

EARLY YEARS' ANNUAL REPORT

February 22, 2021



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's¹ *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 that allowed this level of interaction presented a challenge.

In SD73, the early learning team coordinator and StrongStart 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 StrongStart 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 StrongStart 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 StrongStart centres will extend our reach further out into the community.² (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).³ 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.

¹ OECD refers to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

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

³ 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 particular, the new Early Learning Framework:

- Expands the focus on children from birth to five years in the original framework to children birth to eight years. The vision, principles, and context articulated here are relevant to working with children (and their families) from birth to Grade 3.
- Connects with BC's New Curriculum and Core Competencies (BC Ministry of Education, 2018b). Concepts in the framework can be interwoven with the BC Curriculum to inspire both early childhood educators and educators working with children in Kindergarten to Grade 3.
- Was developed in consultation with the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, and Métis Nation BC.
- Strives to contribute to lasting reconciliation with Indigenous people, which is anchored by the province's cross-government commitment to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)⁴, and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Recognizing and acknowledging how Euro-western practices are embedded in mainstream educational pedagogy, this framework's intention is to contribute to reconciliation through implicitly and explicitly honouring Indigenous authorities in education.
- Strengthens the vision of inclusive spaces and practices for all children, including children with diverse abilities and needs.
- Envisions learning and being as a holistic process that happens as children and adults come together in relationship with each other, ideas, materials, places, and histories.
- Introduces language that may be new to some educators. The use of this language is intentional as it helps in expressing new ways of thinking about the complexities of childhood care and learning. Using new language can offer different ways of seeing, which can inspire new conversations.
- Uses the term "living inquiries" (known as "areas of learning" in the 2008 Early Learning Framework) and "pathways" (known as "learning goals" in the 2008 Early Learning Framework) that will help to describe the thinking, doing, and learning that happens as children, educators, materials, and ideas interconnect.⁵

New and reimagined initiatives are included in the areas of early literacy and early numeracy. These foundational skills can be developed in our early learners and we have developed initiatives that can be implemented, measured and supported. Details can be found in the Assessments section as action items to better support the learning measured.

Throughout this report, programs and initiatives are discussed to illustrate the connection between District-level work and direction from the Ministry of Education. For more information on specific programs, refer to the Programs and Initiatives section.

⁴ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples can be found at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

⁵ Early Learning Framework, 2019, p. 4 and 5

IN REVIEW: ACTION ITEM UPDATE FROM THE 2020 REPORT

- Expand the number of schools participating in Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) from three to eight.
 - While we had sixteen elementary schools interested in participating, UBC was unable to secure funding to work with all committed school districts. When the program is fully running once again, SD73 will request participation in the questionnaire.
- Collaborate with principals from the CHEQ pilot to discuss their data and develop action plans to support their learners.
 - See above item.
- Expand the Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) program to ensure it is represented in each family of schools.
 - SPARK was represented in each SD73 Family of Schools. 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-through 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 of ways our early learning team kept students front and centre. The team was able to reach 468 families 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 professional development administration meetings were dedicated to allowing time for facilitators to reflect and explore the new document and its content.
 - One large virtual conference - *Considering the Early Learning Frameworks 'First Peoples Principles of Learning' and Common World Pedagogies* - was held in April, 2020 through a virtual format - 105 district early learning teachers attended to learn how the ELF connected 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 adapted to an online/virtual environment to support professional learning. Detailed report links are included below:
 - <https://cr4yr.com/2020/09/16/cr4yc-research-findings-2019-2020/>
 - <https://cr4yr.com/2020/09/16/sey2kt-research-findings-2019-2020/>

- Collaborate with the early years' community partners on three "Kindergarten Readiness" presentations for families, preschools and daycare professionals.
 - More than 340 families and community ECEs attended three Kindergarten Readiness presentations in the 2019 – 2020 school year.
- Collaborate with community partners on four 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 2019 – 2020 school year. Community events included the very popular ABC Family Literacy Day at the Henry Grube Education Centre which was attended by 649 families. An International Children's Day focussed around a celebration of the Children's Charter of Rights⁶ and a Healthy Kids' Day was held in partnership with the Early Years' Centre, YMCA/YWCA, and Boys' and Girls' Club. The one cancelled event was a spring Teddy Bear Picnic.
- 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 four (4) hands-on, play-based sessions for families and students in four StrongStart centres. Topics included immunization, sleep, nutrition and dental care.
- 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.
 - Due to restrictions on meeting during COVID-19, this interactive table had initial discussions but was moved to the 2020 – 2021 action items list to continue the conversation.
- Train twenty-five (25) Kindergarten teachers who are new to the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The focus includes the process for completing the instrument as well as the purpose of the EDI.
 - Training and administration was successfully completed last year. See Kamloops WAVE 7 Report <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/edi/sd/73/> and
 - Provincial report: <http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/maps/edi/>

