



ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



Land Acknowledgment Rocky Mountain School District No. 6 is honoured and grateful to be able to work, learn, and grow on the traditional unceded territories of the Secwépemc and the Ktunaxa Peoples and the chosen home of the Métis People of British Columbia.

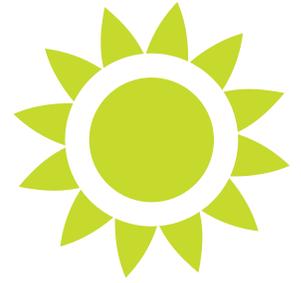
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and Funding	2
Ministerial Initiatives	3-8
Ready, Set, Learn (RSL)	3-4
StrongStart (SS)	5
Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transition (SEY2KT)	6
Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)	7
JUSTB4 Program	8
District Initiatives	9-14
Early Learning Framework (ELF)	9-10
Kindergarten-Early Childhood Educator Collaboration (K-ECE)	11
Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Dual Credit Program	12
After-School Programs	13
New Spaces Fund (NSF)	14
Surveys	15-16
Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)	15
Early Development Instrument (EDi)	16



INTRODUCTION

In May 2021, Rocky Mountain School District No. 6 (SD6) created a District Vice-Principal of Early Learning role with a portfolio focused on early learning and building relationships with childcare providers. In 2022, the new Ministry of Education and Child Care was announced and SD6 accessed Ministry funding to add a Director of Instruction, Early Learning and Child Care position. This has allowed SD6 to form an Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) team made up of the Director of Instruction, Early Learning and Child Care and the District Principal of Early Learning.



This document will highlight some of the projects and initiatives facilitated by the ELCC team in 2022-2023 and will detail the team's plans for 2023-2024.

FUNDING 2023-2024

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOECC) will continue to support ELCC work through a variety of funds found in the Early Learning Funding Agreement. For SD6 these include:

- Early Learning Programs, Projects & Pilots
 - StrongStart BC (SSBC) Early Learning Centres and SSBC Outreach Programs
 - Ready, Set, Learn (RSL) Program
 - Changing Results for Young Learners (CR4YC) Project
 - Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) Project
 - JUSTB4 (JB4) Pilot
- Capacity Building
 - District Early Learning and Child Care Lead

It is important to note that even though the Ministry has eliminated funding this year to support the implementation of the Early Learning Framework (ELF), the ELCC team will continue to move this important work forward in SD6.



READY, SET, LEARN (RSL)

What is Ready, Set, Learn?

Ready, Set, Learn events are funded by the Ministry of Education and Child Care and provide preschool children (birth to five years of age) and their families with information about free programs and services that are available to them prior to entering school. These events are embedded in community and foster positive connections between families, the school system, and local community agencies. SD6 works with community services to put on these events and sits shoulder-to-shoulder with early years partners.

What is Currently Happening?

The 2022-23 CHEQ results from across SD6 show that 69% of families did not use any programs or supports for children from three years of age to kindergarten. Of these families, 21% indicated that a barrier to accessing preschool programs was that they did not know about them while 18% stated that the cost was a barrier.

The Ready, Set, Learn events in SD6 are aimed at building more awareness of the wide variety of free programs and services available for families. In the 2022-2023 school year SD6 coordinated seven RSL events.

Here is a list of the events:

Golden Area

Skybridge – September 2022

- Eight (8) program and service providers
- 24 families and one daycare (34 children, 37 adults)

Parson – January 2023

- Four (4) program and service providers
- 10 families (14 children and 11 adults)
- First RSL event for 8 of the 10 families

Nicholson – May 2023

- Five (5) program and service providers
- 15 families (20 adults and 19 children)
- First RSL event for 13 of the 15 families



Kimberley Area

Blarchmont Early Learning Centre – January 2023

- 16 program and service providers
- 19 families (28 children and 27 adults)
- First RSL event for 14 of 19 families

Blarchmont Early Learning Centre – June 2023

- 19 program and service providers
- 50 families (64 adults and 72 children)
- First RSL event for 21 of the 50 families.

