

# EARLY YEARS' ANNUAL REPORT

February 2022



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 73  
(Kamloops - Thompson)



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# Executive Summary

After several years of established and successful programming, early learning, like all aspects of learning, faced a changing landscape for program delivery during a global pandemic. While we know through the OECD's<sup>1</sup> *Seven Principles of Learning* that powerful learning is founded on the social nature of learning and encourages a well-organized cooperative learning environment, a face-to-face experience presented a challenge.

In SD73, the early learning team coordinator and StrongStartBC facilitators not only rose to the challenge of a hybrid-delivery model, but also realized a level of engagement only hoped for prior to the rollout of the model. Through a mixture of in-person sessions, pre-recorded, accessible events, and enhanced community connections, families continued to rely on StrongStartBC programming to engage with their children in “play for purpose.” Families were regularly contacted through social media, email, and by telephone. With a reduction in classroom numbers to ensure a strict adherence to health and safety protocols, it was important to ensure families had access to a virtual classroom, as well as kits and supplies which were received either by an arranged pickup or delivered to the homes of StrongStartBC children. These kits contained items that aligned to the activities offered in live Zoom sessions. This hybrid program created an equitable and welcoming component of the online format. The success of this program style was evidenced immediately as the number of attendees doubled and participation rates remained high throughout the program.

Throughout this report, ties to SD73's District Strategic Plan priorities are embedded within the work of early learning. Ensuring our children have ***strong foundational skills and core competencies*** begins during our first contacts with our early learners. Through the many programs explored in this report, we connect children to their ***passions and interests*** and engage them in the learning process. While we have partnered with our colleagues in the Aboriginal Education department for many years, a new directive from government to ***honour First People's principles of learning and Aboriginal worldviews*** in our early learning work will extend our reach further out into the community.<sup>2</sup> (This work will become more fully developed as restrictions on gatherings is lifted by the province).

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 our programs. And, in doing so, it is evident that our work does not happen in isolation. It is the result of a community coming together to support our youngest learners. Through this process, we continue to ***strengthen partnerships to enrich the way we lead, learn and work***. And finally, with the ongoing support of the Early Learning Framework, project dollars, as well as the support for programs within the community, we can offer initiatives that support our children while ***ensuring we have sustainable resources***.

In 2019, the Ministry of Education published an update to the British Columbia Early Learning Framework (ELF).<sup>3</sup> The update represents a collaborative process that includes members of the early childhood community such as educators, Indigenous organizations, Elders, government, and other officials.

An earlier version of the Early Learning Framework (2008) introduced a plan for children from birth to five years. The 2019 ELF update delves deeper into new concepts and connections and widens the scope to children up to eight years.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD refers to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

<sup>2</sup> For more information on supporting Aboriginal education in SD73, see the Aboriginal Education Annual Report (October, 2020) on our District website

<sup>3</sup> BC's Early Learning Framework can be found at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/early-learning-framework>

## IN REVIEW: ACTION ITEM UPDATE FROM THE 2020 - 2021 REPORT

Restart participation in Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ).

- SD73 has confirmed funding from UBC to implement the CHEQ in the 2022/23 school year.
- Collaborate with principals from the CHEQ pilot to discuss their data and develop action plans to support their learners.

Expand the Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) program to a centralized model at the district level to ensure equity and access to quality resources for all families.

- SPARK was represented in every school last year. Due to COVID-19, a modified delivery system was required. Virtual sessions were developed and schools developed innovative ways to interact with families. Events like drive-thru meet and greet with the principal, virtual story times, video tours of schools, delivery of kits to children's homes, and an early learning Facebook group were just a few of the examples our early learning team kept students front and centre. The team was able to reach 1,100 families (up more than 630 from the previous year) with kits and resources.

Develop and deliver a professional learning series focused on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF).

- During participation in Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC), twelve SD73 teachers and early childhood educators participated in six sessions on building ELF into their teaching practice.
- Six StrongStart BC professional development administration meetings were dedicated to allowing time for facilitators to reflect and explore the new document and its content.
- Virtual Conference - morning and afternoon sessions were held on April 26th, 2021. Our two topics included *Exploring Inquiry-Based Learning in Early Years Programs* and *Going Deeper into The BC Early Learning Framework (ELF)*. 125 district early learning teachers and ECEs attended to connect the ELF to their practice.
- Participate in provincial sessions that support early learners, such as Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) and Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC).
- Provincial sessions were adapted to in person and online/virtual environments to support professional learning. Detailed report links are included below:

<https://cr4yr.com/2021/09/24/cr4yc-research-findings-2020-2021/>

<https://bit.ly/SEY2KT2020-21>

<https://www.compassionatesystemsleadership.net/sey2kt-20-21>

Collaborate virtually with the early years' community partners on two "Kindergarten Readiness" presentations for families, preschools, and daycare professionals.

- 362 families and community ECEs attended (virtually) two Kindergarten Readiness presentations in the 2020-2021 school year.