⁶ 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 2020 - 2021

- Expand the Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) program to include an online / virtual platform for families and schools to ensure access when face-to-face programs cannot be delivered.
- Ensure all elementary schools can participate in a SPARK or a mini-SPARK program.
- Support and build resources for StrongStart to continue delivering early learning services, including virtual programming and the development and delivery of supply kits.
- Support all seven (7) StrongStart schools with access to an early childhood educator in Kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry of Kindergarten during the month of September.
- 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 three of Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT), begin participation in the Ministry of Education series, *Compassionate Systems Leadership*, and continue in the second year of participation in Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC).
- 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 building a collaborative service-learning resource with Thompson Rivers University, in which nursing students and early childhood educators establish positive relationships with families to foster children's healthy development.
- Continue to build 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. We will also address support for distributed learning (@KOOL) teachers with the Kindergarten Survey.
- 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 common practice around early reading and phonemic awareness skills.
- Collaborate with the SD73 Numeracy Team on providing math toolkits and professional development opportunities for early numeracy.

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 on for that child. This investment ensures positive outcomes later on for children who have access to quality early years' programs.

Funding

In 2020 – 2021, 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
 - StrongStart
 - Ready, Set, Learn

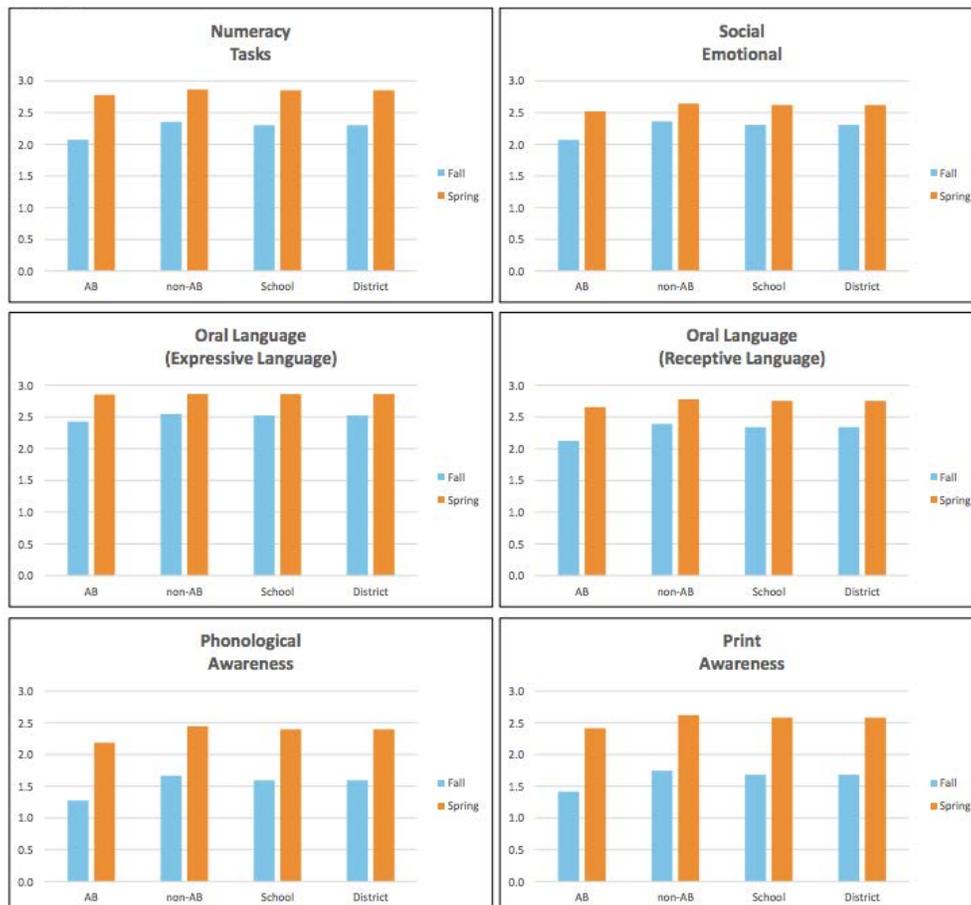
Assessments

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 the year. We collect baseline data, plan interventions and supports for each student and then continue to monitor for growth.

