foundational documents that guide the ELCC team's work relate directly to our learners throughout the kindergarten to grade twelve model and increasingly guide work outside of the K-12 model to ensure that SD73 has met the needs of not only current learners, but those who are about to become SD73 students. With the creation of the ELCC team, SD73 is well situated to ensure equity and inclusion throughout this portfolio by working to **remove barriers and creating environments that provide accessible and empowering opportunities for all students and staff to thrive.**

Without the support of our province, our community, and our committed early learning specialists, this work would not be possible. Through our connection to the Early Development Instrument (EDI), developed through the University of British Columbia, we know that good quality intellectual stimulation, support, and nurturance all lead to healthy brain development in our pre-kindergarten children. UBC posits that for every dollar we spend in the early years, supporting our children, the return on investment is between four and eight dollars we do not need to spend later for that child. This investment ensures positive outcomes later for children who have access to quality early years' programs.

Foundational to the ELCC portfolio is ensuring throughout our new education system we are **fostering opportunities to promote emotional, psychological, and physical well-being for all students and staff** in both the 0-5 and K-3 realms.

Throughout this document, there is a direct tie between the work being done to create structures and processes to expand the existing K-12 system to one that connects with and understands the importance of early learning. As this is largely new work, a lot of time and attention has been spent creating early learning ties with various district departments, such as: Aboriginal Education, Communications, Information and Technology, Curriculum and Instruction, Data Team, Finance, Human Resources, Inclusive Education Services, Purchasing and Maintenance. Working with these SD73 departments ensures programs and initiatives within the ELCC portfolio

are **embracing our responsibility to contribute to a sustainable environment.**

As the ELCC team builds the work within the child care portfolio, we continue to ensure the existing high quality K-3 programming remains uninterrupted. Additionally, work has continued to strengthen ties to community partners specific to child care and early learning, looking for additional opportunities for partnerships, and building communication bridges so that we are creating a strong network of child care from which the whole community can benefit.

Funding 2022-2023

The Ministry of Education and Child Care continued to support the ELCC through several funds contained within our Transfers Under Agreement:

- Transfer Under Agreement: Capacity Building
 - Early Learning Framework (ELF)
 - Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)
 - Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT)
- Transfer Under Agreement: Early Learning Programs
 - StrongStartBC (SS)
 - Ready, Set, Learn (RSL)
 - Seamless Day Kindergarten (SDK)
 - Just B4 (JB4)

MOVING FORWARD: ACTION ITEMS FOR 2022-2023

ASSESSMENT/SURVEYS

As a school district, we monitor and support the early learning programs. The complexity of measuring early learners combined with the knowledge that learning is fluid in the early years requires ongoing measurement throughout early years. We collect baseline data, plan interventions and supports for each student, and continue to monitor for growth.

- Participation in Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)
 - Continue to expand the number of schools who choose to participate in this questionnaire. Moving forward: the team at HELP has stated that CHEQ will be implemented in the same 3 year cycle that the EDI is implemented. Next participation year for SD73 and CHEQ: 2025-2026.
 - Continue to offer and provide ongoing support to principals, kindergarten teams, & school support teams from CHEQ participating schools specific to reading, interpreting and discussing the data and developing plans to support the K learners.
 - Continue to share pertinent data with community partners in the snapshot CHEQ data provides for the SD73 area.
- Host regional session for UBC HELP to discuss CHEQ and EDI Wave 8 data with BC Interior School Districts and their Community teams (Spring 2023).
- Participate in future implementations of the University of British Columbia's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) Developmental Instruments.
 - Participate in initial conversations with UBCs HELP team regarding expanding SD73s participation from solely EDI collection to Middle Years Indicator (MDI) and Youth Development Indicator (YDI) to capture a significant snapshot of the impact of COVID-19 years on SD73 learners for Wave 10 in 2026.
 - Initiate conversations with SD73 departments regarding the expansion of HELP projects to additional age groupings.
 - Share Wave 8 SD73 data when available (School Board, District Leadership Team, administrators).
- K Survey
 - Survey all participating K teachers regarding information collected from K Survey (Spring 2023).
 - Make a recommendation on surveys and assessments that provide data to best support kindergarten students.

- Provide support for kindergarten teachers to utilize the SD73 data dashboard.
- Primary Reading Assessment (PRA)
 - Continue to support teacher implementation of the PRA.
 - Work with the District Literacy Team to provide support to K-3 teachers for correct usage of the PRA, examine the data it provides and use the data to inform practice and teaching moving forward.
- Number Sense Assessment (NSA) K-3
 - Work with the District Numeracy Team to collect and examine various number sense assessments in use from around the province.
 - Create a working table of interested primary teachers and administrators to provide feedback and recommendations based on the pilot implementation of SD73 Number Sense Assessment K-3.
 - Work with the District Principal, Information Management and Analytics to include the NSA on the SD73 data dashboard.
 - Implement NSA across district by 2023 - 2024 school year.
- Complete Ministry of Education and Child Care Scan Final Report (July 2023).

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

- STRONG, PREPARED AND READY for KINDERGARTEN (SPARK)
 - Continue to support the SPARK program as a centralized model at the district level to ensure equity and access to quality resources for all schools and families.
 - Provide support for implementation workshops for interested administrators and teachers.
 - Continue to support and build resources for SPARK to reflect the growing interests and needs of SD73.
- SD73 Literacy Team
 - Collaborate with the SD73 Literacy Team regarding work on the Primary Reading Assessment to develop protocols based on developmental stages and include corresponding 'teaching points'; in the winter/spring, consulted with 44 educators for feedback on drafts; made further revisions.
 - Collaborate on professional development opportunities to support the implementation of an early years phonics based program (after school two-part workshops and NID in the fall of 2023).

- Collaborate informally about the inclusion of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction content in professional development at school-based non-instructional days (NIDs), staff meetings, Learning Assistance Resource Teachers (LART) session, and District-wide NID on Shifting the Balance (December 5 NID).
- Continue promoting the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness and Intensive Phonological Awareness Program kit resources in every school.
- Engage in a working group of primary teachers and administrators to update the Reading Strategies Bookmark to reflect current research and practices.
- Continue collaboration on professional learning series with the Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years (POPEY) (Oct. 12, Nov. 16, Jan. 25/26).
- Continue to develop professional development opportunities for both ECEs and kindergarten teachers; as well as grade 1-3 teachers. Upcoming professional learning includes:
 - Early Years Interior Conference
 - Seamless Day and Just B4 Interior Regional Support Group
 - Changing Possibilities for Young Children
 - POPEY Learning Series
 - K-1 Learning Specialists' Association
 - Collaboration with curriculum teams, including professional learning and resources to support balanced literacy and balanced numeracy programs, resources and assessments.
- Continue to work with the Aboriginal Education Department to support opportunities to implement early learning aspects into the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement and Local Enhancement Agreement.
- Kindergarten Transitions
 - Continue to support kindergarten transitions through work on the SPARK program and participation as panelists for the community Kindergarten Round-Up family presentation.
 - Explore with community partners the possibility of having earlier transition evenings and events for families to participate in (i.e. when children are 3-4 year olds) prior to the Kindergarten Round-Up and SPARK K transition events.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

- Continue to collaborate with the early years' community partners with in person and virtual sessions

and printed materials for kindergarten readiness for families, preschools and daycare professionals.