Collaborate with Kamloops Early Learning and Literacy (KELLI) on three PILOT ***Kindergarten on the Loose with Mother Goose*** virtual sessions that targeted early learning Kindergarten literacy readiness skills.

- 55 adults and 83 children attended our six-week program.

Collaborate with community partners on three community events to increase awareness about the importance of literacy and provide literacy support for all ages.

- Despite COVID restrictions, three community events for literacy occurred in the 2020 – 2021 school year.
  - An International Children's Day focused on a celebration of the Children's Charter of Rights<sup>4</sup> in November 2021.
  - Unplug and Play was held in partnership with the Early Years' Centre, YMCA/YWCA, Boys' and Girls' Club, Interior Savings, and Literacy in Kamloops (LinK) in January.
  - Annual Teddy Bear Picnic was held in June.

Each event was adapted to connect families by providing home kits, virtual sessions, and self-led activities.

Build a collaborative service-learning project with Thompson Rivers University (TRU), in which nursing students and early childhood educators establish positive relationships with families to foster children's healthy development.

- TRU nurses provided resources and materials for all Kindergarten and StrongStart BC families. Topics included immunization, sleep, nutrition, and dental care. Videos, posters, and supplies were distributed through our online format (Facebook) and 280 dental kits were included in Kindergarten orientation packages.

Create a working table to give feedback on the SD73 Kindergarten Survey. The working group will make recommendations on adaptations required for diverse learners and develop a tool that meets the needs of our French Immersion learners.

- Kindergarten Survey included minor revisions for the 2021-2022 school year. The team was able to include added adaptations for inclusion, change of some outdated content and photos, and adjust the winter reporting timelines on phonological and phonemic awareness.

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<sup>4</sup> Children's Charter of Rights can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/rights-children.html>

## MOVING FORWARD: ACTION ITEMS FOR 2021 - 2022

### SPARK

- Continue to work on Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) programming, lesson plans, training and resources for schools and families.
- Centralize SPARK for all elementary schools to participate in a full SPARK program.

### StrongStartBC

- Support and build resources for StrongStartBC to continue delivering early learning services, including virtual programming and the development and delivery of supply kits.
- Continue to support all seven (7) StrongStartBC schools with access to an early childhood educator in Kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry of Kindergarten during the month of September.

### Ministerial Initiatives

- Continue the development and delivery of a professional learning series focused on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF).
- Continue participation in provincial sessions that support early learners, such as year four of Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT), year two of the Ministry of Education series, Compassionate Systems Leadership, and continue in the third year of participation in Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC).

### Community Collaboration

- Continue to collaborate with the early years' community partners on virtual sessions and printed materials for Kindergarten Readiness for families, preschools, and daycare professionals.
- Continue to collaborate with early years' community partners on community programming such as Mother Goose, One-to-One Reading, and 1001 Books before Five to increase awareness about the importance of early literacy.
- Continue second year of the pilot Kindergarten on the Loose with Mother Goose sessions that targets early learning Kindergarten literacy readiness skills. Shift to in-person sessions when possible.
- Continue building a collaborative service-learning resource with Thompson Rivers University, in which nursing students and early childhood educators establish positive relationships with families to foster children's healthy development.

- Build Kindergarten Readiness Early Learning Kits for our Aboriginal Agencies (listed below) as part of a collaboration with the Aboriginal Education Council. These kits will include both literacy and mathematics resources and materials.  
(Little Shuswap Lake Band, Adams Lake Band, Neskonlith, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, Simpcw, Whispering Pines/Clinton, Skeetchestn, Clearwater Aboriginal Society, Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, Two Rivers Métis, and North Thompson Friendship Centre).

## Assessment

- Continue to build a working table to give feedback on the SD73 Kindergarten Survey. The working group will make recommendations on the mathematics section and develop a tool that meets the needs of our French Immersion learners.

## Childcare

- Continue to support Seamless Day Before- and After-School Care in its pilot year. Support teachers and ECEs in building foundational teaching practices around the Early Learning Framework. These programs support families in providing a wrap-around system.
- Continue to support Just B4 Preschool in its pilot year. Continue to work with early childhood educators and families on developing a seamless transition into kindergarten.



# Introduction

Each year, SD73 plans for system improvement. Several of our guiding documents relate directly to our learners throughout the Kindergarten to grade twelve model. Yet increasingly, school districts have been tasked with looking outside of the K-12 model to ensure that we have met the needs of not only our current learners, but those who are about to become our students.

This report looks at the provincial Early Learning Framework, as well as our SD73 programs, projects, and initiatives. To better illustrate that SD73 partners both between departments and within the larger community, a section on community partnerships is included.

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, 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.

## Funding

In 2021 – 2022, the Ministry of Education supports school district early learning through several funds contained within our Transfers Under Agreement.