Kindergarten Survey

The Kindergarten Survey (or K-Survey) is administered each year. The data collected for January of 2021 has a focus on phonological / phonemic awareness. As schools collect the data, our District Early Years Coordinator breaks it down to determine which classrooms or students may need some 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.

Although the data set below represents the previous school year, it is an indicator of the importance of phonological awareness training. New data was collected throughout the month of January and the data sets align with previous years' data. A focus on supporting phonological and print awareness remains a priority.



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

To better support our K-Survey, we will create a working table to give feedback on the next iteration of the assessment. Recommendations for adaptations will be added to the survey for our diverse learners. To better support our immersion schools, a French version of the kits and the survey will be developed. A new support this year has been developed to adapt for use with our distributed learning (@KOOL) kindergarten teachers.

ACTION ITEM:

- Continue to build 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. We will also address support for distributed learning (@KOOL) teachers with the Kindergarten Survey.

To develop phonemic awareness skills, our Early Years Coordinator and Literacy Team will build kits for schools using a four-part resource, the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness program. Using these resources will develop common language and key understandings of phonological and phonemic awareness and will be supported through professional learning from the Early Years and Literacy coordinators. The program supports teachers by encouraging manageable daily practice that becomes routine. It is especially important to have a system in place to support all learners, but in particular those who were affected by the suspension of in-class learning in the 2019 – 2020 school year. Children with strong phonological and phonemic awareness are better able to decode (sound out) and encode (match the letters to sounds) with proficiency. When encoding and decoding are combined, students develop both auditory and visual processing which bring phonemic awareness and phonics together.

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 common practice around early reading and phonemic awareness skills.

Just like literacy, numeracy is a foundational skill that can be supported in early years. The purchase and distribution of “Ultimate Math Toolkits” ensures that a strong resource is in place for all of our all kindergarten classrooms. With restrictions on sharing materials, distribution of kits with loose parts and learning materials has been complicated to employ. The logical solution was to ensure each kindergarten learner received an individual toolkit. Small bins with built-in dividers were given to kindergarten students to help develop their learning while developing fine motor skills. Students practiced the building blocks of mathematical understanding in a safe and engaging, hands-on learning opportunity. To further develop their understanding, the kits supported engaging mathematical discussions and math became a valuable part of their daily play. Toolkits and the supplies for them were delivered to kindergarten classrooms in October, 2020.

ACTION ITEM:

- Collaborate with the SD73 Numeracy Team on providing math toolkits and professional development opportunities for early numeracy.

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 of the organization: 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.

No data was gathered in the 2019 – 2020 PRA collection due to the suspension on in-class learning in the spring of 2020. The data presented below was collected in the previous school year and represents a sample of student performance that is comparable with previous years. The next PRA data collection will occur in May and June, 2021.

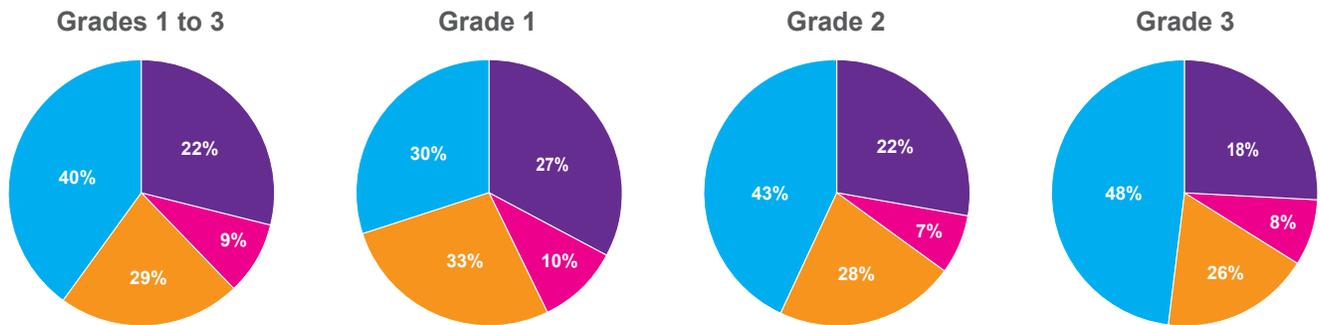
School Report Details

Aboriginal: **Included**
 Non-Aboriginal: **Included**
 Male: **Included**
 Female: **Included**

