

EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE ANNUAL REPORT

February 2024



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:

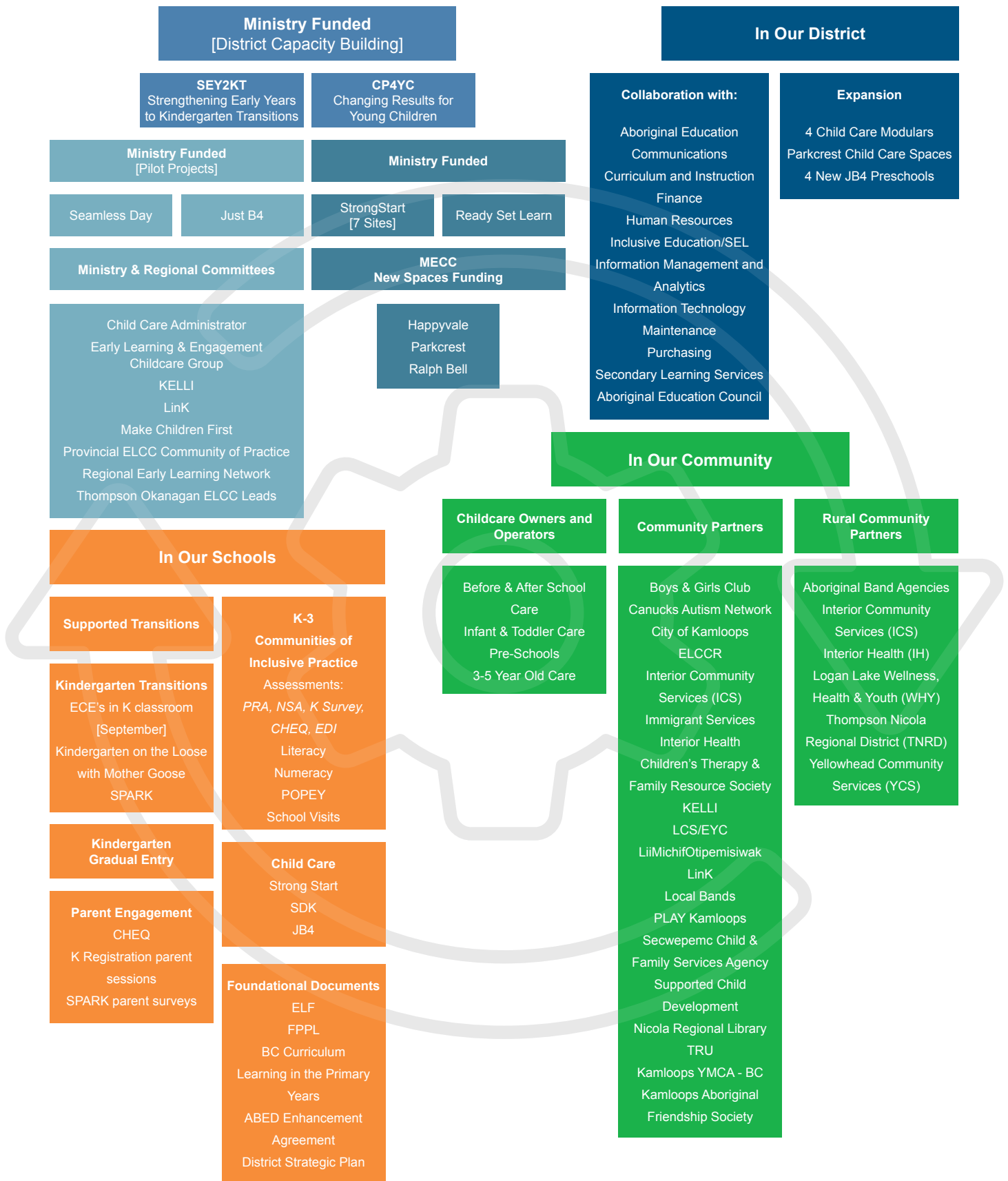
- Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
- Sexqeltqin (Adams Lake Indian Band)
- Quaaout (Little Shuswap Lake Band)
- Sk'emtsin (Neskonlith Band)
- Simpcw
- Pellt'iq't (Whispering Pines/Clinton Band)
- Skítsesten (Skeetchestn Band)



Table of Contents

Early Learning and Child Care - Flow Chart	4
Executive Summary	5
District Strategic Plan	7
Past, Present, Future Charts	9
Early Learning in SD73	30
Intellectual Development	31
Assessments/Surveys	31
Programs and Initiatives	34
Human and Social Development (Wellbeing)	39
Assessment/Surveys	39
Programs and Initiatives	42
Community Collaboration	51
Community Partners	51
Systems Development	53
Staffing	53
Staff Development	54
Finances	54
Human Resources	54
Facilities/Purchasing	55
Next Steps	55

Early Learning and Child Care



Executive Summary

In the past year and a half, the Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC) and the Kamloops-Thompson School District (SD73) have been navigating the expanded birth to grade 12 education system. This expansion has created opportunities to further address equity measures for all children entering into kindergarten through the creation of and ongoing support and guidance of the Early Learning and Child Care Team (ELCC). SD73's Early Learning team consists of the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary and Early Years, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care, and the 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 years.

The ELCC team will create educational environments where all learners can be successful due to strong starts as learners. Having a dedicated early learning team in SD73 supports this for all early years 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 the school years for families with a variety of programs and opportunities. The ELCC team works from the foundational belief that high-quality, accessible and affordable child care is essential to the well-being of children, their families and the broader community. Furthermore, research in the field widely recognizes that child care plays a critical role in economic development, poverty reduction, gender equality, social inclusion and healthy child development. In recognition of this, the SD73's ELCC team, alongside its many district and community partners, are committed to interconnected opportunities to address child care needs that exist at both our district and regional levels.

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](#)¹ as well as The Conference Board of Canada (2017)² 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's 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 pre-K to 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 support, 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. The ELCC's work this past year has continued to focus on the kindergarten transition programs, K-3 directives, and the provision of quality child care opportunities such as Seamless Day Kindergarten (SDK - Arthur Hatton) and Just B4 (JB4) within five of the seven StrongStart sites while looking for opportunities to further expand these programs in a viably productive way. The ELCC team was also able to expand on the implementation of the UBC Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) assessment which provides a snapshot of life experiences and well-being over the years prior to entering

¹ Alexander, Craig. "Why early childhood education is important for you, yes you." Online Document Catalogue. 8 Apr. 2021.

² The Conference Board of Canada. "Ready for Life: A Socio-Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care." Oct. 2017.

kindergarten, and complete the ninth year of implementing UBC's Early Development Instrument (EDI).

Continuing the established work of previous years, the ELCC team plans 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 2023-2024 school year specific to the area of assessments have included expanding the districts involvement in the CHEQ assessment (17 elementary schools participated this year), utilizing the results of EDI Wave 8 to inform district educators as to where to target intervention support, continuing to improve upon and implement updated assessments (K Survey, Primary Reading Assessment) and further implementing the Number Sense Assessment (K-3) initiated last spring. Other highlights from the current year include collaborating with SD73's Literacy Team with the implementation of the district's Reading Strategies Bookmark, supporting the implementation of an early years phonics program for grade 1 and 2 teachers, and continuing the workshop series with the Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years (POPEY) for grade 2 and 3 teachers.

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 implementing a series of training workshops for primary teachers specific to the implementation of the updated Primary Reading Assessments (PRAs) and initiating further parallel work for primary teachers in SD73's French Immersion schools (FRIMM). The ELCC team has continued to support the development and implementation of the Number Sense Assessment (NSA) as it continues in its full pilot year. ELCC also initiated work with the Aboriginal Education Council specific to including early learning aspects within the updated [Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement](#) (2023-2028). Child care considerations from this document outline ways in which child care providers and partners of all kinds can work together to deliver early learning and child care opportunities reflective of the following key points: culturally responsive citizens; language; foundation skills; inclusive education; student, parent and community engagement; mental health; anti-racism education; land-based education; assessment; and career education. The ELCC team continues to take part in numerous community meetings and discussions specific to SD73's newly expanded role into child care where the need to continue to address concerns and questions 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. At the end of the 2023 school year, the ELCC team completed and submitted the required Environmental Scan of child care specific to those within or on school district properties. Additionally, the ELCC team implemented two child care needs surveys at the end of the 2023 school year: an Indigenous Families Child Care Needs Assessment and a Child Care Needs Survey. These two surveys have provided an updated snapshot of the current needs for childcare for both SD73 and ELCC community partners. 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 to create additional early childhood education positions and Finance to create funding models that will support current programs as well as the possibilities of expansions as Ministry funding allows. ELCC team members continue to 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 9 data, which was completed in January 2023, 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 2023 PRA data highlights 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.

The 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 portfolio will continue to mean 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 SD73 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.

Early Learning and Child Care is foundational in all of these priority areas as the work in the early years sets SD73 students up for greater success moving forward. *“Early learning paves the way for learning at school and throughout life. What children learn in their first few years—and how they learn it—can have long-lasting effects on their success and health as children, teens, and adults.”* (Eunice Kennedy Shriver, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2021). For the purpose of this annual report, the priorities focussed on this year are: Intellectual Development, Human and Social Development/Wellbeing, and Systems Development.



Past, Present, Future Charts

ACTION ITEMS:

The following information highlights the work that has been done, which strategies and actions have been implemented and future goals to be achieved and are directly connected to the three priorities being highlighted within this report.

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)</p> <p>The CHEQ program is administered through the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) out of the University of British Columbia (UBC). 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. 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.</p>		
<p>SD73 had 74% of eligible families from 14 elementary schools participate in the HELP-UBC CHEQ, September 2022. For more information regarding either HELP or CHEQ, see http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/ and http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/cheq/cheq-parent-information/. In the spring of 2023, the ELCC team collaborated with the UBC CHEQ team to host a regional session for BC Interior School Districts and their community teams to discuss the impact and value of CHEQ data.</p>	<p>SD73 had 85% of eligible families from 17 elementary schools participate in the UBC CHEQ, September 2023. This year, due to the high participation rate, the data could be used to provide insights to SD73’s current kindergarten cohort and the necessity of providing support and possible interventions into kindergarten classes this year. This data will be used to work with district and community partners to monitor needs and create strategies at a community level to support children transitioning from pre-k programs and supports into kindergarten.</p>	<p>We will encourage schools to continue to participate and actively engage parents and create opportunities for completion of this survey. We also know that the data we collect through CHEQ is appreciated by community partners who use the information to make informed decisions specific to programs and resources. Due to our high participation rates, UBC has chosen SD73 to pilot the implementation of CHEQ via spring 2024 Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) sessions. We will continue to offer and provide ongoing support to principals, kindergarten teachers and school support teams from CHEQ participating schools specific to reading, interpreting and discussing the data and developing plans to support the kindergarten learners.</p>

In 2022-2023

In 2023-2024

In 2024-2025

ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: K Survey

The K survey is designed to collect data about individual kindergarten students over the course of their kindergarten year. This data should be used to inform teaching practices and interventions to support children who are showing potential delays and gaps in their early learning journey. In kindergarten this may take the form of small group work, one-on-one support and additional adult interventions all aimed at increasing children's skills and understandings. Survey questions are directly connected to the curriculum and highlight essential foundational skills and understandings for successful further development.

