



ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

# EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025



**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 Ktunaxa and Secwépemc Nations. We honour the cultures, languages, and First Nations people of these territories.



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# INTRODUCTION

Since May 2021, the Rocky Mountain School District Board of Education has supported a dedicated position focused on early learning and child care. In 2022, the new Ministry of Education and Child Care was announced, and Rocky Mountain accessed Ministry funding to continue this focus and in addition to the District Principal of Early Learning, the Board used these Ministry funds to create a Director of Instruction, Early Learning and Child Care position. This early learning and child care team has yielded many positive results for children, families, educators, and the school district.

Some of these successes include the development of relationships and partnerships with early years programs and services including child care providers, the creation of school age care on school grounds, two ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund projects providing a total of 296 new child care spaces, the creation of a district-wide Kindergarten Transition Timeline, the implementation of the Early Learning Framework, professional development, and more!

This document will highlight some of the early learning and child care Ministry funded projects and district initiatives from 2024-2025 and will detail the early learning and child care operational plan for 2025-2026. For more details about early learning and child care in Rocky Mountain including stories of success, please visit the [Early Learning and Child Care webpage](#).



## FUNDING 2024-2025

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOECC) continued to support early learning and child care through a variety of funds found in the Early Learning Funding Agreement. For Rocky Mountain these included:

- **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
- **Capacity Building**
  - District Early Learning and Child Care Lead

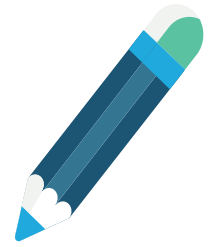




# READY, SET, LEARN

## What is Ready, Set, Learn (RSL)?

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 communities and foster positive connections between families, the school system, and local community agencies. Rocky Mountain works with community services to put on these events and sits shoulder-to-shoulder with early years partners.



## What is Currently Happening?

Ready, Set, Learn events in Rocky Mountain are aimed at increasing awareness of the wide variety of free programs and services available for children and families prior to entering the school system. These events allow families to build relationships and connections not only with programs and services but also between families themselves.

The 2024 Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) indicated that the number eight barrier to accessing free preschool programs and services was that they did not know about them at 9%. This has dropped significantly since 2020 when the CHEQ data indicated that the number one barrier for families in accessing preschool programs and services was that they did not know about them at an alarming rate of 33%. These results confirm the district's success in utilizing RSL events to achieve its goal of increasing awareness of programs and services available for children and families prior to entering school.

In the 2024-25 school year the District Principal coordinated eight RSL events across the district. Below is a list of events by geographic area and the attendance that was recorded.

### Golden Area

#### Parson – September 2024

6

program  
& service  
providers

6

families  
6 children,  
6 adults

First RSL event  
for  
4  
families

#### Golden Arena Lounge – January 2025

9

program  
& service  
providers

24

families  
31 children,  
29 adults

First RSL event  
for  
9  
families

#### Kinsmen Park – June 2025

8

program  
& service  
providers

45

families  
56 children,  
48 adults

First RSL event  
for  
25  
families





## Kimberley Area

### Blarchmont Early Learning Centre – January 2025

**13**

program  
& service  
providers

**21**

families  
24 children,  
29 adults

First RSL event  
for

**11**

families



### Blarchmont Early Learning Centre – June 2025

**8**

program  
& service  
providers

**33**

families  
42 children,  
35 adults

First RSL event  
for

**18**

families



## Columbia Valley Area

### Columbia Valley Centre – November 2024

**8**

program  
& service  
providers

**28**

families  
42 children,  
26 adults

First RSL event  
for

**22**

families

### Canal Flats Community Centre – April 2025

**6**

program  
& service  
providers

**19**

families  
25 children,  
25 adults

First RSL event  
for

**13**

families

**9**

program  
& service  
providers

**20**

families  
25 children,  
11 adults

First RSL event  
for

**11**

families

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

The school district's goals are to continue to make RSL events predictable and consistent year after year to build awareness, connections, and opportunities for families to access free programs and services prior to their children entering the school system.



Read more about RSL [here](#).