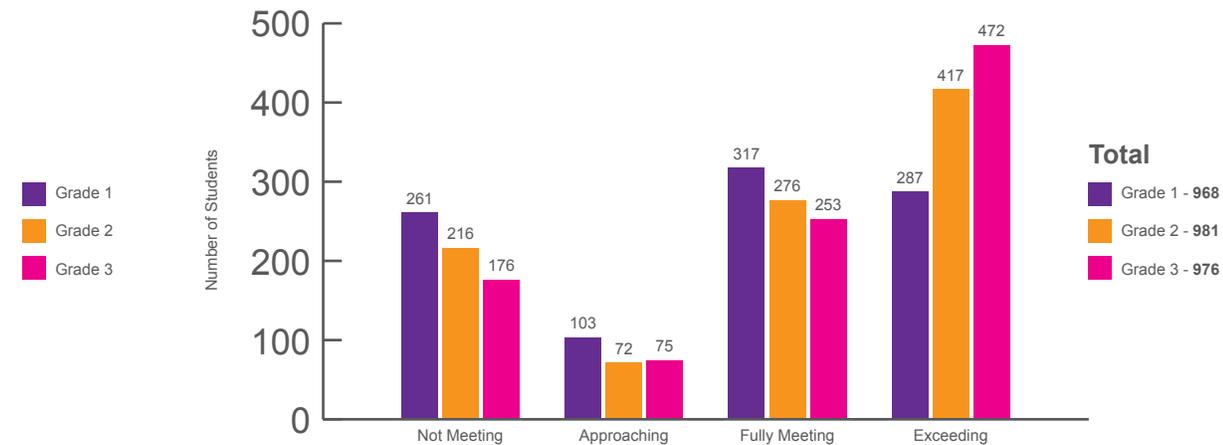


- 63% in grade 1 are fully meeting or exceeding
- 71% in grade 2 are fully meeting or exceeding
- 74% in grade 3 are fully meeting or exceeding

Performance



Performance by number of students per achievement band

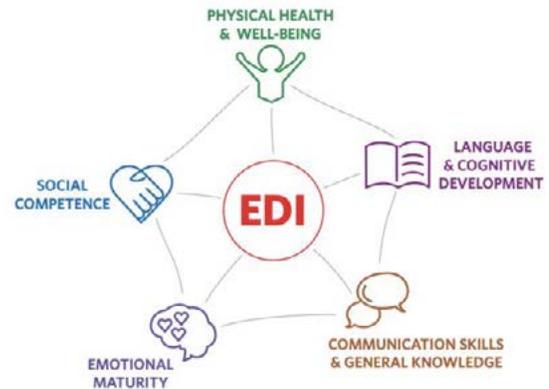


Early Development Instrument (EDI)

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 areas. The following notes the five developmental areas and offers a sample question for each.

School districts are invited to participate in a series of "waves" of the EDI before being rotated out to accommodate other districts. SD73 was invited to participate in one year within Wave 8 (2019-2020). Neighbourhood data for Wave 8 will not be available until the completion of the 2021 – 2022 school year as each wave represents three years. Neighbourhood data for Wave 7 was included in the February 2020 copy of this report. The charts that follow represent the latest data sets on vulnerability rates by scale district-wide. Of greatest concern is the rate of vulnerability on more than one scale. Support for students who measure as vulnerable on multiple scales presents a more complex challenge for school years and beyond.