Columbia Valley Area

Radium Public Library – January 2023

- Six (6) program and service providers
- 7 families (11 children, 9 adults)
- First RSL event for 6 of the 7 families

Pothole Park in Invermere – May 2023

- 10 program and service providers
- 45+ families (75 children, 58 adults)
- First RSL event for 38 of 45 families

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

SD6 will continue to offer several RSL events and will aim to create concrete dates in each community that will remain the same from year-to-year in order to make these events predictable and consistent for families and service providers.

Read more about RSL [here](#).



STRONGSTART (SS)

What is StrongStart?

StrongStart BC is a program that provides rich learning environments designed for early learning development for young children (birth to five years old) and their caregivers.

The overall learning experience is shared as parents and caregivers attend with their children and are encouraged to get involved in activities like telling stories, playing games that focus on developing language, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. Qualified early childhood educators lead learning activities where children find opportunities to make friends and interact with others of similar ages.

Additionally, StrongStart provides caregivers information about community services and programs and supports them in making valuable connections with their child and other caregivers.

What is Currently Happening?

In the 2022-2023 school year, StrongStart expanded to Nicholson Elementary School and Windermere Elementary School. StrongStart programming is now available for families in every K-3 and K-7 school. CBAL (Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy) holds the third-party contract for running StrongStart within SD6 and is a valued partner.

While StrongStart facilitators are not SD6 employees, the School District involves facilitators in professional learning that takes place throughout the school year, and they actively participate in projects like Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) and the K-ECE Collaboration.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

StrongStart will continue to operate in all SD6 K-schools and the StrongStart schedule for each community can be found on the Early Learning and Child Care SD6 webpage.

StrongStart facilitators, alongside JUSTB4 staff, will participate in organized professional development on all SD6 non-instructional days. This learning will be facilitated by the ELCC team and will be focused on the Early Learning Framework.

Read more about SS [here](#).





STRENGTHENING EARLY YEARS TO KINDERGARTEN TRANSITIONS (SEY2KT)

What is Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT)?

SEY2KT is a Ministry of Education and Child Care initiative that focuses on building strong, meaningful relationships between the education and early years sectors through collaborative dialogue. Using the Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL) approach, SEY2KT groups engage in CSL tools like collective visioning and creating generative social fields in order to work towards providing a seamless transition for children and families from early years into kindergarten.

What is Currently Happening?

SEY2KT is based in the Columbia Valley. This year the SEY2KT participants included:

- SD6 employees including District Principals and Vice-Principals, a school principal, and a teacher
- Representatives from CBAL, Family Dynamix, Shuswap Band, and Interior Health

Representatives from the ?Akisq'nuk First Nation and the Métis Nation were also invited but were unable to attend.

The SEY2KT group focused on promoting and supporting the Ready, Set, Learn events in the Columbia Valley and worked to build stronger connections between service providers, the School District, and families. The group participated in all the Ministry's province-wide morning sessions and then worked in the afternoon on our local Columbia Valley context.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

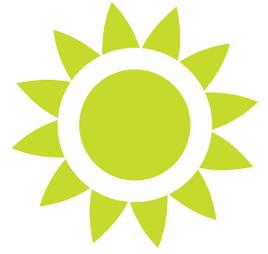
In 2023-24, SEY2KT will expand the group to include more representatives from other community programs and services in order to gain new perspectives. The focus will continue to be on developing creative ways to further engage and support preschool children and families within the Columbia Valley as they transition from early years into school.



Read more about SEY2KT [here](#).



CHANGING RESULTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (CR4YC)



What is Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)?

CR4YC is a Ministry of Education and Child Care funded project that brings together community based ECE workers, StrongStart facilitators, and Kindergarten teachers. CR4YC is focused on the social and emotional well-being of children and how ECEs and Kindergarten teachers can work together to share ideas and collaborate using the Early Learning Framework. By building relationships between early years and schools through collaboration and inquiry, CR4YC seeks to improve outcomes for children.