Full K Survey implemented including the new Number Sense Assessment questions for June input. Kindergarten (K) teachers input their own K Survey data into EdPlan insight. Administration and teachers have full access to reports and graphs.

A survey was given to K teachers in June of 2023 looking for feedback on the K Survey. Of the K teachers (30%) who participated 96.2% felt the K survey was useful as both an assessment of and for learning which is a sign of a useful assessment. 92.3% believe that the K Survey continues to capture the information needed to support students and to inform teacher practice. 88% view the pilot Number Sense Assessment (NSA) either as informative or very informative. And 88.5% used the results from the NSA section to inform their practice.

Based on feedback provided, a small working group should be created to look further at fine-tuning the survey and at ways that the information from the survey can further inform teaching practices which will better target the needs of kindergarten students.



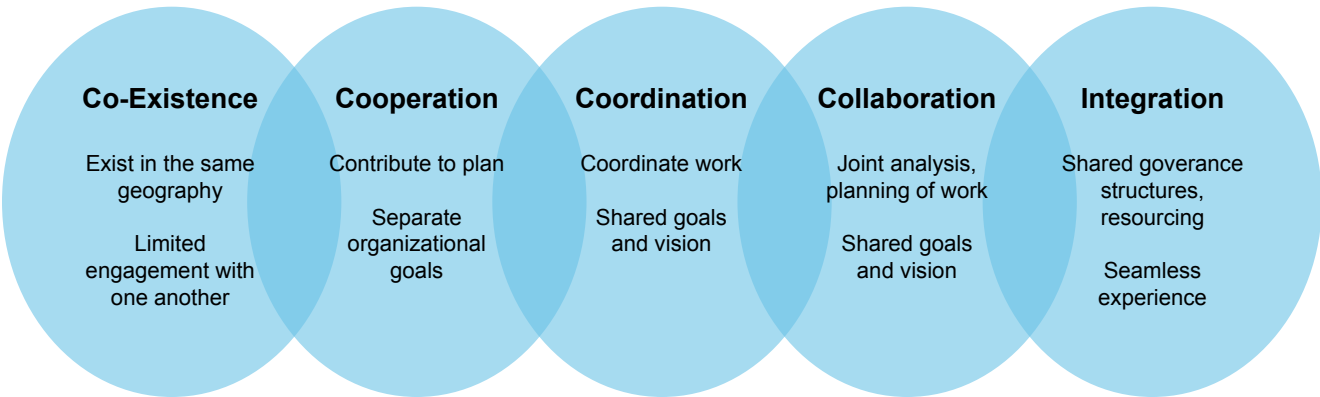
In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: Early Development Indicator (EDI)</p> <p>The EDI is a short questionnaire completed by Kindergarten teachers in the second half of the kindergarten school year. This instrument is used not only across SD73, but across Canada and internationally. The purpose of the questionnaire is to measure a child’s ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations. EDI data offers a foundation for building our understanding of the patterns and trends in children’s physical, emotional, social and cognitive development at kindergarten. 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.</p>		
<p>SD73 participated in the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) with UBC EDI Wave 9 - February 2023. For more information on EDI, see https://edi.offordcentre.com/. Following this, near the end of the 2023 school year, the EDI Wave 8 data was released to school districts. Wave 8 represents the 20th year of collecting data provincially. These two decades of research have demonstrated the predictive capability of EDI vulnerability.</p>	<p>Based on the SD73 Wave 8 EDI report, 1082 kindergarten students participated (94.9% participation rate). 31% of participating students are vulnerable on one or more vulnerability scales. Without additional support or care, children who are vulnerable on the EDI have an increased risk of encountering difficulties in the school years and beyond. This data will be used to work with community partners to monitor needs and create strategies at a community level to support children transitioning from pre-k programs and supports into kindergarten. Schools and School Districts are also encouraged to use the data to make informed decisions about supports and programming based on the data collected.</p>	<p>We will continue to use Wave 8 data to support areas needing intervention and when Wave 9 data is released in 2026, this will also be used to support interventions and programs. EDI will not be implemented again in SD73 until February 2027.</p>

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: 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 in employing practices that accelerate learning for students who have fallen behind and ensure schools have the resources they need to support these students. PRA data is also pivotal in determining which students can access the summer reading intervention program.</p>		
<p>The Literacy Team conducted research into the Science of Reading and incorporated detailed feedback from over forty Grade 1-3 teachers as it updated the Primary Reading Assessment (PRA) to reflect current best practices. In the spring of 2023, two optional phonics assessments were created with a small group of primary teachers. The Literacy Team met with primary teachers from both French Immersion schools on the September 25, 2023 Non Instructional Day (NID) to understand teachers' perspectives on the strengths and challenges of <i>Évaluation de lecture au primaire</i> (ÉLAP).</p>	<p>In the fall, 120 Grade 1-3 teachers and LARTs attended full-day in-services to learn about updates to the PRA, how to connect the updates to inform their teaching practices, and how to support students who are not yet reading at grade level through various strategies and resources, such as the new Teaching Points provided as part of the updated PRA. Detailed resources, including videos, are posted on MySD73. Some teachers are currently implementing SD73 created draft supplementary assessments. The Literacy Team is facilitating a French Immersion (FRIMM) primary literacy assessment working group. This group is currently evaluating newer research and resources (FRIMM specific) as it builds background knowledge about second language literacy assessment and instruction.</p>	<p>The PRA updates workshop will be offered at the April 22 NID and at a date to be determined next year.</p> <p>Feedback will be sought and work will be completed on the optional, supplementary assessments (phonics, high frequency words) to support literacy instruction. Based on recommendations from the French Immersion primary literacy assessment group, the ÉLAP will be updated and supplemental assessments identified or created.</p>

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: Number Sense Assessment (NSA)</p> <p>The NSA is in its first full pilot year of implementation. Schools and teachers who are utilizing this assessment are recommended to input data into the district's data dashboard starting in February with completion of all questions included by April. Like the PRA, the NSA data can be used as both formative and summative assessment. The data can also be viewed, after input, by both administrators and teachers for use in targeting areas needing focus and intervention for students.</p>		
<p>The Numeracy Team brought together small groups of grade 1-3 teachers to provide ongoing input into the Number Sense Assessment (NSA). Numerous teachers/schools chose to pilot the NSA in June 2023. Some grade 1 teachers were brought to the Henry Grube Education Center in the spring of 2023 for professional development specific to the NSA and supportive resources.</p>	<p>The Numeracy Team continued to provide professional development throughout fall 2023 to remaining grade 1 teachers. Grade 2 and 3 teacher representatives from each elementary school received training on the NSA in January of 2024. Based on feedback from teachers, changes have occurred to the NSA in an ongoing manner. Currently, all elementary schools are participating during this pilot year. Grade 3 teachers no longer need to implement the District Numeracy Assessment (DNA). Interest in the NSA has been expressed by other school districts. June 5th will be a day of learning specifically for Grade 3 teachers around number sense and computational fluency.</p>	<p>The 2024-2025 school year will see the full implementation of the NSA. Similar days of learning for Grade 2 teachers will occur that bridge the Grade 1 and 3 work with teachers completed in 2023-2024.</p>
<p>ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: Child Care Needs Assessment Survey</p>		
<p>The Child Care Needs Assessment was sent to SD73 K-7 families, pre-K families in communities within SD73 in June 2023.</p>	<p>A summary was created and shared with the School Board in Fall 2023 and then shared with community partners such as the City of Kamloops to support their development of child care opportunities.</p>	<p>The information collected from this survey will be used in all New Spaces Fund applications as opportunities present in SD73. The information will continue to be shared with interested community partners in their pursuit of child care expansion opportunities.</p>

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>ASSESSMENTS AND SURVEYS: The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MECC) Environmental Scan This scan ensured all voices connected to child care within SD73 had a voice. Most importantly, the ELCC team worked directly with the Aboriginal Education Council to ensure Indigenous voices were heard and included within the environmental scan. A direct result of this was the specific Indigenous Families Child Care Needs Assessment showcased above.</p>		
<p>The MECC Environmental Survey was initiated in the Fall of 2022 and the final report was submitted in July 2023. At that time, SD73 was designated at Cooperation on the Continuum of Integration (see insert below) which is a Child Care on School Grounds measure. A primary reason for this was that the District and the MECC continue to learn how to integrate early learning and child care with the traditional K-12 model. Priority funding still stems from K-12 students without a viable funding model in place to support programming for ages 0 to 5.</p>	<p>While growth has occurred in the continuum of integration, SD73 is continuing in the Cooperation stage in which there are growing shared communication and professional learning opportunities.</p>	<p>SD73 will move toward the Coordination stage by ensuring systems and structures as in place to reframe child care from “space creation” to “service creation.” This will continue the work of weaving child care into the education system rather than adding it on to an existing one and create a community of practice for early years.</p>

Continuum of Integration



PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

In 2022-2023

In 2023-2024

In 2024-2025

District Initiatives & Programs: Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) and Ready Set Learn (RSL)

RSL is the allocated funding provided by MECC 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. In SD73, these funds are used primarily for SPARK resource bags for students and k-transition (SPARK) events.

SPARK was implemented at all elementary schools. SPARK bags continue to be provided centrally via the ELCC team. Elementary schools implemented a variety of the recommended programs. The Early Years Coordinator continued to provide resources and lessons for successful implementation of the program.

SPARK continues to run as last year. Ready Set Learn (RSL) funding from MECC continues to be allocated to each school to support k-transition events (SPARK). Training and support continues to be provided to kindergarten teachers and interested Principals and Vice-Principals by the ELCC team.

The ELCC team will investigate additional options for the provision of the SPARK bags and how to best utilize the RSL funding to support program implementation. The ELCC team will continue to support and build resources for SPARK to reflect the growing interests and needs of SD73.