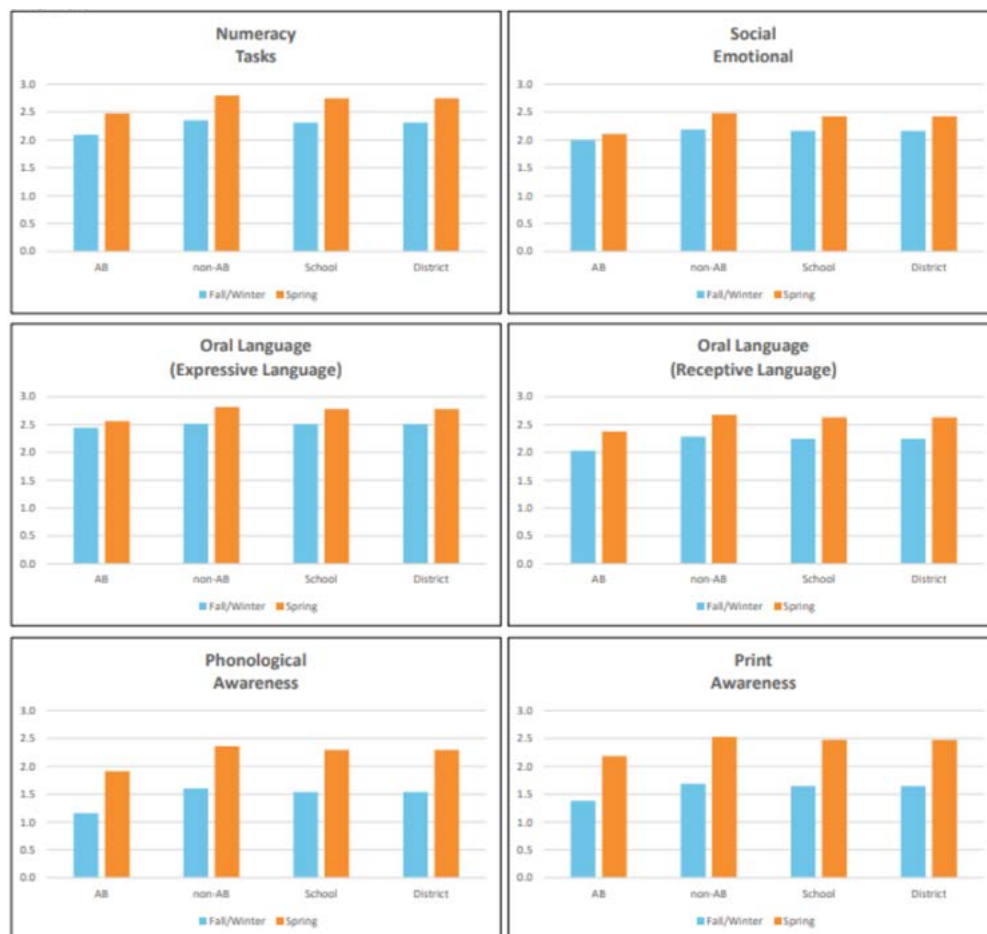
- Transfer Under Agreement: Capacity Building
  - Early Learning Framework (ELF)
  - Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)
  - Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT)
- Transfer Under Agreement: Early Learning Programs
  - StrongStartBC
  - Ready, Set, Learn
  - Seamless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

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

# Assessments

## Kindergarten Survey

The Kindergarten Survey (K-Survey) is administered each year. The data collected for fall/winter (blue column) is compared to spring of 2021 (orange column). Areas for growth are supported and checked against our year-end data. For the past several years, the data has indicated the need for strategies to support phonological and print awareness. The spring data collection shows strong growth in these areas indicating successful strategies. As schools collect the data, our District Early Years Coordinator breaks it down to determine which classrooms or students may need next-step interventions. We know early intervention secures the best outcomes. Every school has a play-based phonological intervention kit and works for thirteen weeks on literacy strategies through games. A new Heggerty phonological program was also purchased for every school to implement as a strategy to encourage whole class reading intervention.



0	1	2	3
No Evidence	Minimal Evidence	Can do most of the task	Consistent and Complete

The newest version of the Kindergarten Survey was sent out with adaptations for inclusion, with replacement of outdated material and images, plus modifications to specific due dates. In particular, the team felt the need to continue the focus on phonological awareness and print awareness. By changing the collection deadlines, the schools will receive more accurate and timely information to implement action plans and have discussions around intervention.

### **ACTION ITEM:**

- Continue to collaborate with a working table to give feedback on the SD73 Kindergarten Survey.

The working group will make recommendations on adaptations required for diverse learners as appropriate, as well as develop a tool that meets the needs of our French Immersion learners. This year will include a review of the mathematics section of the assessment.

### **ACTION ITEM:**

- Collaborate with the SD73 literacy team on a series of professional development opportunities and distribution of resources for all elementary schools to have a common resource and practice around early reading and phonemic awareness skills.

Early this school year, the Literacy team and Early Learning team hosted a two-part after-school workshop on Heggerty Phonemic Awareness and Early Primary Word Work.