- Continue to collaborate with early years' community partners on community programming such as *Mother Goose*, *One-to-One Reading*, and *1001 Books Before Five* to increase awareness about the importance of early literacy for all families.
- Continue delivery of Kindergarten on the Loose with Mother Goose (3rd year) sessions that target early learning Kindergarten literacy readiness skills. In-person sessions will occur. Sessions will be rotated to new schools Spring 2023.
- Continue to support SD73s involvement in the community run Kindergarten Round-Up presentation evening as well as exploring the possibility of additional supportive family sessions earlier in a child's development towards kindergarten.
- Continue building a collaborative service-learning resource with Thompson Rivers University, in which nursing students and early childhood educators establish positive relationships with families to foster children's healthy development.
- Continue to work closely with the Early Years Center on analyzing gaps in the system around family and community needs.
- Implement a new project with Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS) involving the delivery of kindergarten transition supports and family play sessions.

MINISTERIAL INITIATIVES

- Continue the work on professional learning focused on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF).
- Continue participation in year five of (Changing Possibilities for Young Children) CP4YC research of which SD73s. New reports and summary of findings will be published each year in the fall.
- Continue participation in year six of Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) and in year five of the Ministry of Education series, Compassionate Systems Leadership. New reports and summary of findings are published each year in the fall.
- StrongStartBC
 - Continue to support and build resources for these programs to continue delivering early learning services including the development and delivery of supply kits.
 - Continue to support all seven StrongStartBC schools with access to an early childhood educator in kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry to kindergarten during the month of September 2023.
 - Develop language play kits to support English language learners to address the growing needs of culturally diverse families who access StrongStart programs.

□ Child Care

- Continue to support Seamless Day Kindergarten (SDK) and Just B4 (JB4) pilot programs as they move into their second full year of delivery.
- Continue to explore the expansion of SDK & JB4 programs through surveying interest with principals and extending opportunities for current staff participants to discuss their experiences with other interested ECE, kindergarten teachers and administrative teams.
- Expand both SDK & JB4 programs.
- Continue to develop ECE and kindergarten teacher partnerships.
- Continue to work with the finance department to establish more effective ways of collecting fees from families as well as the creation of a financial structure that is sustainable to the district and these programs.
- Consider next step opportunities for newly licensed afternoon child care spaces out of existing StrongStartBC rooms.
- Continue to work with Director of Instruction - Secondary Education and Learning Services for ways to encourage highschool students to participate in the existing ECE diploma partnership with TRU.
- Develop a five year plan of expansion opportunities using the Ministry implemented environmental child care scan information.
- Continue to work with Human Resources in the active recruitment and retention of ECE workers for SD73 child care programs.
- Continue to apply to New Spaces funding to acquire the necessary funds to complete the upcoming child care spaces in the rebuild of Parkcrest Elementary.
- Continue to develop the new partnership with Inquiring Little Minds (ILM) who will be providing child care at the Ralph Bell and Happyvale sites.
- Continue to work with the district Inclusive Education team for ways to ensure all children in the new MECC education system have the necessary access and support to child care ensuring equity for our youngest learners and their families.
- Continue to participate in all regional and provincial committees and meetings dedicated to child care and in doing so, encourage additional funding to support inclusion in SD73 run child care (SDK/JB4) programs.
- Continue to communicate with community partners when new child care opportunities are available within SD73 buildings.

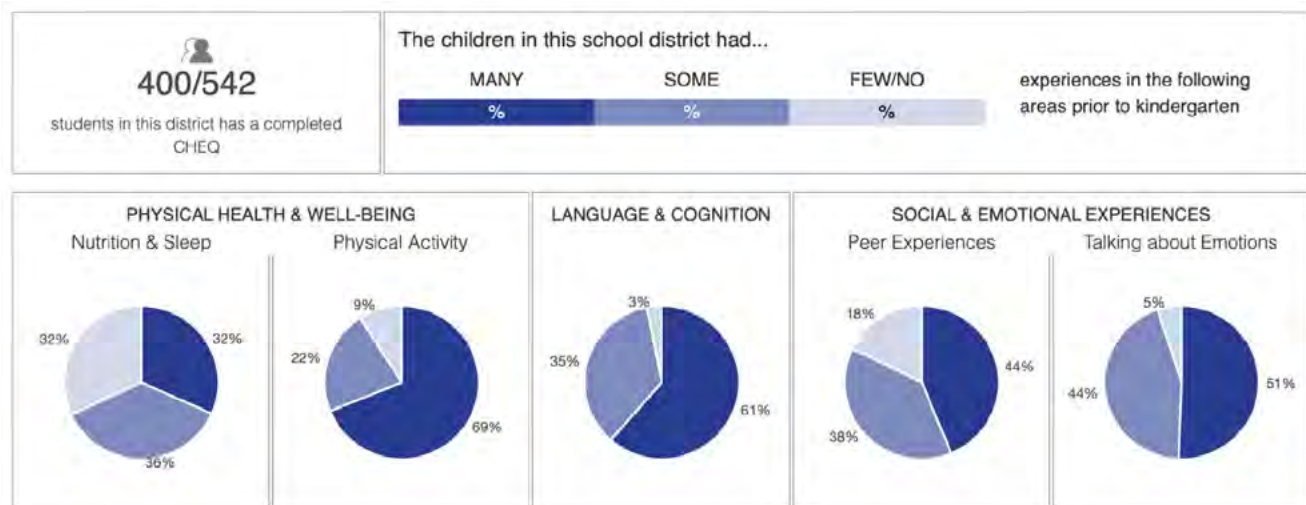
HIGHLIGHTS from February 2022 - February 2023

ASSESSMENTS/SURVEYS

For detailed information about the following assessments/surveys, please refer to Appendix B at the back of this report. The following are highlights.

□ **CHEQ:**

- The Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) is used to better understand and support children’s experiences prior to kindergarten.
- The 2022 district snapshot of current kindergarten cohort:



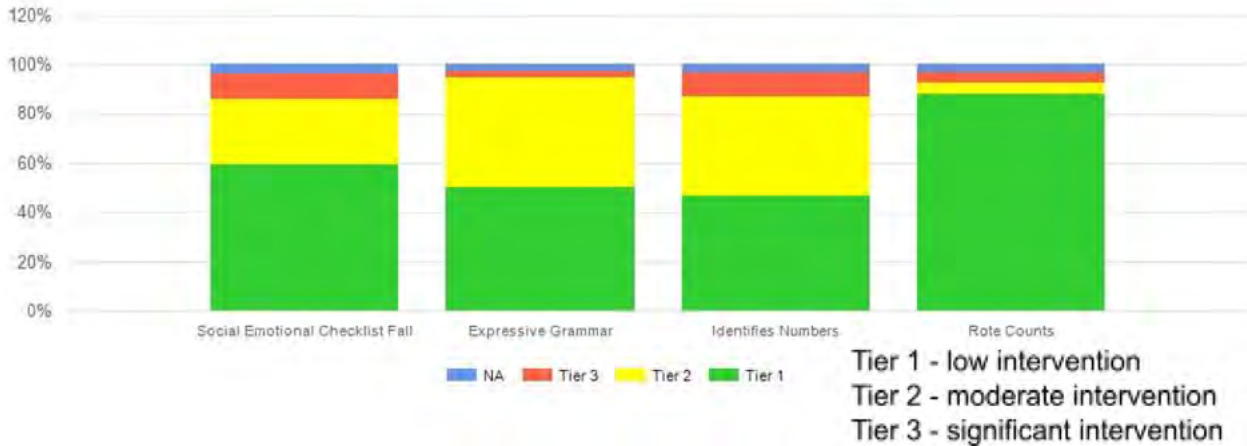
□ **In general:**

- 14 schools and 400/542 (or 74%) of families participated
- 88% of current K’s are in very good or excellent health
- 92% have a regular bedtime and 89% receive 10 or more hours of sleep during a 24 hour period

□ **Points of interest:**

- 56% of our K cohort experienced a stressful event (COVID, parent separation/divorce, death of a close family member, etc.) last year
- 71% are not accessing programs or supports from age 3 - kindergarten
- 46% have one or more hours of using an electronic device each day

Kindergarten Survey - Fall 2022



Points of interest from Fall K Survey data:

- Based on these findings: Social-emotional learning, following directions, identifying numbers and expressive grammar are all areas showing as areas in need of targeted intervention.
- Although rote counting (shown) is strong, this same group of K students struggle with number identification. Students are able to memorize and repeat numbers, but they are not transferring this knowledge to number recognition and number concept.
- Expressive grammar is the ability to put thoughts into words and sentences in a way that makes sense and is grammatically correct. This is a good snapshot of how kindergarten students are doing specific to oral language development which is the cornerstone to reading and writing.
- Historical data from the K Survey show improvement in the areas of phonological and print awareness, which is a direct connection to the work K teachers are doing with the intentional, daily implementation of phonological awareness programs. (See p. 10 of the Early Years Annual Report, February 2022)

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers for the students in their classrooms during February of every third school year in SD73. The data gathered measures trends and patterns in children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development at kindergarten.

WAVE 8 Points of Interest:

- Provincial data provided in the fall of 2022. Wave 8 represents the 20th year of collecting data provincially. These two decades of research have demonstrated the predictive capability of EDI vulnerability.
- Across the province, 33% (13,500) of kindergarten students were vulnerable in one or more areas that are critical to their healthy development. This means that one in three of these children are entering

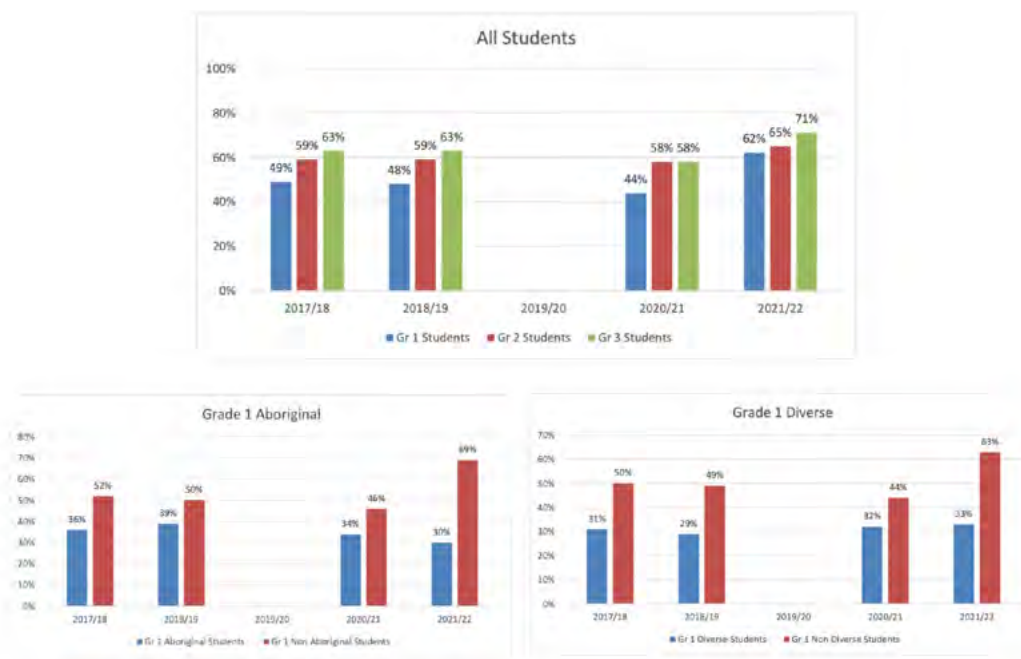
kindergarten vulnerable in at least one area of development important to their future success. These students are currently in grade three.

- The provincial report has been released and the SD73 specific report will be released at the end of February 2023. Wave 8 results show 20% of SD73 kindergarten students are considered vulnerable on more than one indicator. This is an improvement of 1% from Wave 7 data.
- Without additional support and care, children who are vulnerable in one or more scales of the EDI are more likely to experience future challenges in their school years and beyond.
- Social and Emotional Development remains the highest areas of concern and these relate directly to common childhood mental health issues.
- The data highlights the inequities that children and families across BC continue to face.
- The trend for overall vulnerability rates long-term continues to increase in BC.
- Kindergarten teachers in SD73 are currently participating in EDI - Wave 9 which opened on February 1st, 2023 and will close on March 7th, 2023. These results will not be available until the end of Wave 9 (February 2026).

Primary Reading Assessment (PRA)

Literacy - Primary Reading Assessment - June

Students who are Proficient or Extending in the June PRA (historically this was also measured as Meeting or Exceeding Expectations). Primary Reading Assessment results for 2019/2020 school year were not completed due to Covid-19.



□ **Points of Interest:**

- Data from June 2022 indicates there was a slight positive increase in reading achievement this past year when compared to previous years.
- However, when considering specifically Grade 1 results, a significant gap still exists between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students as well as between diverse and non-diverse learners.

Programs & Initiatives

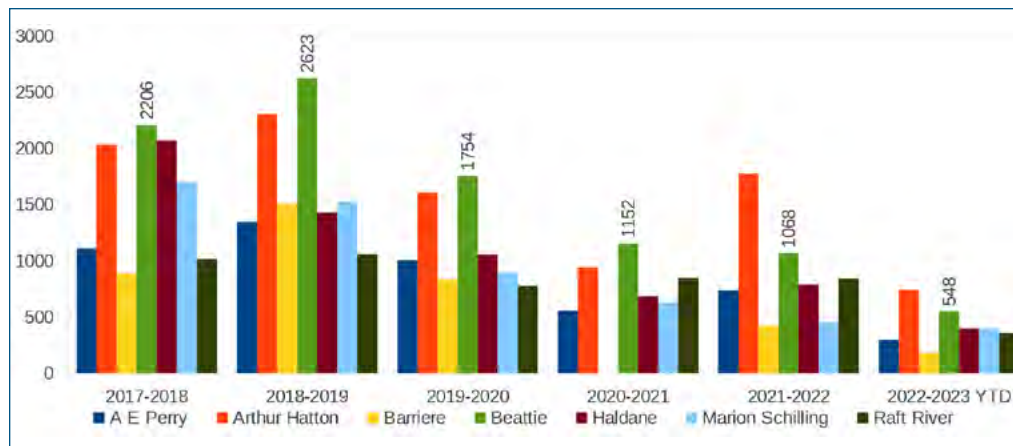
For detailed information about the following programs and initiatives, please refer to Appendix C at the back of this report. The following are highlights.