In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>District Initiatives & Programs: Kindergarten (K) Transitions K-transitions encompass a broad range of supports and services provided to children and their families as they prepare to transition into kindergarten. The ELCC team is dedicated to working with teachers, community partners as well as children and their families to ensure the k-transition is successful to all involved.</p>		
<p>The ELCC team supports kindergarten transitions through a variety of programs and initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) • StrongStart • Just B4 Preschool • Seamless Day Kindergarten • Kindergarten <i>On the Loose with Mother Goose</i> • Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) in the Kindergarten classroom for the month of September • Kindergarten transition meetings with the District's Inclusive Care Team- Spring • Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) • Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS) - support with English Language Learner (ELL) families • Kindergarten Round Up family night. 	<p>The ELCC team will continue to support designated K-transition events and programs. Work has begun to update the Kindergarten Information Videos for next year's kindergarten registration parent information evenings.</p>	<p>The ELCC team, with community partners and agencies, have been invited to participate in SD73's Transitions Fair which historically only targeted transitions for students grades 10-12. This year it has expanded to help families with children ages 0-5, who have diverse needs, prepare to transition into kindergarten within the next few years. The ELCC team is always looking for creative and innovative ways to strengthen kindergarten transition opportunities for children and their families. We remain open to opportunities and possibilities as they arise and as we receive feedback from current events and programs.</p>

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>District Initiatives & Programs: Professional Development (Pro-D) and the Early Years The ELCC team continues to develop Pro-D opportunities to meet the needs of ECEs and primary teachers in SD73. In many cases, Pro-D is offered in collaboration with various SD73 teams as well as community partners. This is a growing area of need and interest.</p>		
<p>The ELCC team have provided and collaborated in a variety of Pro-D opportunities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years (POPEY): K-1 • CR4YC • Compassionate Systems Leadership • ECE monthly pro-d focussed on the book <i>Quality Reflection Tool</i> and the Early Learning Framework (ELF) • Oral Language Development - <i>Moe the Mouse</i> • NSA Training • FRIMM K Survey Training • K/1 Local Specialty Association (LSA) after school meetings once a month 	<p>Pro-D for ECEs has continued to focus on the Early Learning Framework while building inquiry and play environments with the child and family in mind. Provincial Outreach Program for Early Years (POPEY) has focused on grade 2 & 3 teachers as well as interested LART's from participating schools. In general, the ELCC team has continued to integrate pro-d opportunities for primary teachers through collaboration with the literacy, numeracy, and Aboriginal Education teams.</p>	<p>The ELCC team looks forward to the revised <i>MECC Primary Program</i>, now called: <i>Learning in the Primary Years</i>. This document takes many of the foundational early learning principles outlined in the Early Learning Framework and moves them into the K-3 years. This document is something that will potentially form the basis for professional development created by the ELCC team moving forward. Additionally, the ELCC team has had initial conversations with POPEY regarding returning to Kindergarten teachers and strengthening foundational literacy skills, assessments and strategies for this grade group. Initial conversations have also taken place with the Numeracy team specific to a possible joint offering specific to Reggio Emilio numeracy approaches for K and 1 teachers and interested ECEs. We would like to provide professional development that bridges the gap between ECEs and primary teachers and extends to include ECEs from community programs. The creation of an Early Years Community of Practice within SD73 is being considered.</p>

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

In 2022-2023

In 2023-2024

In 2024-2025

Collaborations: ELCC and HR and Finance Departments

HR and Finance departments worked to support the new ELCC portfolio and navigate the various funding streams and staffing needs.

Through collaborative efforts, there is now a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with CUPE and the creation of a new Child Education Assistant (CEA) position, specific to supporting before- and after-school care (BASC) programs when ELCC is able to start expanding to include such child care programs. Additionally, in January 2024, the ELCC team, with Board approval, was able to expand Just B4 preschool to four elementary sites: Barriere, Beattie, Raft River and Marion Schilling. Much work has been done to fine tune child care fee processes with the Finance department to ensure programs run viably.

Further efforts continue to look for child care expansion opportunities possibly into the area of BASC at schools that have space for such programs. In any and all expansion possibilities, further consideration into the creation of a viable inclusion model will need to take place.



In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Collaborations: ELCC and Aboriginal Education Department		
<p>Various projects have taken place in collaboration with the ELCC team and members of the District Aboriginal Education Department. After presenting and consulting with the Aboriginal Education Council, the ELCC team began work on the possible inclusion of early learning and child care initiatives in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Additionally, the ELCC team continued to successfully Indigenize a modified <i>Mother Goose</i> program that some SD73 Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) are implementing, such as the S07 S07 (Coyote Singing). Indigenous content was added to SPARK kits for all incoming K students and families.</p>	<p>In an effort to find Indigenous ways to support Indigenous early learners, the program <i>MOE the Mouse</i> was purchased and the Early Years Coordinator and the Aboriginal Elementary Coordinator took the necessary training in order to be facilitators and trainers for the program implementation. The Early Years Coordinator and the Aboriginal Elementary Coordinator completed the development of a new eight week intervention program and a new assessment, based on the <i>MOE the Mouse</i> program, that will help to inform teaching practices. Pilot implementation of this program will start in a school, February 2024.</p>	<p>Moving ahead, there will be continued support for implementing and sharing Aboriginal language early learning through programs like <i>Mother Goose</i> programming. The continuation of work to utilize Indigenous content in SPARK kits is ongoing. There are plans to locally indigenize the <i>MOE the Mouse</i> program, with projected roll out in Fall 2024.</p>



In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Collaborations: ELCC and the Curriculum and Instruction Literacy Team		
<p>The Literacy team worked with a small group of teachers to revise the district Reading Strategies bookmark. The group created four differentiated bookmarks focused on word reading strategies. A series of four POPEY workshops on Literacy Foundations was offered in 2022-2023 to 20 K-Grade 1 teachers from eight schools. A workshop on <i>Shifting the Balance</i> for K-Grade 2 teachers was offered in December 2023 that focussed on the importance of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. With support from ELCC, the Literacy Team purchased, organized, and provided each elementary school with <i>The Phonics Companions</i> kits for Grade 1 and Grade 2. This resource complements <i>Jolly Phonics</i> for kindergarten. The Literacy Team updated the BC Performance Standards for Reading and Writing to align with the new Proficiency Scale.</p>	<p>Bookmarks were introduced and distributed at the PRA in-services in the fall. An after-school workshop was offered January 31st. A lesson sequence to introduce the strategies has been developed and implemented. A series of four POPEY workshops on High-Impact Literacy Routines was offered in 2023-2024 to 20 Grade 2-3 teachers from nine schools. A workshop on <i>Shifting the Balance</i> for Grades 3-8 teachers was offered in December 2024 that highlighted applications to both whole class instruction and intervention. Workshops on <i>The Phonics Companion</i> were offered in September and at the October Non-instructional Day. The Literacy Team has worked with the District Library Coordinator to begin a Decodables (for beginning readers) section in the HGEC Library Learning Commons. The Literacy Team is compiling various Literacy Guides and scopes and sequences (shared by several BC school districts).</p>	<p>The Literacy Team will continue to recommend and support bookmark use. An updated buddy reading lesson sequence will be created to support implementation. The collaboration with POPEY will be ongoing and it is hoped that this series might be replicated in some way to continue its work in supporting primary teachers, possibly specific to K teachers next year. The Literacy Team will continue to recommend and provide workshops focused on current professional learning resources. With exemplary phonemic awareness and phonics resources in K-Grade 2, the focus will shift to Grade 3. Various resources are being reviewed, including <i>Bug Club Morphology</i>. Decodables will continue to be added to the collection. The Literacy Team will continue work on developing a Literacy Guide to provide information about instruction and assessment. It is hoped this will provide a possible foundation for a district literacy intervention model.</p>

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Collaborations: ELCC and the Curriculum and Instruction Numeracy Team		
<p>The Numeracy team, along with Number Sense Assessment (NSA) work outlined previously, completed professional development around number sense and computational fluency using the anchor text <i>What To Look For</i> by Alex Lawson. Additionally, grade 1 teachers were guided to create resources that develop the essential foundational concepts necessary for all future grades to build upon. Every Kindergarten teacher came to a full day workshop around ten frames and the NSA portion of the K survey which supports the connection between curriculum and assessment.</p>	<p>During the fall of 2023, the Numeracy team ran full and half day workshops specific to the development of mathematical thinking. An important supplement to this was the team bringing in Carole Fullerton for the December NID. 160 K-3 educators participated in this event and were further supported in their classrooms with the provision of a Carole Fullerton resource. At all times, LARTs and administrators have been encouraged to attend these training sessions. In January, the Numeracy team focussed on Grade 3 teachers.</p>	<p>Moving forward the Numeracy team, based on feedback from January 2024 sessions, will be working further with Grade 3 teachers specific to connecting the new NSA with curriculum and the overall scope and sequence in math. Resources will be purchased that promote the development of place value understandings for grade 2 and 3 teachers. Further topics to be developed involve a conceptual understanding of fractions and how it relates to number sense and fluency. Later programming will include returning to K & 1 teachers who are either new to teaching or new to the grade level. This cyclic approach will continue to ensure all teachers have the opportunity for support and learning specific to math.</p>



In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Collaborations: ELCC and the Inclusive Education Department		
<p>A pilot project specific to the expertise of a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) was implemented late spring 2023 in both the JB4 and SDK programs at Arthur Hatton. The purpose of this pilot was two-fold. First, it was to implement a language program that would help reduce oral language gaps that may exist in pre-k and k students in the hopes of improving literacy results. Second, it was to provide on the job support and training from a language expert to the program teachers to help their language support skills moving forward through modeling and the provision of a research based resource.</p>	<p>The SLP project started earlier this year (January 2024) and will be able to benefit two elementary schools and their early years programs through the JB4 preschools.</p>	<p>Looking ahead it is hoped that this program can continue and even expand to support more early years programs in SD73. It is also hoped to look at other programs and professional experts (i.e. social-emotional learning) and ways to decrease equity gaps that may exist for our youngest learners through collaborative efforts.</p>