The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum workshop reviewed the program, had participants view a lesson, and practiced and taught the hand motions used to deliver the daily lessons.

The Word Work Workshop focused on authentic, student-centred approaches to helping students develop phonological awareness and print concepts by outlining the key components of a systematic phonics progression, including the why, what, and when.

### **ACTION ITEM:**

- Continue to collaborate with the SD73 Numeracy Team and the District Library Coordinator on loose part toolkits and professional development opportunities for early numeracy.





This year, the district team created a five-part series of exploration for teacher librarians to explore their Loose Part Math Tool kits. When students interact with loose parts, they enter a world of “what if” that promotes the type of thinking that leads to inquiry, curiosity, and joy. We are excited about the collaborative possibilities that loose parts provide and hope these workshops will help our teacher librarians enhance their ability to develop exciting loose parts inquiry and play-based settings in each Library Learning Commons.

## Primary Reading Assessment (PRA)

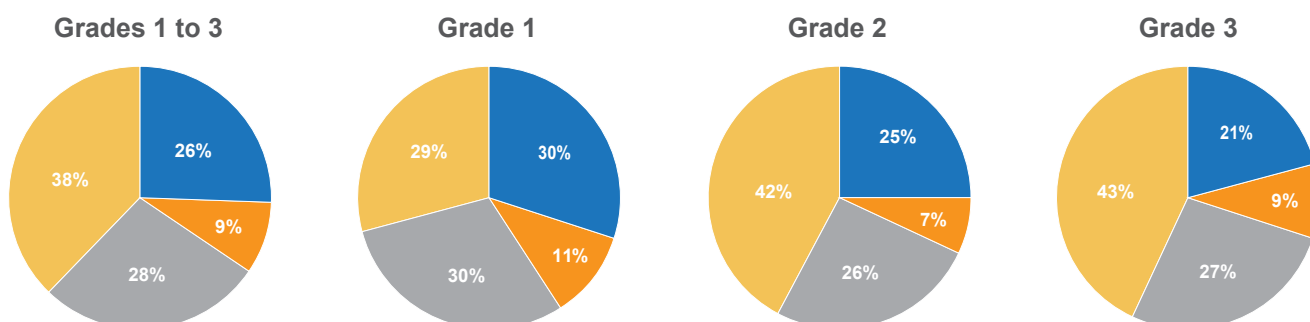
SD73 recommends the use of primary reading levels for both instructional and assessment purposes. Data from the Primary Reading Assessment is used at all levels, including: the classroom, the school, and the district. As a formative assessment tool (assessment *for* learning), the PRA provides valuable 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.

Data from the 2020 – 2021 school year indicates reading performance dropped between 3% and 4% across all primary grades as compared to the levels measured two years ago. Data is not available from 2019 – 2020 due to the suspension of in-class instruction during the assessment period. PRA data provides important evidence of reading in the early grades. It does not include information about whether students attended school in-person or virtually. It is important to look closely at data from the 2021 – 2022 school year to learn if these numbers return to the levels of the 2019 – 2020 school year. New data will show whether student reading gains occurred once students returned to full in-class learning.

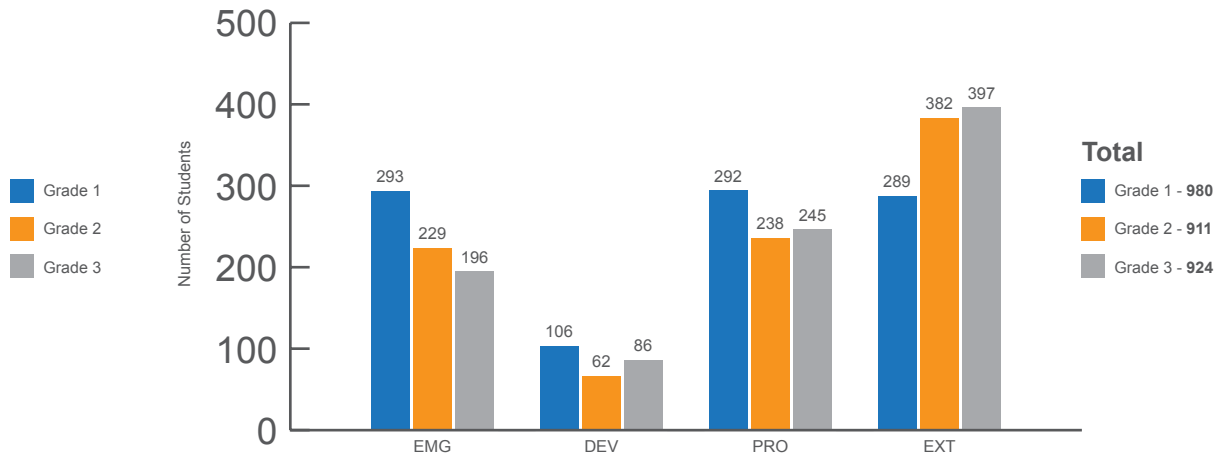
PRA data is important as we can employ practices that accelerate learning for students who have fallen behind and ensure schools have the resources they need.