What is Currently Happening?

In the 2022-2023 school year, CR4YC was expanded from one group in the Kimberley community to include a second group in the Columbia Valley. Participants in each community reported significant positive change for individual students. They also noticed improvement in their classroom environment overall and their understanding of the Early Learning Framework including social/emotional learning.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

CR4YC will continue in the Columbia Valley and in Kimberley. The focus will remain on the ELF and social emotional learning outcomes for children.



“This child is feeling connected and supported with his learning. He has a calmer presence and able to transition from one activity to the next more easily with excitement.”

“He is beginning to understand that it is ok to have big emotions, to make mistakes and that he can still turn his day around. He continues to work towards using positive language towards himself and seeing his personal strengths!”



Read more about CR4YC [here](#).



JUSTB4 PILOT PROGRAM

What is JUSTB4?

JUSTB4 is a Ministry of Education and Child Care provincial pilot project and is specifically designed to provide early learning experiences for children in the year prior to entering kindergarten. JUSTB4 is a licensed preschool program that is facilitated by a certified Early Childhood Educator and a certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant.

The focus of JUSTB4 is on utilizing the BC Early Learning Framework and taking a whole-child approach to teaching and learning. Children play an active role in guiding the learning through play-based activities and social interactions. JUSTB4 prioritizes the social and emotional well-being of children by building a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world around them and celebrating each of their individual gifts. By maintaining a close connection with primary schools throughout the year, JUSTB4 allows for a seamless transition into kindergarten for children, their families, and the school.

Current Actions

A JUSTB4 program began operating out of the StrongStart room in the Blarchmont Early Learning Centre in February 2023 with ten students registered. JUSTB4 was tremendously successful in providing an independent early childhood experience for children who, without this program, would not have had an opportunity to gain important social skills prior to starting kindergarten.

Actions for 2023-24 School Year

During the upcoming school year, the JUSTB4 program will continue at the Blarchmont Early Learning Center and will increase enrollment.

Read more about CR4YC [here](#).



Pillowcase race led by Liz Dowling, ECE and JUSTB4 Manager.

EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK (ELF)



What is the Early Learning Framework (ELF)?

ELF is a guide and support for educators in early childhood and primary grades. The ELF establishes a vision for respectfully living and learning with children from birth to eight years of age. The ELF focuses on building play-based learning environments and incorporates elements of the redesigned curriculum such as the Core Competencies and the First Peoples Principles of Learning allowing for consistency as children transition from early learning into school.

What is Currently Happening?

The 2022-2023 school year was the first time SD6 actively and purposefully took a district-wide approach to implementing the ELF. This was a priority area within the 2022-2023 Annual Operational Plan under the goal of Success For Each Student. This goal involved creating a multi-year plan that began with a Community of Practice for K-3 and K-7 principals during the 2022-2023 school year.

This Community of Practice engaged in three learning sessions focusing on play, pedagogical narration, and critical reflection. Other District Principals and Vice-Principals were invited to participate in these sessions as the ELF touches on all their portfolios. These learning sessions resulted in building a stronger understanding of the facets of the ELF for administrators enabling them to recognize and lead this work in their schools moving forward.



Word Cloud generated to highlight school-based administrators' thoughts on play in the initial learning session.



Word Cloud generated to highlight school-based administrators' thoughts on play after the second learning session.





District and school-based administrators practicing integration of play and the pedagogical narration cycle.

Presentations were done at staff meetings in all eight schools that include K-3 classes by the District Principal of Early Learning to promote and support implementing the ELF. Additionally, work was done one-on-one with many teachers to incorporate more play into classrooms and to gain a better understanding of how pedagogical narration can be used as a regular part of teaching, learning, and reporting.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

Implementing the Early Learning Framework continues to be a priority for SD6 as laid out in the 2023-24 Operational Plan. Focus for the upcoming year will be to continue supporting administrators in leading this work and to create a Community of Practice for Grade 2-3 teachers.