In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Collaborations: ELCC and Community Partners		
<p>The ELCC team works with a vast number of community partners in order to provide quality programs, resources, support and opportunities for preK and K-3 children. Please refer to the ELCC Flow Chart on page four.</p> <p>Specific ongoing community events that the ELCC team are actively involve in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise a Reader - Sept 2023 • ABC Family Literacy Day - Jan 2023 • Kindergarten Round Up - Feb 2023 • Kamloops Immigrant Services - K Loose with Mother Goose - Feb 2023 • Teddy Bear Picnic - June 2023 <p>In May 2023, the SD73 ELCC team hosted the first in-person Child Care Administrators dinner meeting, in partnership with the Kamloops YMCA-BC, Childhood Resource and Referral and Kamloops Early Years Centre (CCRR) who lead these meetings throughout the year.</p>	<p>The ELCC team continues to work hard to maintain ongoing partnerships while looking for additional opportunities for connection and partnership. In the fall of 2023, the team met with a variety of child care providers in Barriere to discuss what the community child care specific needs are and how we can come together to help support meeting the needs. The ELCC team continues to work with TRU nursing students and early childhood educators to establish positive relationships with families that foster children’s healthy development. SD73s involvement in the community run Kindergarten Round-Up presentation evening continues as well as exploring the possibility of additional supportive family sessions earlier in a child’s development towards kindergarten. The ELCC team will continue to co-host with the Kamloops YMCA-BC, CCRR the May Child Care Administrators dinner meeting.</p>	<p>The ELCC team will continue to work with the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, looking for innovative ways to provide educational opportunities for Indigenous people in the community who are interested in becoming Early Childhood Educators. The ELCC team will continue to collaborate with community partners with resources, materials and sessions for kindergarten readiness for families, preschools and childcare professionals. The ELCC team will continue to collaborate with early years’ community partners on community programming such as <i>Mother Goose</i>, <i>One-to-One Reading</i>, and <i>1001 Books Before Grade 1</i> to increase awareness about the importance of early literacy for all families while also continuing to deliver <i>Kindergarten on the Loose with Mother Goose</i> sessions that target early learning kindergarten literacy readiness skills. ELCC will continue to work closely with the Early Years Center on analyzing gaps in the system around family and community needs and create innovative resources and/or programs to fill the gaps.</p>

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Collaborations: ELCC StrongStart facilitators and Kindergarten teachers		
<p>StrongStart facilitators worked in collaboration with kindergarten teachers at SS schools during the month of September 2022. Further, StrongStart facilitators were released to attend kindergarten transition meetings and Kindergarten teachers were invited into preschool to observe and discuss children, spring 2023.</p>	<p>Both initiatives will continue during this school year. Kindergarten teachers and StrongStart facilitators speak to the positive impact these initiatives have on early learners transitioning into kindergarten.</p>	<p>Continue to develop ECE and kindergarten teacher partnerships in unique and creative ways to support seamless transitions into kindergarten for students and their families.</p>



PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

In 2022-2023

In 2023-2024

In 2024-2025

Ministry Initiatives & Programs: Strong Start (SS)

StrongStart is a free, early learning program designed for parents and caregivers to participate with children aged birth to five in one-on-one, play-based early learning activities. Parents and caregivers learn how they can help support their children’s learning, language development, skills, knowledge, and attitudes for success in school. SS is located in seven schools and exists as an agreement between SD73 and the MECC. These programs have existed with SD73 for over 20 years. One SS site has been providing a JB4 preschool program in the afternoon for the past three years.

The StrongStart programs continued to recover from COVID closures and online programming by the facilitators. Participation numbers began increasing to pre-COVID numbers at most of the centers. The ELCC team began working with StrongStart facilitators from the centers exploring expansion options which included JB4 preschool and/or after-school care programs.

As of January 2024, four StrongStart sites have added JB4 preschool in the afternoon. This provides an additional 40 child care spaces to SD73. The ELCC team has developed five language play kits to support English language learners to address the growing needs of culturally diverse families who access SS programs.

It is hoped that StrongStart sites will continue to support the JB4 preschool programs and also be considered, where appropriate, to include after school care. The ELCC will continue to champion the use of the expertise of the StrongStart ECEs to assist K-transitions in September. The ELCC team continues to work on creating supportive resources for StrongStart facilitators to implement in their programs that support new Canadian families. The ELCC team is working with Thompson-Okanagan ELCC leads to host a StrongStart Facilitator joint pro-d session in the 24/25 year in Kamloops.

In 2022-2023

In 2023-2024

In 2024-2025

Ministry Initiatives & Programs: Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)

CR4YC is an MECC-funded initiative that focuses on the social and emotional well-being of young children. This initiative involves six sessions throughout the school year. One of the CR4YC 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.

CR4YC was run with two schools and two community partners. Participants included StrongStart facilitators and kindergarten and grade 1 teachers, who worked alongside LMO (Lii Michif Otipemisiwak) and Children's Therapy and Family Resource Centre staff. The work continues focussed on a particular 'Wonder Child' who represents a child who can benefit from targeted social and emotional activities.

During this current year, the program continues to run utilizing primarily the same early years experts who participated the previous year. As the year progresses, work continues to utilize a 'Wonder Child'. This year, the focus is centered on "Living Stories", which focuses on critically observing, questioning, and wondering with inquiry about the chosen 'Wonder Child' for this year.

As long as the MECC continues to provide funding for this program, the ELCC team will continue to support the implementation of the program as it positively builds relationships between ECEs and teachers, while reducing the perceived professional gap between the professions. The ELCC team will consider how to take the concepts taught and implemented throughout this program and expand it to include other interested K/1 teachers and ECEs associated with SD73.



In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
<p>Ministry Initiatives & Programs: Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) SEY2KT is an MECC funded program aimed at improving the social, emotional, and learning skills, during transition into K activities, for children and their families. SD73 is in its sixth year participating in this project. Each year, the ELCC team and community partners from the CCRR meet to establish a targeted program based on gaps in programming which are determined by SD73 data (CHEQ, EDI) and community programming trends and pressures.</p>		
<p>The SEY2KT team created a project that targeted a gap in the support system for children and their families. The team collaborated with Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS) to support new immigrant families in how to register for kindergarten, how to prepare to meet the needs of their pre-K children, and how to learn through play. This took the form of a k registration event at KIS.</p>	<p>At the start of this school year, the SEY2KT team continued to support the work started last year for underrepresented families attached to community agencies. With this in mind, support continued with the Kamloops Immigrant Society (KIS) with the addition of k-transition support expanding to include Lii Michif Otipemisiwak (LMO) and the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society (KAFS) families who are new to the kindergarten process through the implementation of a specialized Kindergarten on the Loose with Mother Goose program for these targeted communities.</p>	<p>As long as the MECC continues to provide funding for this program, the ELCC team will continue to support the implementation of the program as we find the street data showing marked improvement in reaching some of our most vulnerable families. Each year, the team reevaluates potential areas of need and targets resources and programming to meet the needs of the community.</p>

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

In 2022-2023

In 2023-2024

In 2024-2025

Child Care Programs: Seamless Day Kindergarten (SDK)

SDK integrates before- and after-school care into the kindergarten classroom, delivered by certified early childhood educators (ECEs) who work alongside the classroom teacher during the school day. The program makes the best use of available school space, existing classrooms, outdoors, school gyms and libraries outside of school hours.

SDK continued in its second full-time year of programming at Arthur Hatton Elementary school.

SDK was a three-year funded program with the aim of being financially self-sufficient at the end of the third year. Originally, the funding potentially ended at the end of the three year pilot in June 2024. However, a recent announcement from the MECC stated the extension of funding in support of this successful program for one additional year.

The ELCC team and the Finance department are working on possible modified programs that could remain financially viable and could possibly be expanded to run at other elementary schools without the need of MECC funding.

Child Care Programs: Just B4 Preschool (JB4)

The Just B4 Preschool Early Learning Program is specifically designed for 3 and 4-year olds who will be entering kindergarten in the next few years. The curriculum focuses on both the *First Peoples Principles of Learning and the Early Learning Framework*. Just B4 (JB4) operates in conjunction with the existing StrongStart BC program by maximizing the use of StrongStart staff, space and resources within schools. JB4 provides an opportunity to strengthen early years to kindergarten transitions for children and families.

Of the seven existing StrongStart sites, all were licensed during this school year for expansion into Just B4 preschool and/ or after-school care. Of these, one already had a pre-existing preschool running (Haldane) and another site, Arthur Hatton, was in its second year of successful licensed child care offering JB4 five-days per week.

JB4 was a three-year funded program with the aim of being financially self-sufficient at the end of the third year. For SD73, the funding potentially ends in June 2024. The ELCC team and the Finance department created a modified three-day per week program that is financially viable without MECC funding and is currently running in four additional elementary schools (Beattie, Marion Schilling, Raft River and Barriere).

Moving forward, the ELCC hopes to continue to expand JB4 opportunities i.e. with enough interest the modified programs could become the original five-day per week program to support more students and their families.

In 2022-2023	In 2023-2024	In 2024-2025
Child Care Programs: Additional Child Care Programs		
<p>Before- and After-School Care (BASC) is not offered by SD73 at any elementary schools. Expansion of child care is carefully monitored based on need, space and financial viability.</p>	<p>Currently, SD73 is not providing BASC at elementary schools, beyond that which is associated with the SDK program at Arthur Hatton Elementary. There are currently three potential child care programs (BASC, Infant/Toddler and 3-5-year old care) being considered within the new Parkcrest Elementary school.</p>	<p>Moving forward, SD73 will be investigating the feasibility of providing BASC at the newly built Parkcrest Elementary. The ELCC will continue to support the consultation process associated with new builds to ensure architect renderings adhere to MECC provincial child care guidelines.</p>
Child Care Programs: Child Care Partnerships		
<p>In the Fall of 2022, the Request for Proposal (RFP) for child care space at Ralph Bell and Happyvale elementary sites closed. Inquiring Little Minds (ILM) was the successful operator of these child care sites which included Infant/Toddler and 3-5-year old care programs.</p>	<p>The Ralph Bell Elementary site, operated by Inquiring Little Minds (ILM), opened officially at the start of November 2023. The Happyvale site will open officially in April 2024. Both locations will provide a minimum of 72 childcare spaces.</p>	<p>The ELCC team will continue to work with ILM as per our contract to ensure affordable, quality child care is provided at both sites. A new RFP will be placed on BC Bid (2024/2025) inviting community partners to apply to be the operators of the child care programs that are being built inside of Parkcrest Elementary school.</p>

Early Learning in SD73

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. As stated by Dr. Justin Tarte, the director of teaching and learning in the Union R-XI School District in Union, Missouri, "If we can't first connect with our students' hearts, then we don't have a chance of connecting with their minds." Quality early learning programs allow the education system to ensure we have that important connection right from the start.

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 and Analytics, 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.