PRIMARY READING ASSESSMENT (PRA) 2020 – 2021			
Performance	School Report Details		
59% in grade 1 are proficient or extending	Aboriginal: Included Non-Aboriginal: Included Male: Included Female: Included		Extending
68% in grade 2 are proficient or extending			Proficient
70% in grade 3 are proficient or extending			Developing
66% in grade 1-3 are proficient or extending			Emerging

## Performance



## Performance by number of students per achievement band



## Early Development Instrument (EDI)

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

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

THE FIVE SCALES OF THE EDI



### ACTION ITEM:

- Kamloops/Thompson will participate in the EDI Wave 9 - February 2023.

## Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)

SD73 was invited by Dr. Alisa Almas and Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl to, once again, participate in the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) Project in September 2022. The CHEQ program is administered through the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) out of the University of British Columbia.

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.

CHEQ is unique because the questionnaire is completed by parents and caregivers at the start of the Kindergarten school year ensuring the information and data are immediate and timely. There is no wait time for reports as they are generated by UBC by the end of September for schools to use immediately.

### ACTION ITEM:

- Kamloops/Thompson will participate in the CHEQ- September 2022.
- Follow-up and professional development sessions need to be put in place to read, interpret, and discuss findings with Administrators, Kindergarten teams, school support teams, and community.

# Programs and Initiatives

## StrongStartBC

The Kamloops-Thompson School District is very proud of the StrongStartBC program we provide in seven of our elementary schools. Children and their parents or caregivers in our community can access high-quality early learning environments and activities offered in the StrongStartBC centers located at AE Perry, Arthur Hatton, Barriere, Beattie, Haldane, Marion Schilling, and Raft River.

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

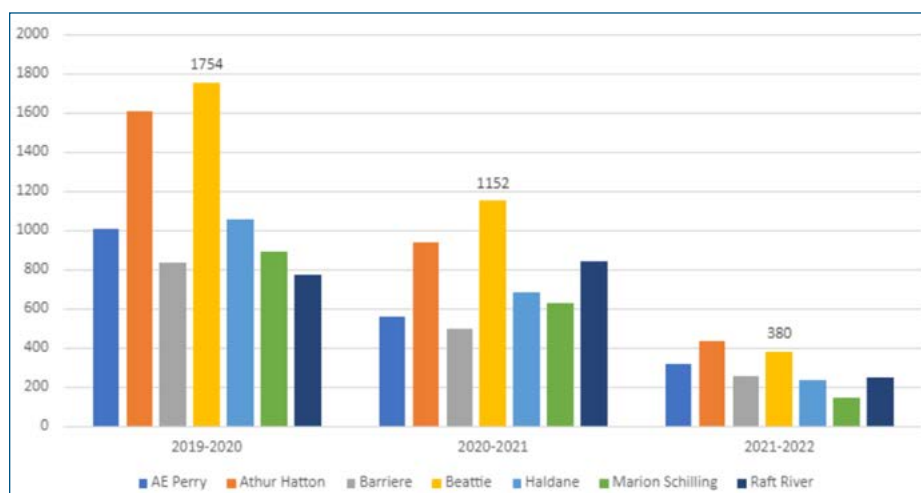
COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on program delivery. StrongStartBC has responded to growing community needs by adapting to online models for program delivery and continuing to provide face-to-face small group instruction.

Young learners benefit from StrongStartBC programs, not just in early literacy development but also in social-emotional recovery to build resilience.

## Positive Attendance - StrongStartBC Centres

SCHOOL YEAR	AE Perry	Arthur Hatton	Barriere	Beattie	Haldane	Marion Schilling	Raft River	TOTAL ATT
2019-2020	1007	1607	833	1754	1054	894	776	7925
2020-2021	557	938	495	1152	682	628	846	4803
<b>YTD</b>								
Sep 2021- Jan 2022	317	433	258	380	234	145	246	2013

## SD73 StrongStartBC Attendance



Note: 2021 – 2022 is year-to-date data (September 2021 to January 2022)

## Ready, Set, Learn

Intended for families and their three- to five-year-old children, Ready, Set, Learn is all about fostering positive connections between families, the school system, and local community agencies. All SD73 elementary schools that enrol Kindergarten classes hold Ready, Set, Learn events in their schools or communities. These events provide a fun, family-oriented atmosphere with the intent of supporting children’s transitions into school.