Read more about the ELF [here](#).



KINDERGARTEN – EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (K-ECE) COLLABORATION

What is the Kindergarten – Early Childhood Educator Collaboration (K-ECE)?

The K-ECE Collaboration is a project that is unique to SD6. Educators from childcare facilities and kindergarten teachers are provided with release time to observe and interact in each other’s classrooms.

The goals of the K-ECE collaboration are to build understanding about what teaching and learning looks like in both environments, to spark conversation and collaboration, to gain respect and appreciation for the work that is done by ECEs and K-teachers, and to ease the transition into kindergarten for children.

What is Currently Happening?

The K-ECE collaboration has been successful with participants representing every kindergarten school and eight childcare programs. Participants complete a framework during each of their three visits and submit these to the District Principal of Early Learning. Dinner meetings were held three times in each of the communities of SD6 bringing participants together to deepen their connection, debrief their visits, and plan next steps.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

The K-ECE Collaboration will continue and it will expand to include new childcare programs. The focus of the visits will be on the ELF and dinner meetings will provide time to co-plan lessons between the K-teacher and the ECE. Additionally, optional professional development will be offered around the ELF at these meetings.

Similar Ideas Transition Supporting
Relationships New Understanding
Communication
 Finding **Connection**
 Discussions Practices Supporting-transition

A word cloud of responses to what teachers and ECE’s gained from the K-ECE Collaboration

“It’s made it more enjoyable, and we have more time for fun. Instead of having to worry about things I “think” the teachers want the children to be able to do - I know what we should focus on and we do.” – *A quote from an ECE that participated in the Collaboration*



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (ECE) DUAL CREDIT

What is the ECE Dual Credit Program?

The ECE Dual Credit Program is a partnership between SD6, SD5, SD8 and the College of the Rockies that was formed in 2021. All costs associated with this program (tuition, textbooks, technology, etc.) are fully covered by the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

The ECE Dual Credit Program allows Grade 12 students to take four courses toward an ECE certificate through the College of the Rockies in their second semester. These four courses provide students with high school credits and College of the Rockies credits. Upon successful completion of these courses, students are eligible to apply to become a certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECEA) through the ECE Registry and can work in licensed childcare facilities. ECE Dual Credit students also get priority registration to continue their ECE courses the following September at College of the Rockies and can be fully certified ECEs by the following summer.

What is Currently Happening?

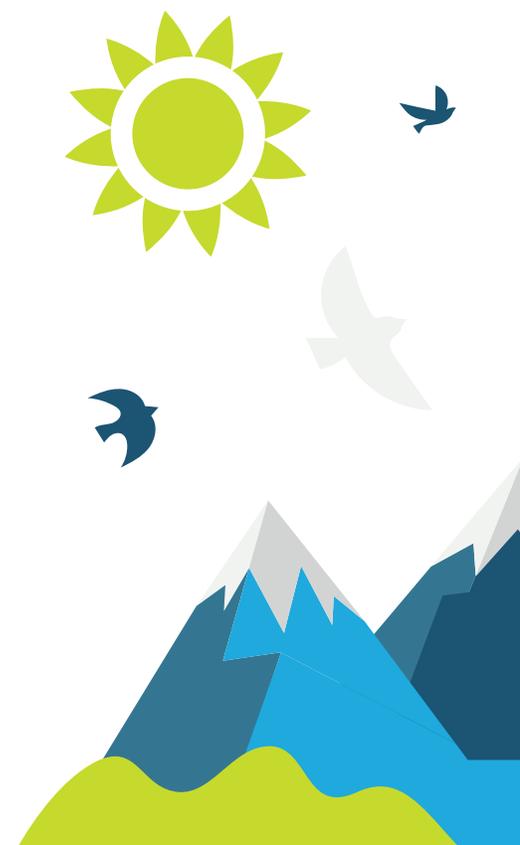
The ECE Dual Credit Program has a three-year financial commitment from the Ministry that began in the 2021-2022 school year. In the 2022-2023 school year, SD6 had five students complete the ECE Dual Credit Program. Three of those students have already begun working in local childcare facilities and two students have committed to pursuing their full ECE certification.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