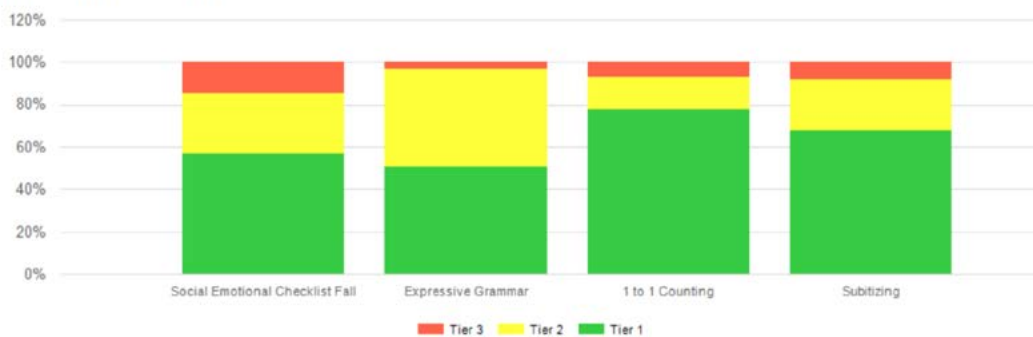
Intellectual Development

ASSESSMENTS/SURVEYS

Assessments and Surveys provide snapshots of how the district's earliest learners are improving their skills over time and with teacher implementation of programs, strategies and skills. In early learning, we are fortunate to have a snapshot, via the CHEQ Survey of potentially impactful factors prior to children even beginning in the K-12 system. From entry into kindergarten until the end of grade 3 there are layers of assessments to support growth over time and snapshots in time to ensure the teaching, programs and resources connected to ELCC are making an intentional positive difference for SD73's earliest learners. The data collected from these assessments and surveys directly relate to success in later assessments such as Foundational Skills Assessments (FSA) which is a summative snapshot of the work done in K-3.

Kindergarten (K) Survey Development

Kindergarten Survey - K Survey Fall



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. The data supports early intervention which in turn secures the best outcomes for student success.

Points of interest from Fall 2023 K Survey data:

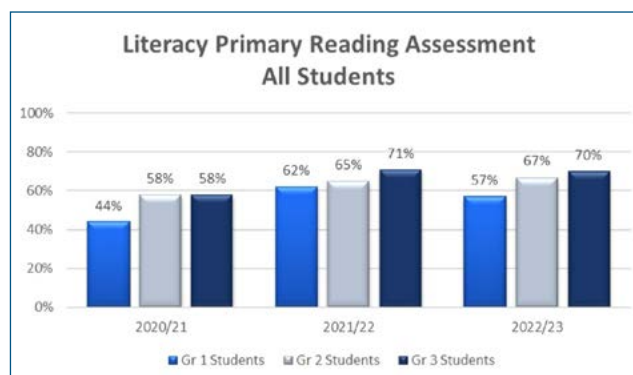
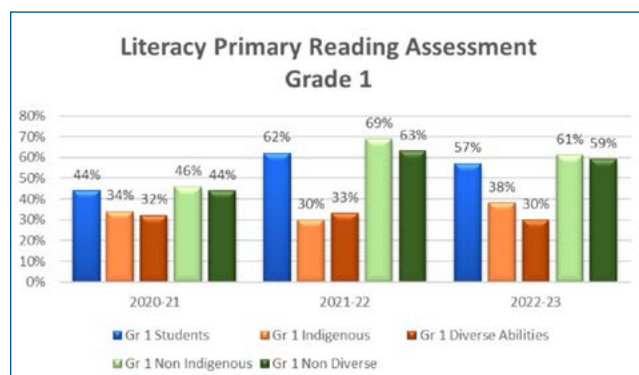
- Based on the fall findings, social-emotional learning, subitizing, and expressive grammar are all areas showing as areas needing additional teaching and/or targeted intervention strategies.
- Although 1 to 1 counting is relatively strong, this same group of K students struggle with subitizing, the ability to instantly recognize the number of objects without actually counting them. Students are able to memorize and repeat numbers, but they are not transferring this knowledge to number recognition and number concept: "...counting is the foundation upon which number concepts and skills are built" (*Young Children's Mathematics*, p. 8).
- 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.
- Struggles in the realm of social-emotional learning is not surprising for this cohort when one takes into consideration the correlated information provided in the Fall CHEQ results.

Primary Reading Assessment (PRA)

The PRA has been utilized in SD73 for many years. The district formally collects the data in June of each school year but many teachers voluntarily utilize the PRA two to three times a year to help inform their teaching practices to support targeted interventions and differentiated instruction for the students they teach.

Literacy - Primary Reading Assessment - June 2023				
	All Schools	Grade 01	Grade 02	Grade 03
Performance Level Unknown	1.28%	3.81%	0.00%	0.09%
Emerging	24.63%	27.90%	25.05%	21.08%
Developing	9.59%	11.81%	7.78%	9.22%
Proficient	27.50%	29.62%	28.56%	24.45%
Extending	37.00%	26.86%	38.61%	45.16%

Both of the following tables reflect the percentage of students reading at proficient or extending (i.e. reading at grade level) by the end of June 2023.



Points of Interest:

- Data from June 2023 'all primary students' indicates there was a slight negative decrease in reading achievement this past year when compared to previous years for grade 3 students and a 5% overall decrease for grade 1 students. Grade 2 students saw a 2% increase. Just over 34% of primary students were not reading at grade level this past June with an overall discrepancy of 13% between grade 1 and 3 with only 57% leaving grade 1 reading at grade level.
- When specifically considering Grade 1 results, a significant gap still exists between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students as well as between diverse and non-diverse learners. An improvement of 8% is noted for Aboriginal students this past year whereas a 7% overall decrease for Non Aboriginal students occurred. A 3% decrease overall occurred for diverse students and a 4% occurred for non-diverse students.

- This speaks to the importance of needing to know what the story is for every child before children enter kindergarten and how SD73, the ELCC team, and community partners should work together to positively impact these results by implementing programming and resources for children and families earlier and more often.
- Despite targeted expenditures specific to increasing skills of primary teachers (resources and training), gaps still exist and some students are reading below grade level at the end of each grade. These gaps are impacting future district and provincial results as the system starts in catch-up mode instead of providing opportunities for eliminating gaps before students enter kindergarten.



When kids struggle to learn how to read, it can lead to a downward spiral in which behavior, vocabulary, knowledge and other cognitive skills are eventually affected by slow reading development.

- Emily Hanford, “At a Loss for Words”, 2019

Number Sense Assessment (NSA) K-3

Since the NSA is still in the pilot process there currently is no data that can be referenced. The success, so far, of the NSA comes from how it informs teacher practice and supports students through its connection to resources, numeracy workshops, and other supports that speak directly to a teachers’ number sense program.

Points of interest:

- The 2023 - 2024 is a pilot implementation year across the district for the NSA. However, all elementary schools have accessed this assessment and are currently implementing the NSA with optional data input January 15 - April 15.
- There is a working table of primary teachers and administrators providing ongoing feedback and recommendations based on the pilot implementation.
- NSA is embedded in the SD73 data dashboard and is accessible to all grade 1-3 teachers and school administrators.
- The 2024-2025 school year will be the baseline year for data collection for the NSA.

INITIATIVES and PROGRAMS

Literacy

Literacy is essential for personal, social and economic development. It plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' lives, enabling them to navigate the world, access opportunities and actively participate in society. By prioritizing literacy development and intervening when needed early and often with support, SD73 can help bridge the educational and opportunity gaps that students may face. It is a crucial step towards promoting equity, inclusivity and social justice in education and society.



Literacy is one of the greatest social justice issues of our time. Now, more than ever, children from all backgrounds are struggling to read, and both parents and educators in our communities around the world need the knowledge that equips them to do something about it.

- Dr. Maria Murray, The Reading League

Points of Interest:

- Promoted the use of Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program, Intensive Phonological Awareness Program, Jolly Phonics, and the newly implemented Phonics Companion resources in every school as part of a balanced early literacy approach. Coupled with training LART teachers on the usage of these programs to support students with greater need, the positive impact of these resources and the training interested teachers have taken part in will further develop literacy results.
- From a recent survey given to kindergarten teachers, currently 92.3% of kindergarten teachers surveyed use Heggerty while 46.2% use Jolly Phonics. When used consistently, kindergarten teachers report overall growth in skill acquisition and increased confidence from students with their improved phonemic awareness and phonics skills i.e. students are rhyming earlier in the year. A survey specific to grade 1 and 2 teachers will be conducted specific to literacy resources and district support will occur in the spring of 2024.



Direct instruction of phonics and phonemic awareness makes skilled, confident readers and writers.

- Kindergarten teacher

- Provided regular feedback forms after all workshops to inform supports and programming moving forward.
- Collaborated on professional development opportunities to support the implementation of early years resources and programs.
- Collaborated specific to the inclusion of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction content in

professional development at school-based non-instructional days, staff meetings, and Learning Assistance Resource Teacher (LART) sessions.

- Supported grade 1 students participating, as an intervention strategy, in the Summer Primary Reading Program which is pivotal to support students with literacy challenges. These students are recommended by teachers to help reduce summer reading gap occurrences and to capitalize on the reading flow many young readers find near the end of a school year. Participation in this program helps reduce equity gaps by providing a way for students to increase or at least maintain their reading abilities over the summer break. This program consistently fills a need for over 300 grade 1 students each summer:

Summer 2021	Summer 2022	Summer 2023
327	301	308



I saw students gain confidence with their literacy skills and abilities throughout their participation in this program.

- Summer Reading Program teacher

- Supported the purchasing of Canadian resources and programs such as: Moe the Mouse; Nelson Socials; SyllaSense Decodables; and The Phonics Companion, that highlight Canadian and Indigenous content.
- Ensured all schools have programs that support meeting the needs of students with diverse learning needs i.e. *The Phonics Companion* program includes embedded assessment and suggestions for differentiation and the Heggerty's *Bridge the Gap* program has focussed intervention lessons to address diverse learning needs in late primary. Both of these resources were given to all elementary schools as a resource.
- Ensured equitable access to the resources and programs used in workshops by purchasing additional program kits, sets of readers and teacher resources that are accessible via the HGEC Library Learning Commons.
- Ensured current researched best practices in teaching and assessing literacy continues in the district by reading current research and attending professional development opportunities.
- Met with FRIMM staff regarding ELAP updates and other possible assessments..
- Ensured the integration of Response to Intervention (RTI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles into planning, teaching and implementing teacher professional development opportunities - connected to effective strategies, assessments and practices.
- Began work on a Teacher Resource Package / District Balanced Literacy Guide.

Numeracy

By providing intentional attention to numeracy, the stage is set for students to engage in deep connections related to the magnitude of numbers that will set them up for success throughout school and life. The ability to decompose numbers fluently and see math concepts spatially sets the stage for primary students to enter the work of place value and strategies around operations where they start to make sense of whole numbers, decimals and fractions. In order to be able to work with abstract concepts, later on, primary students need to first have concrete contextual experiences with the use of manipulatives which provides an anchor to future understandings.