StrongStartBC (SS)

All seven SS locations have recently been licensed for the possibility of adding additional child care programs in these spaces for the afternoon (i.e. JB4, preschool, daycare, after school care).

COVID-19 had an unprecedented impact on program delivery, however, the community has fully embraced SS in-person openings since September 2022 with growing numbers of parents and caregivers taking full advantage of what the SS program offers.

SD73 StrongStartBC Centres - Positive Attendance - Five Year Trend



SCHOOL YEAR	AE Perry	Arthur Hatton	Barriere	Beattie	Haldane	Marion Schilling	Raft River	TOTAL ATT
2015-2016	1198	1436	621	1253	1183	1467	820	7978
2016-2017	1203	1337	694	1833	1490	1018	681	8256
2017-2018	1110	2030	887	2206	2071	1698	1015	11017
2018-2019	1346	2304	1505	2623	1430	1524	1059	11791
2019-2020	1007	1607	833	1754	1054	894	776	7925
2020-2021	557	938	no avail	1152	682	628	846	4803
2021-2022	735	1774	423	1068	787	450	842	6079
2022-2023 YTD	296	739	177	548	397	398	357	2912

Note: 2022-2023 is year-to-date data (September 2022 to January 2023)

Ready, Set, Learn (RSL)

All elementary schools are allocated funds based on projected kindergarten enrolment numbers to ensure that students feel welcomed and ready to be a part of their new school community.

These funds can be used for consumables, Kindergarten teacher release time, snacks, and various other resources found in use during SPARK events or other kindergarten transition events.

Changing Possibilities for Young Children (CP4YC)

This year, this program has been renamed to better reflect the importance of possibilities rather than results. It is now named: Changing Possibilities for Young Children (CP4YC).

CP4YC is a collaborative inquiry project that brings together community-based early childhood educators, StrongStart facilitators, and kindergarten teachers. Participants focus on individual students who would benefit from targeted interventions that support social-emotional learning. Throughout six sessions, student progress is measured, supported, and monitored. Successes are shared with the collaborative team with the intention of making this work scalable while aligning pedagogy between early childhood educators and primary grade educators. This year, participating schools include Beattie Elementary and Arthur Hatton Elementary, who work alongside Cariboo Childcare and Children’s Therapy and Family Resource Centre.

District Early Years Coordinator continues to be the region’s trained facilitator for this program.

Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition (SEY2KT)

This is an initiative that focuses on collaboration and strengthening of relationships across the education and early years’ sectors. The ELCC team and community partners (CCRR, KELLI, Pacific Sport, TRU Nursing, City of Kamloops and Kamloops Immigrant Services) come together to design and implement ongoing collaborative actions based on local resources and needs for kindergarten transition.

The SEY2KT team this year has been focussed on identifying and addressing the barriers in both the

community and school system and determining what would be enabling conditions (e.g., shared pedagogical practices, joint professional learning opportunities) to strengthen early years to kindergarten transitions.

The team consists of School District and three community partners.

Strong, Prepared, and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK)

All SD73 schools with kindergarten registrants participate in the SPARK program.

Based on projected kindergarten numbers, all enrolling kindergarten students will be provided with a district SPARK bag in association with SPARK programming.

DISTRICT INITIATIVE HIGHLIGHTS:

Supported Transitions

Kindergarten Transition Meeting Data:

	Males	Females	Children with Aboriginal Ancestry	Children in Care	Children with Special Education Designations	Rural Children	Urban Children
Number of Incoming Learners	53	20	9	1	32	14	59

*For more information on supporting students in SD73, see the *Annual Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Report* on the district website.

With the expertise of ECE staff in both SS and the JB4 programs in SD73, kindergarten transition is showing good success for students and families needing additional support in this process.

The addition of SS staff in supportive roles in K classrooms in their schools for the month of September is also showing positive results.



Our ECE has been so helpful, especially for a teacher who recently switched grades and is back to teaching kindergarten/grade one after a couple of years! I completely forgot how chaotic a startup can be with these littles. I don't know what I would have done without her help this past month! We are very lucky to have her.

- Kindergarten teacher

District Literacy Team collaboration

- Focus on completing the Primary Reading Assessment protocols and Teaching Points resource.
- Continue to meet about Evaluation de lecture au Primaire updates.
- Begin work on a Teacher Resource Package / District Balanced Literacy Guide.
- Continue to promote use of Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program, Intensive Phonological Awareness Program, and Jolly Phonics kit resources in every school as part of a balanced early literacy approach.



I find that the Heggerty Phonological Awareness program helps me quickly and consistently do phonemic awareness. I find that it has really helped develop writing by my Ks.

- Kindergarten teacher

- Survey administrators and teachers to obtain feedback about Jolly Phonics resource implementation (anecdotal reports are positive with regard to ease and enjoyment of use and, importantly, evidence of improved readiness for reading).
- Continue to engage in a working group of primary teachers and administrators to update the Reading Strategies Bookmark to reflect current research and practices.
- Continue to collaborate on professional learning series with the Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years (POPEY)
- Ongoing collaboration with the **District Numeracy Team** specific to development and pilot implementation of a district Number Sense Assessment.
- Ongoing opportunities to highlight ELCC via presentations at School Leaders meetings and the Curriculum and Instruction newsletter
- Communicating through presentations to the Aboriginal Education Council specific to ensuring early learning is part of the upcoming Aboriginal Education and Local Enhancement Agreements.

Child Care Highlights:

SDK

- SDK has just celebrated its one year anniversary as a pilot program in SD73.
- In the fall, as part of the SDK programming, additional funding was secured to support an inclusive and supportive group child care experience.



We have had a very successful joint collaboration so far. The ECEs have brought so many great ideas and are willing to help out in all aspects of the program.

- Kindergarten teacher

- The program is 100% full in the after school program; 58% full in the before school program.
- There are six students on the waitlist and continued interest in program expansion.
- Challenges that continue to be addressed include funding structures, how to continue to fund additional ECE care for students with diverse needs, how to easily track down unpaid funds, how to better support parents in accessing subsidies and the School Cash Online program for payments, expanding the program, and having enough ECEs available to provide coverage when staff are off.



Having child care on school grounds is a win for everyone - me and my child are already familiar with these surroundings, plus it saves me time and money.

- SDK Parent

JB4

JB4 has just celebrated its one year anniversary as a pilot program in SD73.