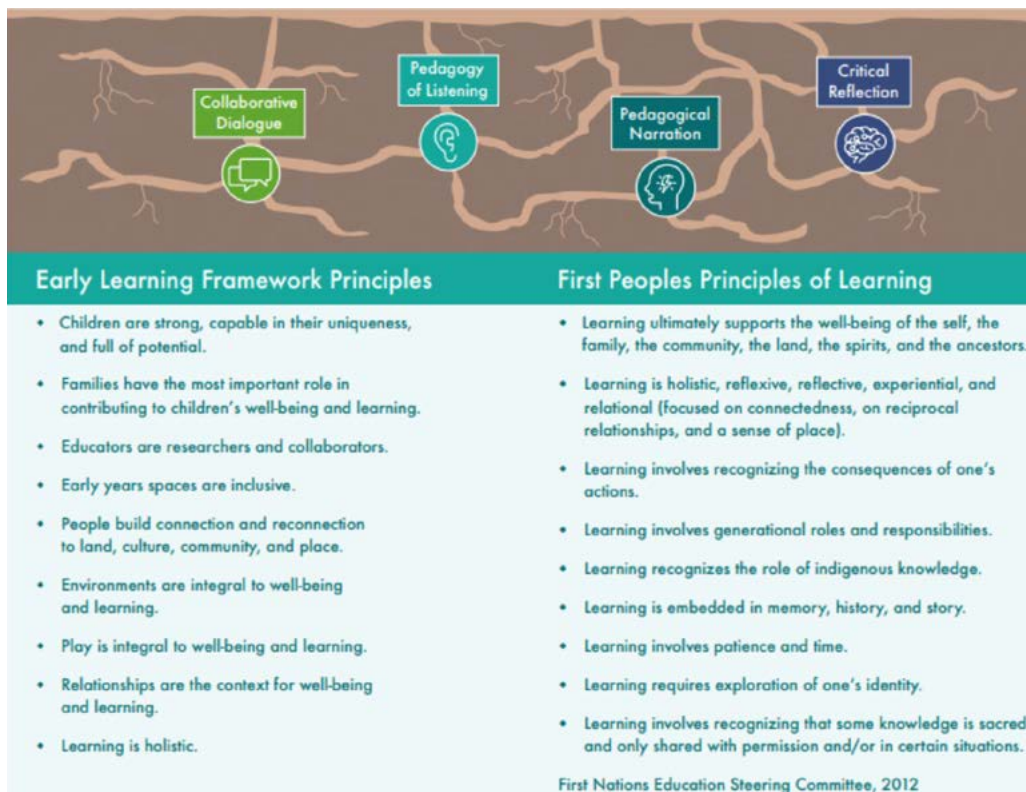
This year, all elementary schools will receive Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) materials to host school event(s). SPARK is implemented through play-based activities while learning about early learning programs and services, their local elementary school, and their communities.

Ready, Set, Learn events are most often held throughout the spring prior to a child beginning Kindergarten.

## Early Learning Framework (ELF)

B.C.’s Early Learning Framework guides and supports early childhood educators, primary school teachers, principals and vice-principals, college and university educators and researchers, post-secondary students in early childhood and elementary education programs, StrongStartBC facilitators, other early years professionals, communities, governments, and families.

The Framework establishes a vision for respectfully living and learning together. It supports the rich early learning experiences of children, provides a focal point for dialogue among British Columbians, and creates a common language and greater understanding of the vital importance of early learning for all young children.



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

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

Each month, the Early Years Coordinator continues to release StrongStartBC facilitators to participate in professional development focused on the ELF principles. Through the SPARK program, curriculum outcomes, core competencies, First Peoples' Principles of Learning and the Early Learning Framework are all highlighted. In April 2021, 125 ECEs and K-3 teachers explored these new documents. The new ELF can be found online at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/early-learning-framework>

## ACTION ITEM

- Continue the development and delivery of a professional learning series focused on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF).

## Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)

In the 2021 - 2022 school year, SD73 continue(s) its third year with a small provincial team focused on Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC).

CR4YC focuses on social and emotional well-being to improve outcomes for young children. 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.

SD73's participants are selected as triads from the same 'community'. For example: a StrongStartBC Facilitator, a Kindergarten teacher from the same school (or neighborhood), and a community-based Early Childhood Educator working in a childcare centre or pre-school in the same community. This has brought educators together who share the same children and families and provide them with the opportunity to collaborate and strengthen relationships over time.

The report can be found at [https://cr4yr.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/cr4yc-final-report\\_20\\_21.pdf](https://cr4yr.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/cr4yc-final-report_20_21.pdf)

**"Resiliency is not one more thing to add to our teaching plates... IT IS THE PLATE"**  
*(as stated by Kim Schonert Reichl, May 2021)*

## ACTION ITEM:

- Continue participation in year three of the CR4YC research. Early learning coordinator is the local facilitator. New reports and summary of findings will be published each year in the fall.

## Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition (SEY2KT)

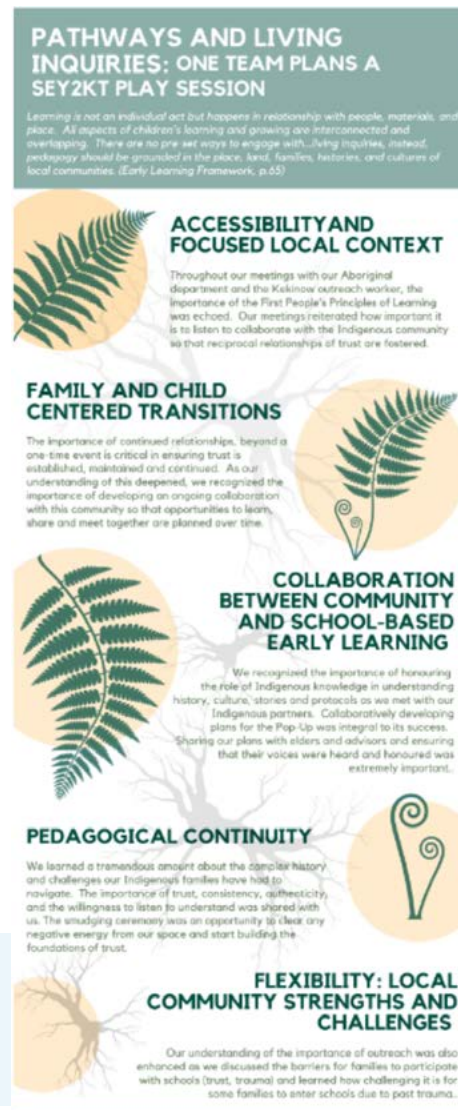
Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition is a Ministry of Education supported program. Each year, the Ministry selects districts to be a part of a provincial pilot aimed at improving the social, emotional, and learning outcomes for early learners.

In the 2021 – 2022 school year, SD73 is participating in the SEY2KT project for the fourth year. A key aspect of SEY2KT is the growth of a collaborative project started between our StrongStartBC educators, our new ECEs, and our Kindergarten teachers. These early years' educators co-plan their time together to improve the transition between pre-K and Kindergarten. Pre-K children spend time, along with their familiar StrongStartBC educator or ECE teacher in the school environment. This transition time is now occurring a full year prior to starting Kindergarten. Our experience shows us that giving our Kindergarten children time to learn and adjust leads to greater gains in all areas of learning. Relationships are the heart of this project. SEY2KT is not focused on a single act of 'transition' – it is about making connections and developing relationships among families and communities.

The report can be found at: <https://bit.ly/SEY2KT2020-21>  
Compassionate Systems Leadership information and presentation: <https://www.compassionatesystemsleadership.net/sey2kt-20-21>

## ACTION ITEM:

- Continue participation in provincial sessions that support early learners, such as year three of Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT), and in the Ministry of Education series, *Compassionate Systems Leadership*.



## Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK)

Throughout the Spring of 2021, district staff, school staff, StrongStartBC Early Childhood Educators, and community agencies collaborated and joined together to support incoming Kindergarten families with a seamless transition into their local schools. SPARK was implemented through virtual tours, drive-thru meet and greets, outside play programs, and online Zoom sessions based on literacy, numeracy, physical literacy, and healthy choices.

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

To support our schools, packages of materials are created and distributed. In person training sessions with teams are facilitated upon request with the Early Learning Coordinator. 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.

## ACTION ITEMS:

- Ensure all elementary schools are supported with a SPARK program.
- Support and build resources for SPARK to reflect the needs of our French Immersion schools and our Indigenous families.
- Support all seven (7) StrongStartBC schools with access to an early childhood educator in Kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry of Kindergarten during the month of September.
- Support Seamless Day and Just B4 pilot programs to continue to develop ECE and Kindergarten teacher partnerships.

## Supported Transitions

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

During 2020–2021, the following Kindergarten planning meetings occurred to support incoming learners:

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

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

Once students enrol 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.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For more information on supporting students in SD73, see the *Annual Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Report* on our District website.

# Seamless Day

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

The before- and after school care runs Mondays to Fridays with before-school care offered from 7:30 AM to 8:30 AM and after-school care from 2:30 PM to 5:30 PM. The hours are adapted for early dismissal days, running from 11:30 AM to 5:30 PM, and on the six non-instructional days running from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

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

- Parental need for before- and after-school care (based on Kamloops COMMUNITY CHILD CARE PLANNING Report - June 2020 and Discussions with Kamloops Early Years/Child Care/Resource and Referral Center) <https://bit.ly/KamloopsChildCareReport2020>
- Availability of licensed childcare within the community.
- A school with additional space (two rooms are licensed – Kindergarten classroom plus one other).
- A Kindergarten teacher participating in the pilot project.
- Early Development Instrument (EDI) data.

Once the program’s policies and guidelines were developed and the classroom spaces at Arthur Hatton Elementary were licensed by the local health authority, the program opened for registration late January. This program is offered for a minimal monthly or daily fee. Families may qualify for childcare subsidies through the Ministry of Children & Family Development. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education.