What children learn in mathematics between the ages of about four and a half and seven years sets the stage for their success at age 15. This research ... underlines the critical importance of providing young children with explicit mathematics learning opportunities.

- Watts, Duncan, Siegler, and Davis-Kean, 2014

Points of Interest:

- Ongoing collaboration with the **District Numeracy Team** specific to the complete implementation of the district Number Sense Assessment in the 2024-2025 school year which will initiate the collection of baseline data for this assessment.



I just wanted to share that there has been a lot of positive discussion, learning and collaboration going on right now as teachers navigate the NSA. I am very excited about the positive direction our district is headed with respect to having a standard primary assessment in terms of better teaching practices, more resources available for schools and a deeper understanding of our very vague curriculum.

**- Grade 2 teacher quote
specific to the work and training opportunities provided for the NSA**

- Ensuring the integration of Response to Intervention (RTI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles into planning, teaching and implementing teacher professional development opportunities - connected to effective strategies, assessments and practices.
- Ensured equitable access to the resources and programs used in workshops by purchasing additional program kits and teacher resources that are accessible via the HGEC Library Learning Commons.
- Ensured current researched best practices in teaching and assessing numeracy continues in the district by reading current research and attending professional development opportunities.
- Through the process of creating the NSA, it was important that supportive lessons and resources were provided so that teachers could know the next steps to take after the assessment was provided to teach students who needed additional support.

- Regular feedback forms are utilized after all workshops to inform supports and programming moving forward.
- 100% of interested K teachers participated in the training focussed on building a numeracy program using the power of ten.
- All grade 1 teachers were provided with the foundational resource What to Look For and were provided class sets of rekenrek manipulatives. This training was instrumental in developing the foundation for number sense for teachers and the early learners they support.
- Primary Leads from each school participated in Taking Shape numeracy training in which each school received the resource kit with all lessons and manipulatives to support implementation K-3. Spatial reasoning provides multiple entry points and equitable access to mathematics.



I got rid of all my old math stuff and have completely changed my practice. I can't wait to hear what the grade 2 teachers will say about my students' number sense next year.

- Grade 1 teacher after putting into practice the items learned at the grade 1 Number Sense workshop

- Provided one day of training around the administration of the NSA and classroom support for unmet concepts i.e. if a child doesn't understand how to move towards a more efficient strategy. A grade 2 or 3 rep from every school, as well as interested LARTs and administrators, were offered the opportunity to participate in these sessions.
- 437 primary grade educators have benefited from workshops outlined above:

September NID	K teachers	Grade 1 teachers	Grade 2 teachers	Grade 3 teachers	December NID
61	80	80	27	31	158

- Future work includes ongoing workshops to support teachers' growing understanding of computational fluency as well as in-class support via modeling of lessons and manipulative use with students.

Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) and Ready Set Learn (RSL)

Through the provision of MECC's Ready Set Learn (RSL) funds, district staff, school staff, StrongStart facilitators, 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 greet, outside play programs, and in-person sessions based on literacy, numeracy, physical literacy, and healthy choices. SPARK is an essential transition step that speaks to how to connect school and home. To support schools, packages

of materials are created and distributed. 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.



What does it mean to be ready for kindergarten? To me it's social learning. How to be around different kinds of people, how to deal with conflict, and playing with other kids. Social skills are important—that helps not just in school but in life. And those are the skills that our daughter learned in SPARK.

- SPARK parent participant

	Students	Adults	Number of Events
SPARK 2023	1010	1266	74

Points of Interest:

- Based on the participation numbers for the SPARK program, it clearly supports the transition into kindergarten through a variety of welcoming activities that help students become confident and excited about entering their school years. SPARK programs are connected to physical literacy, literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional programs.
- RSL funds are used for consumables, kindergarten teacher collaboration time, snacks, and various other resources found in use during SPARK events or other kindergarten transition events.
- Participating schools submit a year end report to the ELCC team who then must submit a report to the MECC.



We do not know anyone personally with kids going to kindergarten at the same school, so it was great for my daughter to see faces and other kids that she will meet when she starts school. It's made her excited and a little less worried about making friends. She also liked getting to see who her teachers might be and what the classrooms would look like.

- SPARK parent participant

- ELCC continues to support and build resources for SPARK to reflect the needs of French Immersion schools and Indigenous families and the growing interests and needs of SD73.
- ELCC continues to support implementation of workshops for interested administrators and teachers.

Human and Social Development (Wellbeing)

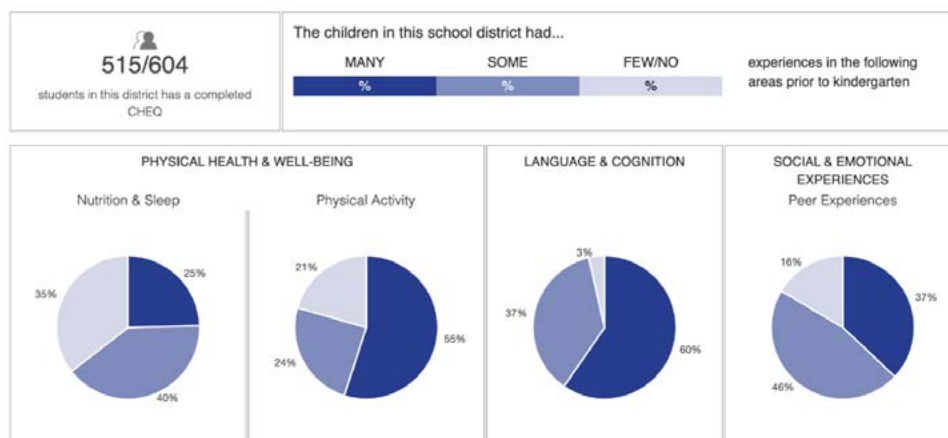
ASSESSMENTS/SURVEYS

Assessments and Surveys provide snapshots of how the district's earliest learners are improving their skills over time and with teacher implementation of programs, strategies and skills. In early learning, we are fortunate to have a snapshot, via the CHEQ survey of potentially impactful factors prior to children even beginning in the K-12 system that provides baseline information to help target potential gaps in learning right from the start. From entry into kindergarten until the end of grade 3 there are layers of assessments to support growth over time and snapshots in time to ensure the teaching, programs and resources connected to ELCC are making an intentional positive difference for SD73's earliest learners.

Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)

Early child development is a social determinant of health which potentially impacts lifelong health and well-being. CHEQ helps to monitor this in our community.

The 2023 district snapshot of the current kindergarten cohort, who were two years of age when the COVID pandemic began, is as follows:



Points of interest:

- 27% of the current K cohort experienced a stressful event (COVID, parent separation/divorce, death of a close family member, etc.)
- 80% receive 10 or more hours of sleep during a 24 hour period (10-13 hours are recommended)
 - 10% have never or rarely had a close friendship with someone their age in the last 6 months
 - 10% get read to once a week or fewer times in a month
- 66% are not accessing programs or supports from age 3 - kindergarten which is down 6%
- 59% have one or more hours of using an electronic device each day which is up 13% (<1 is recommended)

Of their parents/caregivers:

- 74% have experienced child care challenges. Availability, being on a waitlist and cost were listed as the top three areas of challenge.
- 78% express that their stress levels have been medium to very high over the last 6 months.

In general, provincially, children are experiencing:

Less sleep	Lower frequency of peer experiences
Less physical activity	Less time outside
Less perception of parks being safe	Less frequency of risky play
More screen time per day	Increase in barriers in accessing health care, programs and supports
Negative pandemic impact still reported for one quarter to one third of families	

Why is this important? Improved early childhood experiences improve school performance, completion rates and break the cycles of intergenerational poverty. Knowing that children entering kindergarten are having these experiences in growing numbers enables districts to create targeted interventions to improve opportunities and experiences for all children.

The Early Development Instrument (EDI)

Wave 8 data was collected in 2020 and Wave 9 data was collected in January of 2023. Wave 8 students are currently in grade 4 and Wave 9 students are currently in grade 1.

The 2023 district Wave 8 snapshot:

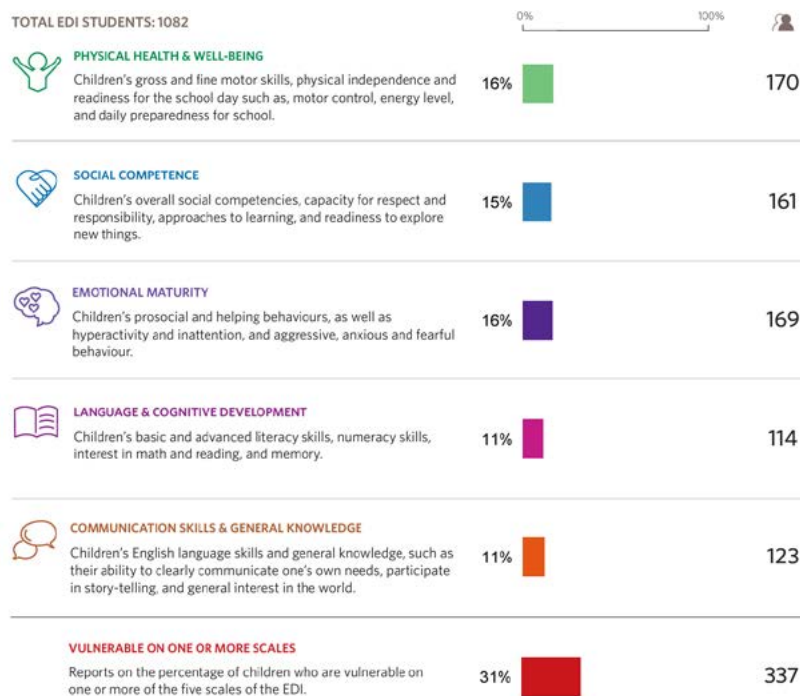
WAVE 8 Points of Interest, Provincially:

- 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 entered kindergarten vulnerable in at least one area of development important to their future success. Without care and support these children are more likely to experience difficulty in their future success in school or beyond such as an increased risk of encountering difficulties in the school years and beyond.
- Social and Emotional Development (Emotional Maturity and Social Competence) remains the highest area of concern and directly relates to common childhood mental health issues. K students, with vulnerability in Emotional Maturity & Social Competence have increased odds of mental health related issues by age 14.

- The data highlights the inequities that children and families across BC continue to face.

Wave 9 Points of Interest, Provincially:

- The trend for overall vulnerability rates, long-term, continues to increase in BC. Significant disparity with vulnerability rates across the province highlight that where you live matters.
- Children who experience poverty in both their household and their neighborhood have 107% higher odds of vulnerability in 2+ more EDi domains.
- Timing and targeting of interventions are important i.e. intervene early and often. Research shows that early and consistent supports and interventions that reduce barriers for vulnerable families and children are necessary to lower the overall vulnerability rates.