It has been wonderful having this program. Seeing the students progress from StrongStart BC to preschool, and then into kindergarten gives them such a head start as they begin their school careers.

- Principal of SDK/JB4 programs

- In the fall, as part of the JB4 programming, additional funding was secured to support an inclusive and supportive preschool experience.
- The program is 100% full.
- Challenges that continue to be addressed include funding structures, how to continue to fund additional ECE care for students with diverse needs, how to easily track down unpaid funds, how to better support parents in accessing subsidies and the School Cash Online program for payments, expanding the program, and having enough ECEs available to provide coverage when staff are off.

Community connections

The ELCC team establish and continue to create community connections through actions such as:

- Participation in local discussions with a variety of community partners such as: Yellowhead Community Services (YCS), YMCA - BC, and Boys and Girls Club (BGC) program leaders regarding working together on child care partnerships.
- Participation in local discussions regarding 'Quality in Early Childhood Education' led by the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network.
- Participation in meetings and discussions such as 'Make Children First' committee and Early Learning & Child Care Engagement Group.
- Participation in Early Learning Regional Leads community meetings.

Child Care Initiative Highlights:

Ministry Environmental Scan

Expansion of early learning and child care teams required an Environmental Scan of child care programs operating on school grounds or in school buildings. Actions taken include:

- Ensuring all voices connected to child care within SD73 have a voice.
- Working directly with the Aboriginal Education Council to ensure Indigenous voices are heard and included within the environmental scan.
- Surveying all elementary, middle and secondary administrators regarding child care space and program possibilities.

New Child Care Spaces

Due to the availability of these funds, SD73 applied and is now in the process of adding two new child care sites using third party providers at Ralph Bell and Happyvale elementary schools.

- Through establishing and refining processes specific to child care, SD73 has been able to secure a successful applicant for providing the child care at these two sites.
- The ELCC team worked with the Maintenance and Purchasing Departments to develop extensive checklists and contract details specific to the provision of child care in SD73.
- Have the opportunity to look at potential expansion of child care provision either directly or indirectly through additional third party providers.

Licensing

The process of applying for and receiving licenses for child care spaces in SD73 is new and has been met with success.

- Working on pilot with one local licensing officer when we first began the process and worked between three different officers.
- Securing seven initial child care licenses specific to the afternoon space available in StrongStart locations. One is already in use with our JB4 program.

Community Collaboration

SD73's community partnerships are a key component of our ongoing success with early years' programs. With the addition of active involvement in child care, these collaborative partnerships have become even more essential for success moving forward. Working with our community benefits our early learners and their families and supports the SD73 Strategic Plan's Value Commitment of **Connection/Relationships by "Building meaningful relationships that support and strengthen learning and growth"** for our youngest learners, their families and the staff that are committed to this age group.

Throughout the year, SD73's ELCC team collaborates with the early years' community partners on "Kindergarten Readiness" presentations for families, preschools and daycare providers. Each year, we collaborate on four community events to increase awareness about the importance of literacy and provide literacy support for all ages. These events are: Raise a Reader, ABC Family Literacy Day, Healthy Kids Day, and Teddy Bear Picnic.

With the addition of child care, we are also collaborating with community partners to create a rich dialogue and understanding about what types and locations of child care services are required in Kamloops and the surrounding communities. Additionally, we continue to work together to determine how we can share space and resources to meet the growing needs of our communities so we can tackle current inequities within child care.

Throughout the child care contract process, SD73 ensures that the district vision, mission, and values are reflected in our partnerships. Inclusion, commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and awareness of the First People's Principles of Learning are clearly embedded in the work of both SD73 and our partner organizations. By sharing these commitments, SD73 continues to move towards equity by **"removing barriers and creating environments that provide accessible and empowering opportunities for all students and staff to thrive."**

Information specific to the variety of Community Partners that the ELCC team are connected to and engaged with, please refer to Appendix D.

Working with our Rural Community Partners

All of our rural partners (please refer to Appendix E) play a vital role in developing and delivering programming for SD73 families and children who live outside of the City of Kamloops area. The many agencies are in contact with school administrators and the ELCC team to access unique supports for early learners in each community. Preschools, play groups, and directly supported services are some of the family-centered practices encouraged with the help of early years funds within our rural schools.

Next Steps



As a school district, we are continually developing next steps. As a system, we learn and grow to better support our learners.

In early learning, our next steps include the expansion of pilot projects to include more schools. Pilots allow us to try out new ideas, collect data, and receive feedback before we begin to include more participants. Our strong community connections mean that we have critical friends who not only give us information on what needs to improve but are prepared to help support the improvements.

At a local level, we will move forward with the various assessments outlined in this report. With the help of colleagues in the community, we can ensure that we are receiving data that best informs and supports early learners. As we develop the assessments we believe collect the most informational data, we can include better supports for diverse learners across the district.

Continuing to support adults with learning is key to our success. The collaborative efforts that have been initiated with various SD73 departments this year will continue to provide effective professional development opportunities not only for K-3 teachers but also develop the ECE to Kindergarten connections.

To remain informed of new developments in early learning, we will continue to attend regional and provincial meetings as well as participate in provincial pilots. Our early learners are best supported when we stay informed and participate in new work.

None of this work would be successful without community partners. A continued focus includes collaboration with the early years' community on all aspects of child care, kindergarten readiness, literacy and supportive transitions for all early learners.

There is enough research and data to support how necessary early learning and child care is to the education system. We know better and have the ability to deal with inequities before our youngest learners enter the K-12 system. As a school district, we are continually developing next steps. As a system, we learn and grow to better support our learners and with the addition of the 0-5 ages now being part of our system, we can start earlier with positive long term outcomes.

Appendix A - Glossary

ASQ

Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Thompson Rivers University nursing students

BGC

Boys and Girls Clubs

CHEQ

Childhood Experiences Questionnaire. For more information on CHEQ, see <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/cheq/cheq-parent-information/>

CP4YC

Changing Possibilities for Young Children – Ministry of Education and Child Care program

Early Learning

The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that preschool children acquire in the years before school entry in key developmental domains: cognitive, physical, language and communication, social and emotional. Defined in section 1 of the School Act.

ECE

Early Childhood Educator

EDI

Early Development Instrument. For more information on EDI, see <https://edi.offordcentre.com/>

ELCC

Early Learning and Child Care Team

HELP

Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia. For more information, see <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/>

Just B4 (JB4)

The Just B4 program is designed for four-year old children to attend “Just B4” Kindergarten. It provides an opportunity strengthen early years to Kindergarten transitions for your children and families.

KELLI

Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative

KIS

Kamloops Immigrant Services

LART

Learning Assistance Resource Teacher

LinK

Literacy in Kamloops

MECC

Ministry of Education and Child Care

NID

Non-instructional Day

NSA

Number Sense Assessment

Phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound within a word. It may be represented by one of more letters.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to discern sounds and sound sequences, including an awareness that words are made up of sounds in sequences.

POPEY

Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years

PRA

Primary Reading Assessment

SDK

Seamless Day Kindergarten: The Seamless Day Kindergarten pilot program employs certified early childhood educators to provide before- and after-school care in Kindergarten classrooms and supports learning alongside the classroom teacher.