THE FIVE SCALES OF THE EDI



2016 / 2017

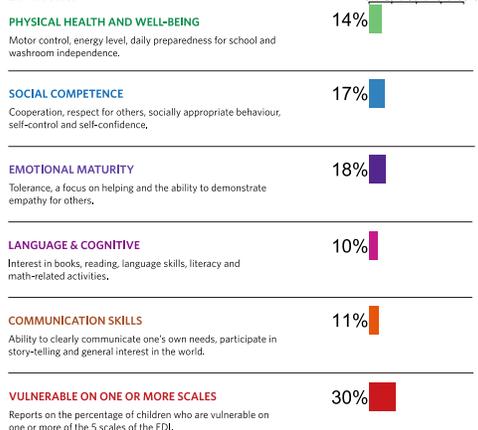
2019 / 2020

SD73 ■ KAMLOOPS - THOMPSON

Demographic Summary

# OF VALID EDI	STUDENT PARTICIPATION RATE	# OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS	STUDENT MEAN AGE	# GIRLS	# BOYS	# ESL	# SPECIAL NEEDS
1025	96%	66	5.64	527	498	30	28

EDI Results



Vulnerable children are those who, without additional support and care, are more likely to experience challenges in their school years and beyond.

Number of Children who are Vulnerable on:

NO SCALES	1 SCALE	2 SCALES	3 SCALES	4 SCALES	5 SCALES
715	108	92	51	31	28

HELP staff are available to answer questions, provide support and assist with the interpretation of your results. Please contact us: edi@help.ubc.ca or visit our website: earlylearning.ubc.ca/edi



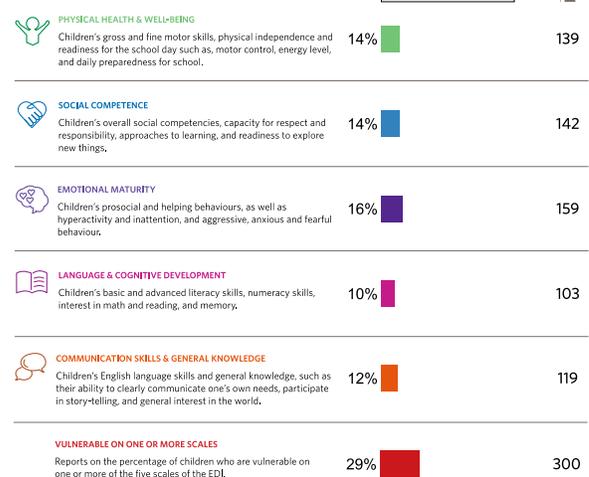
2016/2017 EDI SCHOOL DISTRICT SUMMARY - 6

SD73 ■ KAMLOOPS - THOMPSON

EDI VULNERABILITY RATES BY SCALE

Vulnerable children are those who, without additional support and care, are more likely to experience challenges in their school years and beyond.

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 1024



MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES:

	NO SCALES	1 SCALE	2 SCALES	3 SCALES	4 SCALES	5 SCALES
# Children	724	124	69	50	35	22
% Children	70.7%	12.1%	6.7%	4.9%	3.4%	2.1%

2019/2020 EDI RESULTS - 8

Of note, in comparison to the previous wave's data collection is a decrease in vulnerability in Social Competence and Emotional Maturity. A small increase of one percent in vulnerability appeared in the Communication Skills and General Knowledge domain. The overall vulnerability rate on more than one scale decreased by one percent. While this is good news overall, it is important to continue to watch, in particular, vulnerability on more than one scale.

Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)

SD73 was invited by Dr. Alisa Almas and Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl to participate in the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) Project in April of 2019. The CHEQ program is administered through the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) out of the University of British Columbia.

The CHEQ is a questionnaire that is completed by the parents or guardians of kindergarten-aged children and focuses on early experiences in key areas of development. These developmental areas can be correlated to the well-being, health, education and social outcomes for the child. The questionnaire takes approximately thirty minutes to complete and schools receive instant individual reports that include school-level and classroom-level summaries.

In the fall of 2019, three schools in SD73 completed the CHEQ as a part of a limited pilot project. The Early Years' Coordinator will collaborate with principals from the pilot to discuss their data sets and help develop action plans to support their learners. Although SD73 had sixteen (16) schools prepared to participate in the Fall of 2020, UBC was unable to secure funding for all participating districts. We look forward to participating once funding is once again available.