SD73 specific data:

- The Wave 8 report was released in spring 2023. Wave 8 results show 30% of SD73 kindergarten students are considered vulnerable on more than one indicator.
- Social and Emotional Development (Emotional Maturity and Social Competence) and Physical Health and Wellbeing remain the highest areas of concern and relate directly to common childhood mental health issues. The Wave 9 cohort in SD73 would have been 3 years old when the pandemic started and are now in grade 1.

Child Care Needs Assessment Surveys

The Child Care Needs Surveys (Indigenous Families Child Care Environmental Scan Survey and the Child Care Needs Assessment Survey) were developed as a part of the MECC's Environmental Scan. The results have been shared with the school district, community partners and is a part of the New Spaces Fund application as data sources.

Points of Interest:

- Both child care needs assessment surveys reinforce that there is a limited availability of child care spaces and quality programs available within SD73 communities.
- Programs that do currently exist have waitlists that are long and require full-time commitment from families vs. flexible drop-in ability.
- Families with children with neuro-diverse needs are struggling to find care even more than families with neuro-typical children.
- Surveyed families indicated their preference for child care at their elementary school.

MECC: Environmental Child Care Scan Final Report

The report for this Environmental Child Care Scan was submitted July 2023. The final report is accessible here: [SD73 Environmental Scan](#).

Points of Interest:

- Space requirements and limitations create one of the biggest barriers to child care expansion for SD73.
- Recruitment and retention of child care staff is an ongoing area of concern and a necessary component of expansion.
- There is a noticeable absence of before- and after-school care at most elementary schools.
- Ensuring equitable access to programming is essential in creating a child care model which is accessible to all.
- SD73 completed two child care surveys which both clearly indicated a high need for before- and after-school care and child care occurring during school breaks.
- Of the four considerations and suggestions mentioned in the report, specific to child care, two have already been implemented in SD73: expansion of Just B4 programming and the development of an LOU with CUPE specific to expanding the child care workforce.

INITIATIVES and PROGRAMS

Human and Social Development in early learning and child care encompasses important skills such as self-regulation, feeling safe, welcome, connected to others, and having a sense of belonging. These skills are foundational to cognitive skill development. Research is very clear that if children do not have these soft skills, their brains are not in a position to learn. In fact, leading research clearly dispels the concept of these being soft skills at all. They are the skills necessary to activate the minds of our youngest learners. The programs and initiatives that are attached to the ELCC portfolio, emphasize the necessity of developing these skills and

are actionable items that support a child’s human and social development which then ultimately reduces equity gaps to ensure all children are able to function successfully in school and life.

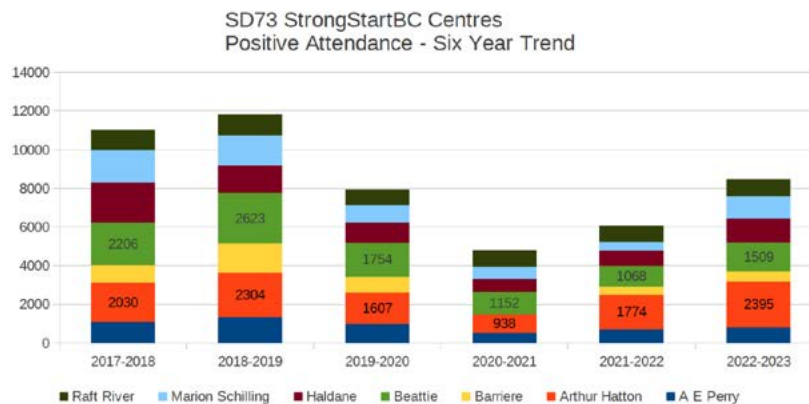
StrongStart

StrongStart (SS) is a child’s first connection to the traditional K-7 school system and typically, a child’s catchment school. Since the SS programs are often attended by students who are within the schools’ catchment area, the experiences they have here are the first steps along a seamless transition into kindergarten.



Points of Interest:

- ELCC continues to support and build resources for these programs to continue delivering early learning services including the development and delivery of supply kits.
- Support of all seven StrongStartBC schools with access to an early childhood educator in kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry to kindergarten during the month of September 2024.
- Develop language play kits to support English language learners to address the growing needs of culturally diverse families who access StrongStart programs. The ELCC team has created five kits so far for children who speak in the following languages: Arabic, Farsi, Punjabi, Mandarin and Ukrainian.
- Work with StrongStart facilitators on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF) in monthly Administration and Professional Development meetings.



- Numbers are continuing to increase at many of the StrongStart programs as we continue to recover from the impact the pandemic had on this program. Some programs regularly have higher attendance rates than others. The ELCC team works closely with the StrongStart facilitators to support innovative ways to improve attendance at facilities where attendance is not improving as quickly.

Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)

CR4YC brings 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/2023/09/12/cr4yc-collected-research-stories-2022-2023/>

	Educators	'Wonder Children'
Numbers of Participants	12	12
Total number of participants overall in CR4YC	72	72

Points of Interest:

- 72 educators and children have benefited from CR4YC over the past six years.
- CR4YC 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. 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.
- SD73's District Early Years Coordinator continues to be the region's trained facilitator for this program.
- Continued participation in year five of Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) research. New reports and summary of findings are published each year in the fall.
<https://cr4yr.com/2023/09/12/cr4yc-collected-research-stories-2022-2023/>

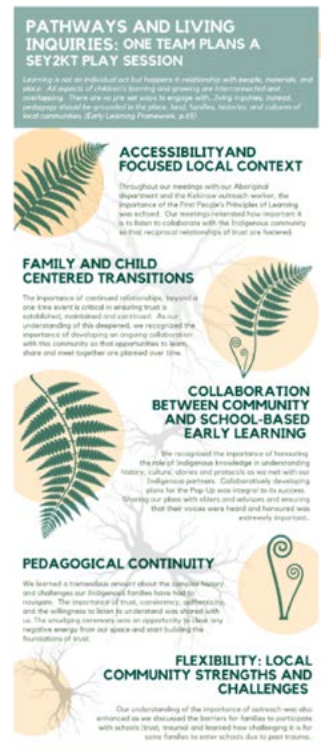


Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition (SEY2KT)

SEY2KT is a MECC supported initiative aimed at improving the social, emotional, and learning outcomes for early learners. The purpose of SEY2K is to transform the system of how children and their families enter the public education system in our community. SEY2KT is not focused on a single act of “transition” – it is about making connections and developing relationships among families and communities. It is an initiative that focuses on collaboration and strengthening of relationships across the education and early years’ sectors. The ELCC team and community partners such as Childcare Resource and Referral Kamloops (CCRR), Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative (KELLI), Pacific Sport, Thompson Rivers University 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 report can be found at: <https://www.compassionatesystemsleadership.net/sey2kt>

Compassionate Systems Leadership information and presentation: <https://www.compassionatesystemsleadership.net/sey2kt-202324>

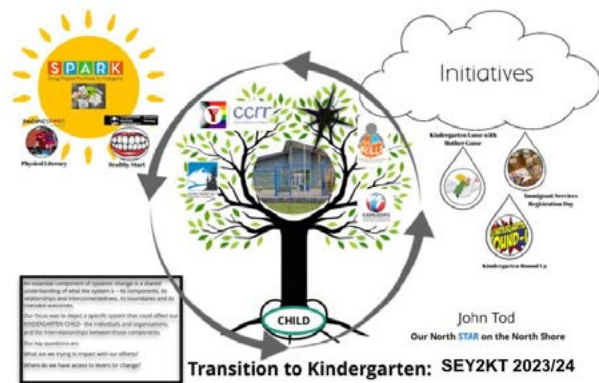


SEY2KT Projects 2022-2023	KIS K Registration Project	K's on the Loose with Mother Goose Project - Community Specific	K's on the Loose with Mother Goose Project - KIS	K's on the Loose with Mother Goose Project - Elementary Schools	Pacific Sport - Physical Literacy Project	Healthy Start - TRU Student Nurses Project
Facilitators	2 + 7 Language Facilitators from KIS	2	2	2	2	3
Adult Participants	9	24	15	90	320	24
Child Participants	9	12	15	90	320	45
Program Sessions	1	1	6	3 schools = 36 sessions	10 schools = 10 sessions	2

Points of Interest:

- The SEY2KT team 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.

- 482 adults and 491 pre-k children benefited from the work being done by the SEY2KT team during 56 sessions designed to support a positive transition into kindergarten.
- Based on current interest by community partners in the programs created and provided by the SEY2KT team, the program is expanding. The team continues to consider options for expansion in spite of this.



Supported Transitions

Entering kindergarten is an important step in every child’s development. A successful transition into school for children who need support involves parents and professionals working together to plan and make decisions. The Kindergarten transition is an opportunity for families, school district staff and other professionals who work with children, to plan a successful entry for children into kindergarten. This is even more important when working with children who have diverse needs and who may require additional support through the process.

Spring Data Intake	Males	Females	Children with Special Education	Rural Children	Urban Children
Number of Incoming Learners: 2022	53	20	32	14	59
Number of Incoming Learners: 2023	73	20	43	23	70

Points of Interest:

- Based on this comparative data, the supportive needs are increasing for children entering kindergarten.
- Kindergarten transition meetings occur for students with diverse learning abilities take 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/caregivers of children with diverse learning abilities entering kindergarten are invited to attend district engagement sessions. In addition, a kindergarten transition night is planned with community agencies for these parents.
- 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 needs.
- Currently there are 67 children with designations in kindergarten for the 23/24 school year.
- During Spring 2023, there were 89 district supportive transition meetings held. Changes are taking place to ensure district transition meetings are focused on students needing significant intervention and support from multiple disciplines within the Inclusive Education department.
- For more information on supporting students in SD73, see the Annual Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Report on the SD73 website.
- The ELCC team also supports other initiatives that work to create successful transitions into kindergarten such as: SPARK events and sitting on the panel for the community Kindergarten Round-Up parent evening which provides families the opportunity to learn about kindergarten expectations, community support and kindergarten registration processes. This also allows families the opportunity to ask questions they may have.
- Currently the ELCC team is exploring with community partners the possibility of having earlier transition evenings and events for families to participate in (i.e. when children are 3-4 years olds) prior to the Kindergarten Round-Up and SPARK K transition events to answer questions and alleviate possible concerns earlier in a child's development.
- With the expertise of ECE staff in both StrongStart and the Just B4 programs in SD73, kindergarten transition events support students and families. The addition of ECE staff in supportive roles in K classrooms in schools for the month of September is 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

Child Care

	Males	Females	Children with Aboriginal Ancestry	Children in Care	Children with Special Education Designations	Rural Children	Urban Children
Number of Children in SD73 Child Care	39	29	4	1	9	20	48

Points of Interest:

- Develop further ECE and kindergarten teacher partnerships.
- Continue to work with the finance department to establish 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.
- Develop a five-year plan for child care expansion opportunities.
- Look for innovative community partnerships that are interested in creating new ECE training opportunities.
- Work with Human Resources in the active recruitment and retention of ECE workers for SD73 child care programs.
- Work with the district Inclusive Education team for ways to ensure all children in the new pre-K to 12 education system have the necessary access and support to child care ensuring equity for our youngest learners and their families.
- 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.
- Communicate with community partners when new child care opportunities are available within SD73 buildings.