SEY2KT

Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition
– Ministry of Education and Child Care program

StrongStartBC (SS) Centre

A free early learning program located in schools, for preschool children accompanied by a parent, other adult family member or caregiver, created through an agreement between school districts and the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

SPARK

Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten

TRC

Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

TRU

Thompson Rivers University

UNDRIP

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

WHY

Wellness Health and Youth Center - Logan Lake

YBC

YMCA - BC

YCS

Yellowhead Community Services

Appendix B - Assessments

Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)

The CHEQ program is administered through the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) out of the University of British Columbia. CHEQ is unique because the questionnaire is completed by parents/caregivers at the start of the kindergarten school year ensuring the information and data are immediate and timely. There is no wait time for results as they are generated by UBC by the end of September for schools to use immediately.

The CHEQ captures important information on children's experiences in their early environments with a focus on specific areas of development that are strongly linked to children's health and well-being, education, and social outcomes. This information can help communities understand how to support children and families prior to kindergarten; it also helps schools with planning for the kindergarten cohort reflected in the CHEQ results.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The EDI is a short questionnaire completed by Kindergarten teachers in the second half of the school year. This instrument is used not only across our school district, but across Canada and internationally. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure a child's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations. The EDI measures five developmental areas and offers a sample question for each.

EDI data offers a foundation for building our understanding of the patterns and trends in children's health and development. While it does not point to specific solutions, this data provides a common starting point for facilitating discussion and inquiry on the status of early child development within schools, districts, and communities. EDI data is particularly valuable when used alongside other data and information including administrative and education data, local knowledge and expertise, and information on local services, and school and community programs.

Kindergarten Survey (K Survey)

The K Survey is administered each year: Fall/Winter/Spring. Kindergarten teachers complete the survey through a variety of methods including observation and one-on-one conversations. In previous years, the data has indicated the need for strategies to support phonological and print awareness. Last spring, the data began to show strong growth in these areas indicating the success of recent resources and approaches being implemented into kindergarten classes. (i.e. District created play-based phonological intervention kit and the Heggerty phonological program). We know early intervention secures the best outcomes. We also know that the intentional, daily teaching of phonological awareness skills positively impacts the acquisition of early reading and writing skills. This year, using the District data dashboard, kindergarten teachers and school administrators have the ability to automatically assess how their youngest students are doing and determine next steps and successful interventions.

Primary Reading Assessment (PRA)

SD73 recommends the use of primary reading levels for both instructional and assessment purposes. Data from the PRA is used at all levels, including: the classroom, the school and the district. As a formative assessment tool (assessment for learning), the PRA provides valuable descriptive feedback to students and informs the teacher of both individual and class reading levels. As a summative tool (assessment of learning), the PRA identifies students' reading levels within a school and identifies needs for additional, focused instructional support. PRA data is important as we can employ practices that accelerate learning for students who have fallen behind and ensure schools have the resources they need to support these students.

Appendix C - Programs and Initiatives

Changing Possibilities for Young Children (CP4YC)

CP4YC focuses on social and emotional well-being to improve outcomes for young children. One of the CP4YC goals is to identify and apply a strengthened understanding of quality practices associated with improving the social and emotional well-being of young children. Another goal is to increase the coherence in pedagogy between Early Childhood Educators and Primary Educators, using the Early Learning Framework.

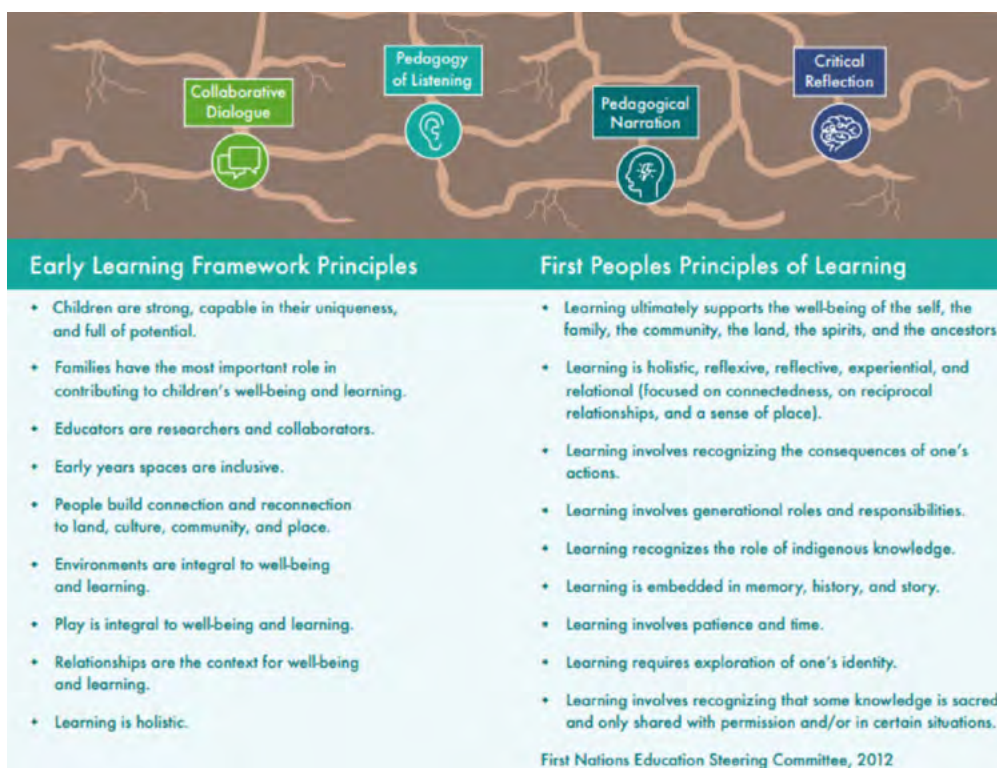
SD73's participants are selected as triads from the same 'community'. For example: a StrongStartBC Facilitator, a Kindergarten teacher from the same school (or neighborhood), and a community-based Early Childhood Educator working in a childcare centre or pre-school in the same community. This has brought educators together who share the same children and families and provide them with the opportunity to collaborate and strengthen relationships over time. Further information can be found at <https://cr4yr.com/2022/10/03/summary-of-learning-2021-2022/>



"Resiliency is not one more thing to add to our teaching plates... it is the plate"
(as stated by Kim Schonert Reichl, May 2021)

Early Learning Framework (ELF)

BC's Early Learning Framework guides and supports early childhood educators, primary school teachers, principals and vice-principals, college and university educators and researchers, post-secondary students in early childhood and elementary education programs, StrongStartBC facilitators, other early years professionals, communities, governments, and families. The Framework establishes a vision for respectfully living and learning together. It supports the rich early learning experiences of children, provides a focal point for dialogue among British Columbians, and creates a common language and greater understanding of the vital importance of early learning for all young children.