Programs and Initiatives

SD73 participates in a number of partnerships, both between departments and in our communities. The school district departments of Curriculum and Instruction, Aboriginal Education, and Inclusive Education work together to ensure our students have the supports they need for success. Our partnerships into the community further enhance learning experiences for current and our soon-to-be students as well as their families.

StrongStart

SD73 has seven StrongStart programs. StrongStart provides rich learning experiences designed to support early learning in a variety of developmental areas including: physical, cognitive, social and emotional, and language. Our programs are supported by qualified Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). The ECEs work closely with other staff in the primary years, particularly the kindergarten teacher. A positive transition to kindergarten is important and allows children the opportunity to make friends and interact with children of the same age.

In February, 2020, the Ministry of Education announced an initiative to create a connection for Aboriginal families. In particular, school districts will begin professional development planning to build capacity in developing or enhancing relationships with local Indigenous communities. Our early years' team has been working with the Aboriginal Education department for a number of years, however, this new initiative will allow us to begin to develop deeper ties with our Elders, storytellers, and language keepers. Throughout the 2019

– 2020 school year, work with the Aboriginal Education Department supported the work of Indigenizing some of our early learning work. Aboriginal Education Workers participated in supporting an Indigenized perspective on programs that have proven successful with early learners. The Early Years team looks forward to further developing this work when we are able to support on-site and increased in-person programs, following the end of restrictions due to the pandemic. In particular, continued development of story, song, and language will remain a focus.

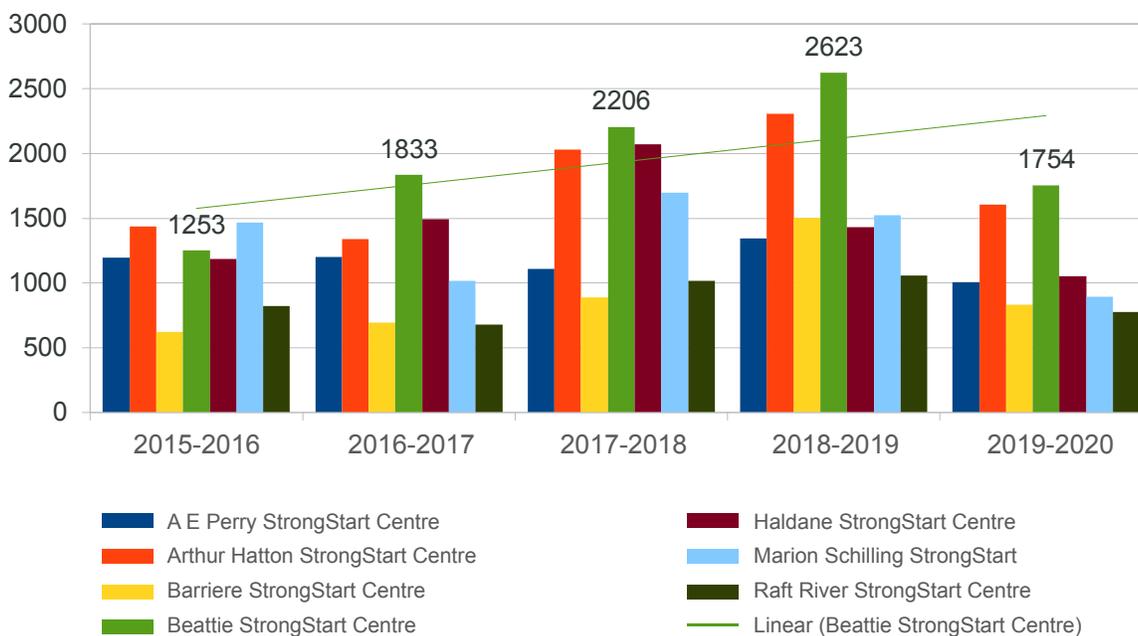
Our programs are located at AE Perry Elementary, Arthur Hatton Elementary, Barriere Elementary, Beattie Elementary, Haldane Elementary, Marion Schilling Elementary and Raft River Elementary. As the green trend line below indicates, we have seen steady, significant growth in attendance in our StrongStart centres.