The 2023-2024 school year will be the last year of this pilot project and the ELCC team has already done several presentations in all three high schools throughout the past school year to promote this opportunity. The ELCC team will connect with high schools in the fall and continue to actively recruit and support Grade 12 students to begin this program in February 2024.



Read more about the ECE Dual Credit Program [here](#).



AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

What are After-School Programs?

In the summer of 2022, SD6 began working in partnership with third-party providers to licence after-school care programs in five primary/elementary schools. While SD6 does not operate these programs, the School District is in a formal partnership with third-party by providing space within schools and enabling families to access convenient child care in their child's school.



What is Currently Happening?

SD6 has formal partnerships with three third-party providers and after-school programs are currently operating in five schools with a sixth location licensed. We have provided after-school care for over 100 children and families in SD6 in the 2022-2023 school year and look to increase that number in the coming year.

All but one location offers full-day care on non-instructional days, winter break, and spring break. Additionally, two locations offered summer programs in 2023.

These include:

- Edgewater Elementary School – Windermere Valley Child Care Society
- Eileen Madson Primary School – Windermere Valley Child Care Society
- Windermere Elementary School – Eva Joseph Early Learning and Cultural Society.
- Marysville Elementary School – Summit Community Services Society
- Lindsay Park Elementary School – Summit Community Services Society
- McKim Middle School – Summit Community Services Society successfully licensed McKim in November 2022 but did not have enough students registered to open the program at that time. Summit Community Services has opened registration at McKim Middle School for the 2023-24 school year and will operate subject to demand.

The ELCC team would like to acknowledge that the success of these programs is in no small part due to the flexibility of the SD6 Operations Department staff, principals, and school-based staff.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

Partnerships will continue and programs will be operating in the 2023-2024 school year.

SD6 continues to work with Golden Community Resources Society to help secure staffing to operate an after-school program at Alexander Park Elementary School.

Read more about after-school programs [here](#).



NEW SPACES FUND

What is the New Spaces Fund?

The ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund provides funding to create new licensed childcare spaces in an effort to help families access affordable, quality, and inclusive child care. The Board of Education approved the submission of an application to build on the grounds at Marysville Elementary School, which was submitted in August of 2022, and one for the grounds at Eileen Madson Primary School, which was submitted in January of 2023.



What is Currently Happening?

Currently, SD6 has received approval for both New Spaces Fund applications.

- In Kimberley, the New Spaces Fund project will be built at Marysville Elementary School and will be operated in partnership with Summit Community Services Society. Conceptual construction plans have been developed by MQN Architects based out of Vernon, BC and the development package is being prepared for the City of Kimberley.
- In Invermere, the New Spaces Fund project will be built on the property behind Eileen Madson Primary School and will be operated in partnership with Windermere Valley Child Care Society.

The ELCC team has created an FAQ related to child care in SD6 and the New Spaces Fund on the Early Learning webpage www.sd6.bc.ca/early-learning/child-care

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

Further steps will be taken to further the development of the Marysville and Eileen Madson projects over the 2023-24 school year. Both facilities are projecting to be open in the fall of 2024.



Groundbreaking event at Marysville Elementary School with Minister of State for Child Care, Grace Lore.

Read more about NSF builds in SD6 [here](#).





CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE (CHEQ)

What is the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire?