The Early Learning Framework applies to all learning environments, from StrongStartBC programs and primary classrooms to childcare settings, preschools, and other early childhood development or child health programs. It also:

- Supports dialogue and reflection on the importance of the development and learning of young children
- Guides early learning programs and activities
- Encourages discussion with families about their child’s early learning
- Shapes professional development
- Creates a shared image of children to guide the promotion of early learning

Each month, StrongStartBC facilitators participate in professional development focused on the ELF principles. The ELF can be found online at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/early-learning-framework>

Just B4 (JB4)

The JB4 program is specifically designed for 3- and 4-year-old children to attend “Just B4” Kindergarten, with the purpose of inspiring and supporting the creation of rich, joyful early childhood spaces. This program provides an opportunity to strengthen early years to Kindergarten transitions for young children and their families.

Just B4 utilizes the StrongStartBC space in the afternoon with the same ECE who leads the StrongStartBC program in the morning. Parents pre-register for the Just B4 afternoon program and choose the days of the week they would like their children to attend. Just B4 is a licensed preschool program and therefore parents do not need to attend.

This program is currently offered for a minimal fee. Families may qualify for childcare subsidies through the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

The location of the Just B4 preschool program in SD73 was determined by several factors including:

- Parental need for before- and after-school care (based on Kamloops Community Child Care Planning Report - June 2020 and Discussions with Kamloops Early Years/Child Care/Resource and Referral Center) <https://bit.ly/KamloopsChildCareReport2020>
- A school with a StrongStartBC room that was licensed
- EDI data

The main benefit of Just B4 is play-based learning. Play-based learning leads to a strong sense of curiosity and learning. Just B4 preschool provides opportunities for children to learn in ways that interest them, building a positive association with learning.

Ready, Set, Learn (RSL)

Intended for families and children preparing to enter kindergarten, RSL is all about fostering positive connections between families, the school system, and local community agencies. All SD73 elementary schools that enroll Kindergarten classes hold RSL events in their schools or communities. These events provide a fun, family-oriented atmosphere with the intent of supporting children's transitions into school.

RSL provides Ministry funds to support Kindergarten transition programs and events. These funds are used to purchase SPARK bags for every incoming K student for use during SPARK events. Schools are also allocated funds based on the projected kindergarten enrollment numbers to offset SPARK (or k transition) expenses. These funds can be used for consumables, Kindergarten teacher release time, snacks, and various other items often found in use during SPARK events.

Seamless Day Kindergarten (SDK)

Seamless Day Kindergarten is a unique program that provides before and after-school care for students in kindergarten and grade one. The students remain in the same caring, play-based environment throughout the day. This allows the educators to better meet the needs of the child and expand on their interests and wonders. The educator team includes a classroom teacher and two early childhood educators. With minimum transitions for the students and team collaboration for the educators, students excel in all aspects of their development.

The before- and after-school care runs Mondays to Fridays with before-school care offered from 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM and after-school care from 2:30 PM to 5:30 PM. The hours are adapted for the six non-instructional days and run from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

The location of the SDK Pilot Program in SD73 was determined by several factors including:

- Parental need for before- and after-school care (based on Kamloops Community Child Care Planning Report - June 2020 and Discussions with Kamloops Early Years/Child Care/Resource and Referral Center) <https://bit.ly/KamloopsChildCareReport2020>
- Availability of licensed child care within the community
- A school with additional space (two rooms were licensed - a kindergarten classroom plus one other)
- A kindergarten teacher participating in the pilot project.
- EDI data

Once the program's policies and guidelines were developed and the classroom spaces at Arthur Hatton Elementary were licensed by the local health authority, the program opened for registration late January 2022. This program is currently offered for a minimal fee. Families may qualify for childcare subsidies through the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

Main benefits:

- Provide children and families with quality early care and learning experiences in a single location for the full workday, with the same caring adults in their local school.
- Improve children's transitions to kindergarten, support their continuity of learning, and enhance communication with families.
- Enable ECEs to work collaboratively with classroom teachers in providing high-quality early learning experiences.
- Identify areas that create barriers for schools to successfully operate SDK models.
- Promote an inclusive education system so that students with diverse abilities are fully participating members of a community of learners.
- Increase the number of affordable, accessible and high-quality child care spaces offered in schools, while helping to build the future of child care required to move BC towards an inclusive universal child care system.

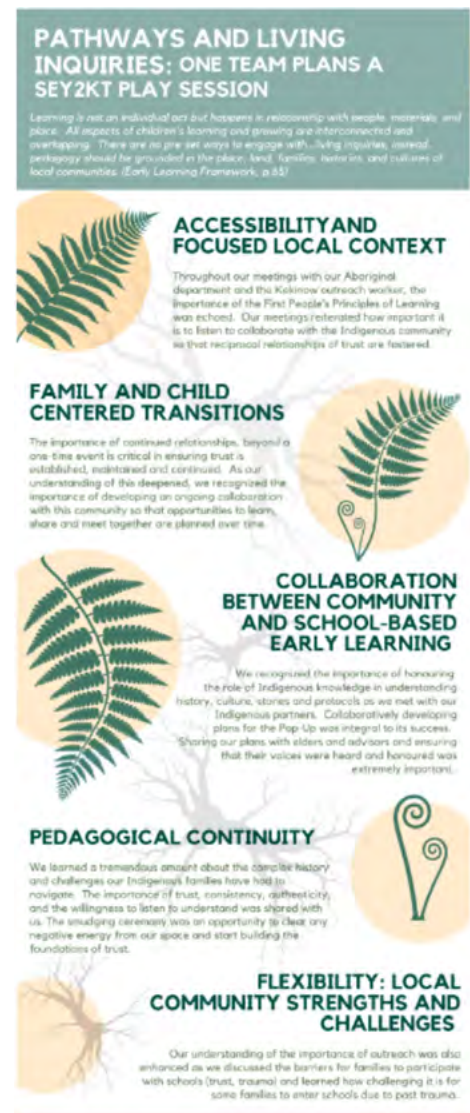
Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition (SEY2KT)

SEY2KT is a MECC supported program. Each year, the Ministry selects districts to be a part of a provincial pilot aimed at improving the social, emotional, and learning outcomes for early learners. SD73 is in its fifth year participating in this project.

A key aspect of SEY2KT is the growth of a collaborative project started between our StrongStartBC educators, our new ECEs, and our kindergarten teachers. These early years' educators co-plan their time together to improve the transition between pre-K and Kindergarten. Pre-K children spend time, along with their familiar StrongStartBC educator or ECE teacher in the school environment. This transition time occurs a full year prior to starting kindergarten. Our experience shows us that giving our kindergarten children time to learn and adjust leads to greater gains in all areas of learning. Relationships are the heart of this project. SEY2KT is not focused on a single act of 'transition' – it is about making connections and developing relationships among families and communities.

The report can be found at: <https://bit.ly/SEY2KT2020-21>

Compassionate Systems Leadership information and presentation: <https://www.compassionatesystemsleadership.net/sey2kt-20-21>



Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK)

Through the provision of Ministry of Education and Child Care's RSL funds, district staff, school staff, StrongStartBC Early Childhood Educators, and community agencies collaborate and join together to support incoming kindergarten families with a seamless transition into their local schools. SPARK is implemented through meet and greets, outside play programs, and in-person sessions based on literacy, numeracy, physical literacy, and healthy choices.