Positive Attendance - StrongStart Centres

SCHOOL YEAR	AE Perry	Arthur Hatton	Barriere	Beattie	Haldane	Marion	Raft River	TOTAL ATT
2015-2016	1198	1436	621	1253	1183	1467	820	7978
2016-2017	1203	1337	694	1833	1490	1018	681	8256
2017-2018	1110	2030	887	2206	2071	1698	1015	11017
2018-2019	1346	2304	1505	2623	1430	1524	1059	11791
2019-2020*	1007	1607	833	1754	1054	894	776	7925

*Note: due to the COVID-19 pandemic, StrongStart Centres were affected by the suspension of in-class learning from Spring Break to May, 2020.

SD73 StrongStart Centres Positive Attendance Four Years



Ready, Set, Learn

Ready, Set, Learn is a Ministry of Education program that supports family-oriented events for children between the ages of three and five. The intent of the program is to begin supporting the transition of students to kindergarten. Families who attend will participate in play-based activities while learning about early years' programs and services. Many of our schools offer a Mother Goose program during their Ready, Set, Learn time. Mother Goose is a program that engages our early learners through storytelling, rhymes, and songs. The program, including a healthy snack, is provided free of charge.

Funding for Ready, Set, Learn was announced to districts on January 11, 2021. At the time of this report, we are planning to support our early learners both virtually, and if possible later in the spring, through small in-person sessions.

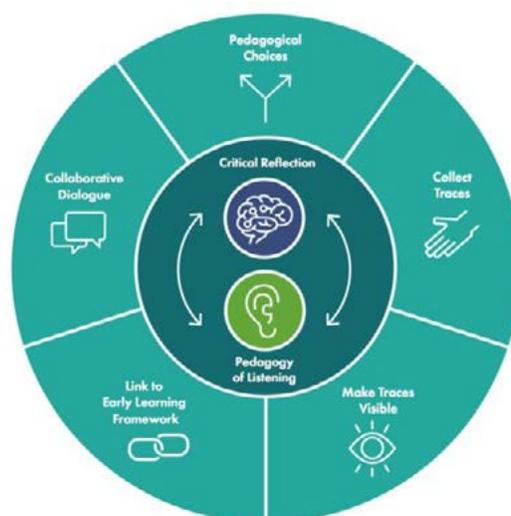
Early Learning Framework (ELF)

In the fall of 2019, the Ministry of Education developed a new early learning guide to set up young learners for success. In November of 2019, Minister of Education, Rob Fleming, stated, "We are focusing on providing accessible high-quality early learning opportunities to all British Columbian children and making sure education professionals, parents and caregivers have the knowledge required to support kids to move forward positively through their K-12 studies to reach their full potential."

The Early Learning Framework Principles set forth ways of thinking about childhood, learning, and practices that underpin the vision of respectfully living and learning together.

The principles are:

- Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness, and full of potential.
- Families have the most important role in contributing to children's well-being and learning.
- Educators are researchers and collaborators.
- Early years spaces are inclusive.
- People build connection and reconnection to land, culture, community and place.
- Environments are integral to well-being and learning.
- Play is integral to well-being and learning.



- Relationships are the context for well-being and learning.
- Learning is holistic⁷.

Each month, the Early Years Coordinator releases StrongStart 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, sixteen schools 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 2019 – 2020 school year, SD73 was invited to participate in a small provincial team focused on Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC). The purpose of the project, as outlined by CR4YC is:

- To increase the social and emotional well-being of young children
- To improve the quality of practices associated with teaching social and emotional well-being
- To increase collaboration and strengthen relationships between early childhood educators and primary teachers
- To use the science and research of social and emotional well-being to improve both educators' practice and social and emotional outcomes for children
- To provide young children with opportunities and specific skills that foster their social and emotional competence through positive human qualities: happiness, self-regulation, kindness, empathy, sense of belonging, altruism, sense of agency, compassion, sense of identity, and building relationships (Changing Results for Young Children report, p. 3)

The report can be found at <https://cr4yr.com/2019/09/02/changing-results-for-young-children-research-findings-2018-19/>

In SD73, CR4YC is a collaborative inquiry project that brings together community-based Early Childhood Educators, StrongStart facilitators, and Kindergarten teachers who are released to work collaboratively in six joint professional learning sessions.

⁷ Early Learning Framework, 2019, p.15
Graphic, Early Learning Framework, 2019, p.53

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.

SD73 will continue to participate in provincial sessions that support early learning. A final report will be created at the end of the 2019 -2020 school year.