Seamless Day



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

Seamless Day integrates before- and after-school care into the kindergarten classroom, delivered by certified early childhood educators (ECEs) who work alongside the classroom teacher.

Points of Interest:

- The program is 100% full in the after-school program; 67% full in the before school program. A waitlist exists for the after-school portion of this program.
- Challenges that continue to be addressed include funding structures, how to continue to fund additional ECE care for students with diverse needs, how to ensure all families have accessed the child care subsidies and the School Cash Online program for payments, expanding the program, and having enough ECEs available to provide coverage when staff are off.
- Exploration with the Finance department into how to create a modified SDK program that can be run at additional elementary schools. Interest by school administrators and staff will be pursued.
- 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;
- 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.
- Continues to expand and strengthen ECE and Kindergarten teacher partnerships.



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

Just B4 Preschool (JB4)



Making sure that schools and four-year-olds are ready for kindergarten is so important. There is no better way to help them be ready than to experience school first-hand from the gym to library – sharing, learning and growing together. This is exactly what Just B4 preschool does! The growth I've seen in these four-year-olds over the four weeks has been amazing. During these uncertain times, Just B4 has given every child enrolled the courage to know school is safe and fun. I can confidently say these children are more prepared for kindergarten.

- ECE/preschool teacher for JB4

JB4 is specifically designed for 3 and 4-year olds who will be entering Kindergarten in the next few years. The initial five day program at Arthur Hatton has been successfully running for three years and the newly modified version began at four additional sites this winter.

Points of Interest:

- The program is 100% full at all five of these programs. Interest is already being expressed for registration in the fall of 2024.
- Challenges that continue to be addressed include funding structures, how to continue to fund additional ECE care for students with diverse needs, 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.
- Just B4 Preschool and the work involved with ECEs and families help to develop a seamless transition into kindergarten.
- Exploration of expanding the four new sites into week programs will be based on parent/caregiver interest and community need as indicated in a survey to existing families in JB4 and SS.

New Spaces

- The first New Spaces Fund application supported the purchasing of four child care specific modular buildings: two each at Ralph Bell and Happyvale elementary schools. These will be operated by Inquiring Little Minds and offer over 70 child care spaces at each site.
- A second New Spaces Fund application has been submitted to ensure effective child care provision within the new Parkcrest Elementary school building.
- The ELCC team continues to look for possible and potential expansion opportunities for child care provision either directly or indirectly through additional third party providers.
- The ELCC team continues to look for possible and potential expansion opportunities for BASC provision at elementary schools that have both administration and staff support.

Community Collaboration

SD73's community partnerships throughout the Kamloops-Thompson region 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 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. Working together we are better able to support the development of healthy, social families and their children which will be beneficial when these children enter kindergarten.



Community Partners

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 City of Kamloops 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.

Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD) partners 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 support for early learners in each community.

With the addition of child care, SD73 is 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. Inquiring Little Minds is the first non-profit child care operator to work in partnership with SD73's ELCC team since the MECC's expansion. We continue to work together with all our community partners 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.

Points of Interest:

With community partners, the ELCC team ...

- Continues to collaborate with early years' community partners with virtual and in-person meetings and sessions and printed materials for kindergarten readiness for families, preschools and daycare professionals.

- Continues 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.
- Continues to support *Kindergarten On the Loose with Mother Goose* sessions.
- Continues to build 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.
- Continues to support SD73's 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.
- Continues to work closely with the Early Years Center on analyzing gaps in the system around family and community needs.
- Continues to support Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS) early years project which involves the delivery of kindergarten transition supports and family play sessions.
- Continues to participate in local discussions with a variety of community partners such as: Yellowhead Community Services (YCS), City of Kamloops, YMCA - BC, and Wellness Health and Youth Center (WHY), Literacy in Kamloops (LinK), PLAY Kamloops/Pacific Sport, Thompson Rivers University (TRU), Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society (KAFFS), LMO and Interior Community Services (ICS) regarding working together on child care partnerships.
- Continues to be interested in local discussions regarding 'Quality in Early Childhood Education' led by the Early Childhood Pedagogy Network.
- Continues to participate in local meetings and discussions such as 'Make Children First' committee and 'Early Learning & Child Care Engagement Group' as well as creating opportunities to bring child care educators together in Barriere to discuss specific child care needs for the area.
- Continues to participate in the Early Learning and Child Care Provincial and Regional Leads communities of practice.

All of our partners play a vital role in developing and delivering programming for SD73 families and children who live within the boundaries of SD73.

Systems Development

Allocating Resources Responsibly, Fairly and Sustainably Through Operations

The Early Learning and Child Care team is a growing team that offers academic, social, emotional, physical and mental health support to students and training to staff. Although some of the programs and initiatives ELCC provides are solely done by the ELCC, as outlined in this report there are many more programs and initiatives that are done collaboratively with other district departments and community partners. ELCC is unique in that it is the foundation on which most all other departments intersect and supports all other grades and departments. The ELCC team partners with community partners, students, parents/caregivers and staff to improve outcomes for all early learners. Before students with identified diverse needs even begin their K-12 educational experience, kindergarten transition meetings are held. At these meetings, District and community professionals discuss the needs and goals of the students and discuss the necessary components of a successful transition plan for kindergarten success. This process also provides opportunities to connect self-identified Aboriginal young learners and their families to Aboriginal Education Workers and programs to highlight cultural identity and belonging within the K-12 system right from the start.

ELCC is unique within systems development as most MECC funding is targeted funding for K-12 students. Feeding Futures, Aboriginal Education, and Inclusive Education funding doesn't start to support learners until they enter kindergarten. Unfortunately in some cases, this is too late to help close equity gaps that began prior to kindergarten for some families and children. ELCC is the bridge between community support funds and MECC funds and because of this place in the system, it is often a gray area of funding when research clearly supports this as being a pivotal developmental time for a child to have targeted interventions and supports. The child care portion of ELCC is required to be cost neutral and run like a business yet it exists as part of the largest non-profit organization, namely the MECC. To be effective in creating equitable opportunities for accessing child care and programs, consideration needs to be given to funding child care in a manner that matches the K-12 system. The ELCC team diligently works on creating financially viable programs and opportunities for families and children, in particular ones that are aligned with the priorities that were outlined in the MECC Environmental Scan and the two SD73 Child Care Needs surveys. Systems development pieces include: staffing, staff development, finances, human resources, facilities and purchasing.

Staffing

The District Early Learning and Child Care department is overseen by the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary and Early Learning as well as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The ELCC portfolio is supported by (1) FTE District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care. The District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care works closely with the District Coordinator of Early Learning in the provision of early learning programs and child care services. Together they supervise Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) charged with implementing the Early Learning Framework and providing quality early years and child care programming.

In this past year, the District Early Learning and Child Care department was supported by:

- One (1) FTE District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care
- One (1) FTE District Coordinator of Early Learning
- ECEs who are part of the following programs:

- 7 StrongStart Facilitators
- 3 ECEs connected to SDK at Arthur Hatton
- 2 ECEs connected to JB4 at Arthur Hatton
- NEW (January 2024) 4 ECEs connected to JB4 (3-day modified program) at Beattie, Barriere, Marion Schilling and Raft River elementary schools

Staff Development

Staff development involves providing professional development opportunities for ECEs and K-3 teachers. These are mostly done in separate programs, but it is hoped moving forward that opportunities will be created that bridges ECEs and K/1 teachers' learning experiences. Throughout the year the ELCC team, in collaboration with other Curriculum and Instruction teams, supported teachers with resources that embed early years content in the curriculum as well as provided access to professional learning on early years topics. One ongoing program that provides staff development for both k teachers and ECEs is CR4YC. This provides a unique opportunity for both groups of educators to come together and co-learn. For the current year, ECE pro-d has focussed on inquiry methods to teach social emotional learning, assessment for learning, documentation, oral language development in the early years, and the integration between reading and writing.

Finances

Many of the structures that support the creation and implementation of child care are dependent on the structures and processes created together by the ELCC and Finance departments. These two departments work very closely together to ensure parent fees are paid, there are systems in place for easy payments by parents, and eligible parents have support applying for the available Affordable Child Care Benefits subsidies. We are also looking within the district at creative ways to ensure programs such as SDK and JB4 can continue and expand, possibly in a modified way, moving forward whether or not the MECC still provides funding for these programs.

Human Resources (HR)

The ELCC team works with the HR Department to create staffing notifications and hiring ECE staff specifically for covering programs when needed. Although there is a lot of interest in working for SD73 from ECEs, there are currently limited opportunities. This year, in partnership with HR and CUPE, a Letter of Understanding (LOU) was created to allow for a new position, CEA - School-Aged Care, which opens up the possibility of creating additional hours of work for interested CUPE members when SD73 is ready to expand into after school care at elementary schools. What makes ELCC unique in this regard is that the child care programs are guided by Interior Health's Licensing requirements. ECEs are required to have at least 40 hours of professional development accumulated over 5 years, First Aid, and must meet basic licensing expectations in order to remain qualified for their positions. These licensing requirements are on top of CUPE expectations and are monitored closely in order to ensure the highest quality of programming is provided to our youngest learners. These are positions of unique responsibility as well in that ECEs are often providing care and programming independent of the rest of the school.

Facilities/Purchasing

ELCC is also unique in that it is responsible for creating processes and structures that support child care expansion. For instance, working together with Finance, Facilities and Purchasing, RFPs are created that are placed on the BC Bid site for child care operators to apply for spaces connected to the school district. Part of this process now includes child care specific interview questions, criteria and contracts. Moving forward, design of child care space will be completed collaboratively and based on provincial design guidelines to ensure SD73 models and provides quality child care spaces for the community in their schools. Purchases for furnishing child care spaces also need to adhere to provincial design standards.

As ELCC expands, so will the need to add additional staff to the portfolio to support the HR needs, financial processes and design implications that come with expansion in an equitable and sustainable manner.

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.