Each participating school team consists of kindergarten teachers, learning assistance resource teachers, principals and vice-principals, certified education assistants, Aboriginal education workers, and early childhood educators. We continue to monitor participation to ensure that a SPARK program, with well-developed lesson plans and supports, is included throughout the entire district.

To support our schools, packages of materials are created and distributed. In person training sessions with teams are facilitated upon request. Online resources and materials with lesson plans, videos, and connections to community are updated and added to every year as the materials and needs change.

StrongStartBC (SS)

The Kamloops-Thompson School District is very proud of the StrongStartBC program we provide in seven of our elementary schools. Children and their parents or caregivers in our community can access high-quality early learning environments and activities offered in the StrongStartBC centers located at AE Perry, Arthur Hatton, Barriere, Beattie, Haldane, Marion Schilling, and Raft River. Young learners benefit from SS programs, not just in early language and literacy development, but also in social-emotional and self-regulation development.

To help children prepare for success in Kindergarten, qualified early childhood educators (ECEs) lead and demonstrate learning activities, story time, music, and art. Parents and caregivers learn how they can help support their children's learning, language development, skills, knowledge, and attitudes for success in school.

Supported Transitions

Early years kindergarten planning for students with diverse learning abilities takes place each spring. The purpose of this planning is to effectively transition children into kindergarten by collaboratively sharing information between families, community agencies, and District employees.

To prepare for kindergarten, the parents of children entering kindergarten are invited to attend District engagement sessions. In addition, a kindergarten transition night is planned with community agencies for the parents of children with diverse learning needs.

Once students enroll in school, Inclusive Education Services staff members provide direct service and consultation, together with school-based teams, on an as-needed basis to meet individual student's needs⁴.

⁴ For more information on supporting students in SD73, see the Annual Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Report on our District website

Appendix D - Community Partners - Kamloops

Early Learning and Childcare Engagement Group

In 2019 – 2020, the City of Kamloops undertook the work of creating the Child Care Planning Program report with the support of a consultant and an Advisory Committee to engage with key stakeholders in the community on the topic of childcare. The creation of the engagement group was developed to build a bridge between early learning and childcare stakeholders. SD73's ELCC team are an invited member of this engagement group and continue to work with this engagement group as they consider complex local issues such as access to universal, quality early years' care.

Interior Community Services (ICS) and Early Years' Centre (EYC)

Interior Community Services and the Early Years' Centre host Kindergarten Transition nights. These sessions happen in late fall (generally November), and again during the winter (generally February). These information sessions have community information tables and booths for parents and guardians. As a direct partner, SD73 teams from Inclusive Education, Aboriginal Education, Transportation, and the ELCC team are invited to participate in this community event.

Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative (KELLI)

Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative provides free early literacy programming for children 0 – 5 years and their families. They are a key partner with the SD73's SPARK (Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten) program, KELLI is the host agency for the very popular Mother Goose program that runs in many of our schools.

Another popular community event is the ABC Family Literacy Day. ABC Literacy Day attracts families from all over the community to attend a day-long open house each January and is often the kick-off event to the popular 'Unplug and Play' week of events highlighted in SD73 schools.

Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS)

KIS serves immigrants, refugees, migrant workers, visible minorities, first-generation Canadians, and their families in becoming full and equal members of Canadian society. KIS delivers programs and services designed to advance the journey and provide information, support, and tools to help each individual reach their goals and facilitate adjustment to a new life in Kamloops and the Thompson-Nicola Region. KIS helps link families to appropriate community services and programs. Through KIS programs, local services and resources, children, youth, parents and seniors are helped to gain the language and cultural knowledge they need to be healthy, successful and caring community citizens.

One focus for KIS is the Early Years Bridging Program which provides families with young children a safe and supportive environment to play and learn, connect with others, learn about parenting within a Canadian context, and obtain information about resources available to them in Kamloops. The program has two components, one for children and the other for parents. The children's program emulates the goals of a preschool environment, and includes supervised free play, "Circle Time", outside play, and music therapy. The parents' program includes guest speakers for specific topics, based on their expressed needs to build parents' capacity and resiliency. New this year is the inclusion of a SD73 Kindergarten Registration and Transitioning program led by SD73 Early Years Coordinator.

Literacy in Kamloops (Link)

Literacy in Kamloops works to increase awareness about the importance of literacy. Link provides literacy support for all ages, including early learners. Examples of Link in the community include Unplug and Play, Raise a Reader, Bright Red Book Bus, Bright Red BookShelf, and One-to-One Reading.

PLAYKamloops/Pacific Sport

PLAYKamloops brings together leaders from key community sectors including education, recreation, sport, health, and the media to raise awareness of what physical literacy is and why it is important to integrate physical literacy programs into the community. PlayKamloops and Pacific Sport are direct partners with SD73's SPARK project, as well as the Kindergarten transition events.

Regional Early Childhood Pedagogy Network (ECPN)

The Early Childhood Pedagogy Network is a province-wide network of pedagogists who walk alongside educators and children within early childhood contexts. The work of the pedagogist is to disrupt the status quo of education in British Columbia with slow, pedagogical decisions and projects that open possibilities for other ways of being and knowing in early childhood education. In Kamloops, community pedagogist [Teresa Smith](#) has been working within three early childhood education centers since September 2020.

In addition to this in-center work, Teresa and TRU faculty pedagogist, Cory Jobb, have invited early education professionals from across the region to engage in discussions about the local early childhood education landscape. Specifically, the hope is to create a conversation among education professionals through which we might learn about our shared inheritances as educators in unceded Secwepemcúl'ecw, consider the present conditions of education here, and envision alternative possibilities for education and care that is meaningful and relevant to 21st century childhoods now and into the future. To get in touch with Teresa and/or to join this conversation, you can email her directly at tsmit286@uwo.ca.

Thompson Rivers University Nursing Students

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is a screening tool that promotes parental and caregiver awareness of their child's development from birth to age six. Access to families is acquired through the StrongStartBC programs in SD73. Completion of the ASQ increases family understanding of developmental milestones. It further teaches families activities to assist if milestones are delayed.

Another TRU initiative, the Healthy Start program, involves the third-year nursing students. Healthy Start supports readiness skills and positive health habits for our early learners and works collaboratively with our Early Childhood Educators (ECE) in the StrongStartBC programs. The TRU nursing students act as a conduit to services and community support. To support the healthy development of children, the early learning community has identified six areas of wellness: emotional health, nutrition, sleep, activity and exercise, safety, and disease prevention. Supporting these areas of wellness directly contribute to a healthy start to school.

Appendix E - Rural Community Partners

All of our rural partners play a vital role in developing and delivering programming for SD73 families and children who live outside of the City of Kamloops area.

- ❑ Aboriginal Band Agencies
- ❑ Indigenous Early Learning Centers
- ❑ Interior Community Services (ICS)
- ❑ Interior Health (IH)
- ❑ Logan Lake Wellness Health and Youth (WHY)
- ❑ Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD)
- ❑ Yellowhead Community Services (YCS)