ACTION ITEM:

- Continue participation in provincial sessions that support early learners, such as year three of Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT), begin participation in the Ministry of Education series, *Compassionate Systems Leadership*, and continue in the second year of participation in Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC).

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. If selected for the pilot, districts receive a small grant to promote effective transitions for all pre-Kindergarten children and their families.

In the 2020 – 2021 school year, SD73 will participate in the SEY2KT project for the third year. A key aspect of SEY2KT is the growth of a collaborative project started between our StrongStart educators 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 StrongStart educator, in the kindergarten classroom. This transition time occurs in September of each year and the positive response to the program has encouraged SD73 to increase the amount of time for the transition in each of the years we have tried the project. In our third year of this aspect of transition improvement, we are now participating for the full month of September. Our experience shows us that giving our kindergarten children time to learn and adjust leads to greater gains in all areas of learning.

Another SD73 program, our very successful Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) program is being expanded to more schools throughout the district. We continue to ensure that our rural and remote areas of our school district continue to benefit from SPARK.

Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK)

Throughout the spring of 2021, district staff, school staff, StrongStart Early Childhood Educators and community agencies collaborated virtually and joined together to support incoming kindergarten families with a seamless transition into their local schools. SPARK is implemented through four 1-hour orientation 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 assistant workers and Aboriginal education workers. We are

monitoring participation to ensure that a SPARK program, with well-developed lesson plans and supports, is included in every family of schools in SD73.

To support our schools, bins of materials to support SPARK are created and distributed. As educators attend the training program, they receive a bin. A training day is scheduled each February and includes community representatives who take the lead on components of the professional development over the four sessions. Community representatives include the Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD), Pacific Sport, Early Years Centre, and Kamloops Early Language and Literacy Initiative (KELLI).

ACTION ITEMS:

- Expand the Strong, Prepared and Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) program to include an online / virtual platform for families and schools to ensure access when face-to-face programs cannot be delivered.
- Ensure all elementary schools can participate in a SPARK or a mini-SPARK program.
- Support and build resources for StrongStart to continue delivering early learning services, including virtual programming and the development and delivery of supply kits.
- Support all seven (7) StrongStart schools with access to an early childhood educator in Kindergarten classrooms for gradual entry of Kindergarten during the month of September.

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 2019–2020, 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	70	24	23	0	32	4	90

Prior to the beginning of Kindergarten, District employees attend daycares to observe students and determine what support will be helpful.

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 (IES) staff members provide direct service and consultation, together with school-based teams, on an as-needed basis to meet individual student's needs.⁸

Community Collaboration

SD73's community partnerships are a key component of our ongoing success with early years' programs. Working with our community not only benefits our early learners and their families, but also supports the SD73 Strategic Plan Priority 5: Strengthen partnerships to enrich the way we lead, learn, and work. Throughout the year, SD73 will collaborate with the early years' community on three (3) "Kindergarten Readiness" presentations for families, preschools and daycare providers. Further, we will collaborate on four (4) 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.

We work collaboratively with many organizations including:

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 child care. The creation of the engagement group was meant to build a bridge between early learning and child care stakeholders. SD73's early years coordinator was an invited member of this engagement group and will continue to work with them 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.

⁸ For more information on supporting students in SD73, see the *Annual Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity Report (September 2019)* on our District website.

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 funded through the Ready, Set, Learn grant from the Ministry of Education.

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 at the Henry Grube Education Centre.

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. Play Kamloops 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 StrongStart 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 StrongStart 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 contributes 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.

Next Steps

As a school district, we are continually moving toward our 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 also are prepared to help support the improvements.

At a local level, we will move forward with a redevelopment of our kindergarten survey, with the help of some of our colleagues in the community, we can ensure that we are receiving the data sets that best inform supporting our learners. As we better develop the survey, we can include 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 or a mini-SPARK 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 begin with a phonemic awareness program 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 will remain on our collaboration with the early years' community on kindergarten readiness, literacy, and supports for all early learners. When we work together, our children get 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/>

ELF

Early Learning Framework - Ministry of Education

ELCC

Early Learning and Child Care Engagement Group – City of Kamloops

HELP

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

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.

RSL

Ready, Set, Learn – Ministry of Education initiative

SEY2KT

Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition – Ministry of Education program

StrongStart 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)