The CHEQ is facilitated by the Human Early Learning Partnership, a collaborative research centre that hopes to contribute to improving conditions that promote an equitable start in life for all children and their families (<https://earlylearning.ubc.ca/monitoring-system/cheq/cheq-overview/>). The CHEQ was first piloted in 2018 and SD6 has participated since its inception. The Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) gathers important information about children’s experiences prior to entering kindergarten from the perspective of the child’s caregivers.

Children’s development in their early years is highly influenced by their experiences in their home and community. The CHEQ collects information that schools and communities can use to support children and families and ensure a solid foundation for healthy development and well-being.

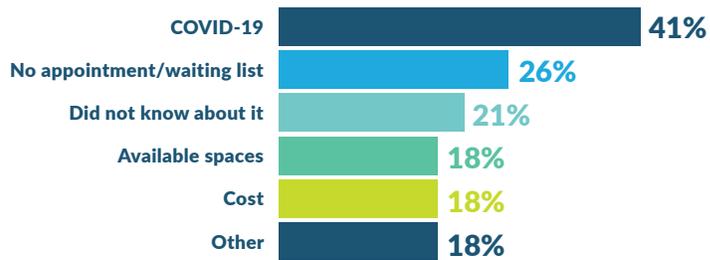
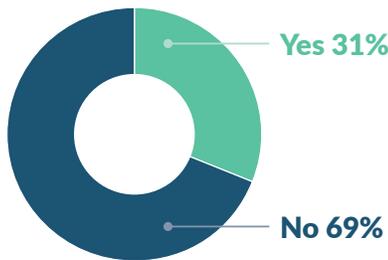
What is Currently Happening?

In the 2022-2023 school year, SD6 gathered information from 91.1% of the kindergarten students across the school district. Through the support of the ELCC team, schools have built a strong understanding of how the information that is contained within the CHEQ is valuable and how it can be used to better understand our youngest students who are new to the school system.

Schools in each community have come together with a team of staff to discuss what their CHEQ data tells them and how this information can guide and influence teaching and learning within their classrooms. Additionally, the CHEQ data is shared with early years partners as one way to better understand when/how/why families are or are not accessing their preschool programs and services.

3 YEARS TO KINDERGARTEN

Answered: 208



CHEQ Data indicates that 69% of families entering Kindergarten do not use community programs and supports. Understanding that this is because many do not know about them helps to guide our work (i.e., focus on Ready, Set, Learn Events).

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

SD6 will continue to participate in the CHEQ and principals have already set out plans to collect this data during their kindergarten gradual entry. With the ELCC team’s support, each of the three communities will again be gathering to review the CHEQ data and develop plans that are informed by their school and community data. Throughout the 2023-24 school year, there will be further follow up by the ELCC team to support these plans and some schools have CHEQ data included in their School Success Plans.

Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, the CHEQ will now come at a cost to SD6 due to changes in HELP’s funding model.

Read more about CHEQ [here](#).

EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDi)

What is the Early Years Development Instrument (EDi)?

Like CHEQ, the EDi is facilitated by the Human Early Learning Partnership. The Early Development Instrument (EDi) is a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers for the students in their classrooms during the month of February.

The EDi is part of a larger scope of instruments that support understanding students' well-being and development. SD6 participates in some of these other instruments including the CHEQ (Childhood Experiences Questionnaire) and the MDi (Middle Years Development Questionnaire).

The EDi gathers information around five core areas of early childhood development – physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge. EDi data is collected in three-year waves and because of the size of our school district, SD6 participates in two of those three waves.

What is Currently Happening?

The 2022-2023 year is the first year of a new wave and EDi changed from a three-year wave collection cycle to a four-year cycle. SD 6 teachers participated in this first-round of Wave 8 data collection and we received the reports in June. The ELCC team is currently reviewing this data and will be sharing it with schools and early years partners in the fall.

Actions for the 2023 – 2024 School Year

SD6 will be in a non-collection year but we will continue to look at the data gathered from 2023 to discern how to better understand and support students going forward.

Read more about the EDi [here](#).