## Main benefits:

- Provide children and families with quality early care and learning experiences in a single location for the full workday, with the same caring adults in their local school.
- Improve children’s transitions to Kindergarten, support their continuity of learning, and enhance communication with families.
- Enable ECEs to work collaboratively with classroom teachers in providing high-quality early learning experiences.
- Identify areas that create barriers for schools to successfully operate Seamless Day models.
- Promote an inclusive education system so that students with diverse abilities are fully participating members of a community of learners.

- Increase the number of affordable, accessible, and high-quality childcare spaces offered in schools, while helping to build the future of childcare required to move BC towards an inclusive universal childcare system.

## Just B4

SD73 is pleased to announce the opening of the Just B4 early childhood education Child Care Program.

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

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

This program is offered for a minimal monthly or daily fee. Families may qualify for childcare subsidies through the Ministry of Children & Family Development. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the financial contribution of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education.

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

- Parental need for Preschool Programming (based on Kamloops COMMUNITY CHILD CARE PLANNING Report - June 2020 and Discussions with Kamloops Early Years/Child Care/Resource and Referral Center) <https://bit.ly/KamloopsChildCareReport2020>
- A school with StrongStartBC room that was licensed.
- Early Development Instrument (EDI) data.

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

### ACTION ITEMS:

- Continue to develop Seamless Day and Just B4 programming.
- Continue to develop professional development opportunities for ECEs and Kindergarten teachers.

# Community Collaboration

SD73's community partnerships are a key component of our ongoing success with early years' programs. Working with our community benefits our early learners and their families and supports the SD73 Strategic Plan Priority 5: Strengthen partnerships to enrich the way we lead, learn, and work. Throughout the year, SD73 collaborates with the early years' community partners on "Kindergarten Readiness" presentations for families, preschools, and daycare providers. Each year, we collaborate on three community events to increase awareness about the importance of literacy and provide literacy support for all ages.

## ACTION ITEM:

- Continue to collaborate with the early years' community partners on virtual sessions and printed materials for Kindergarten Readiness for families, preschools, and daycare professionals.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group

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

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

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

### Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative (KELLI)

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

Another popular community event is the ABC Family Literacy Day. ABC Literacy Day attracts 1,000 families to attend a day-long open house each January.

## ACTION ITEM

- Continue to collaborate with early years' community partners on community programming such as Mother Goose, One-to-One Reading, and 1001 Books before Five to increase awareness about the importance of early literacy.

## Literacy in Kamloops (Link)

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

## PLAYKamloops/Pacific Sport

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

## Thompson Rivers University Nursing Students

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

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

## ACTION ITEM

- Continue building a collaborative service-learning resource with Thompson Rivers University, in which nursing students and early childhood educators establish positive relationships with families to foster children's healthy development.

# Working with our Rural Community Partners

All of our rural partners, including Yellowhead Community Services (YCS), Interior Community Services (ICS), Interior Health (IH), Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD) and our many Aboriginal Band Agencies and Indigenous Early Learning Centers play a vital role in developing and delivering programming to our families and children. The many agencies are in direct contact with school administrators to assess unique supports for early learners in each community. Mother Goose programming, preschools, play groups, and direct supported services are some of the family-centered practices encouraged, with the help of Ready Set Learn money, within our schools.

## Next Steps

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

In early learning, our next steps include the expansion of pilot projects to include more schools. Pilots allow us to try new 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 refining the Kindergarten Survey. With the help of colleagues in the community, we can ensure that we are receiving the data that best informs supporting early learners. As we better develop the survey, we can include better supports for diverse learners as well as our French Immersion students.

We will ensure that our SPARK program reaches all communities and is offered as a full program in every elementary school. We are pleased to note that our outlying communities including Barriere, Chase, Clearwater, and Logan Lake are all participating in a full SPARK program.

Continuing to support our adults with learning is key to our success. The development of a series of professional learning workshops that focus on the principles of the Early Learning Framework (ELF) will ensure that we all have access to this important work.

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

As a support for foundational skills, SD73 will build early literacy and early numeracy programs in our schools. We will continue with phonemic awareness programs available to all schools and support numeracy with a toolkit and professional learning.

None of this work would be as successful without our community partners. A continued focus includes collaboration with the early years' community on Kindergarten readiness, literacy, and supports for all early learners. When we work together, our children benefit from the best of all our work.

# Glossary and Acronyms

## **ASQ**

Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Thompson Rivers University nursing students

## **CHEQ**

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

## **CR4YC**

Changing Results for Young Children – Ministry of Education program

## **Early Learning**

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

## **ECE**

Early Childhood Educator

## **EDI**

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

## **ELCC**

Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group – City of Kamloops

## **HELP**

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

## **Just B4**

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

## **KELLI**

Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative

## **LinK**

Literacy in Kamloops

## **Phoneme**

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

## **Phonological Awareness**

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

## **PRA**

Primary Reading Assessment

## **Seamless Day**

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

## **SEY2KT**

Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition – Ministry of Education program

## **StrongStartBC Centre**

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

## **SPARK**

Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten



## **TRC**

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

## **UNDRIP**

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)