# STRONGSTART



## What is StrongStart (SS)?

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

The overall learning experience is shared as caregivers attend with their children and are encouraged to get involved in activities like telling stories, making crafts, and 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 facilitators provide caregivers information about services and programs available in the community while supporting them in making valuable connections with their child and other caregivers.



## What is Currently Happening?

Seven SS programs operated across the school district and SS facilitators participated in Changing Results for Young Children and SEY2KT to further build their capacity in implementing the Early Learning Framework while helping to ease the transition into kindergarten for children and families. To deepen connections and relationships between SS facilitators and schools, SS facilities participated in professional development with Rocky Mountain K-3 teachers and support staff during non-instructional days.

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

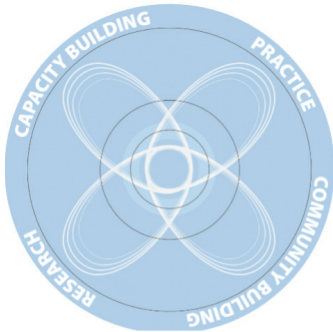
StrongStart schedules will be tweaked for the upcoming school year to better align with other community parent and tot programs operating. This will allow parents to have more access to programming rather than having to choose one program or another because they are offered on the same day at the same time. StrongStart facilitators will continue to engage in professional development with school-based staff during non-instructional days.

The Ministry has announced a funding increase of \$2,000 per zone for StrongStart next year and the school district has allocated \$500 of Feeding Futures funding per zone to help offset the rising food costs associated with providing children and families a snack as part of SS programs.

Read more about SS [here](#).



# STRENGTHENING EARLY YEARS TO KINDERGARTEN TRANSITIONS



## 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 early years sector, schools, and community through collaborative dialogue. Using the Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL) approach, SEY2KT groups engage in CSL tools like collective visioning and creating generative social fields to work towards a seamless transition for children and families from early years into kindergarten.

## What is Currently Happening?

SEY2KT moved to Kimberley this year. This new group was guided by the following inquiry question: How do we build open, collaborative relationships and communication between early years' stakeholders, schools, and families with the common goal of easing the transition into kindergarten?



**"SEY2KT was a place to be, to learn, and to grow connections both personally, professionally, and as a part of our beautiful community. An invaluable experience for healthcare, education, childcare professionals."**

The group participated in all six of the Ministry's province-wide morning meetings and held working sessions in the afternoon. The group also planned three additional half-day working sessions and used CSL tools like systems mapping, the analytic and aspirational iceberg, collective visioning, creative tension, the ladder of inference, and the mandala for systems change to dive deeper into our local context and current reality.

**"I got connected to the community of people serving children and families in Kimberley. My contributions were honoured and valued. I hope to continue to be part of this important work."**

SEY2KT participants included a school principal, a StrongStart facilitator, a local childcare manager, the Kimberley public library, Interior Health, East Kootenay Division of Family Practice, Child Care Resource and Referral, Early Years Coordinator, and Community Connections. The Director of Instruction facilitated the group which was asked to share its learning and progress during some of the provincial sessions.

*\*Representatives from Ktunaxa Kinbasket and Métis were also invited but were unable to attend.*



## Actions for the 2025-2026 School Year

While the SEY2KT group in Kimberley is keen to continue their work, the Ministry announced in June 2025 that there will be no more funding for the SEY2KT project moving forward. The Director of Instruction will look at creative ways to continue the important work of SEY2KT.





# CHANGING RESULTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



## What is Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)?

CR4YC is a Ministry of Education and Child Care funded project that brings together community based early childhood educators (ECEs), including StrongStart facilitators, and kindergarten teachers. CR4YC is focused on the social and emotional well-being of children and how educators 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?

This year, CR4YC continued in the Columbia Valley and a new group was added in the Golden area resulting in a large percentage of the educators being new to CR4YC. Building meaningful connections was the focus amongst participants and the work with their Wonder Children. Participants shared that they felt a strong connection was built within their CR4YC group, and many discussed that building a strong connection with their Wonder Child made a significant impact on their practice and the well-being of all their students. Additionally, participants reported that their practice was affected positively by being part of CR4YC, and they indicated major positive changes occurred in the facets of social emotional learning that they focused on with their Wonder Child.

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

The Ministry announced in June 2025 that funding for CR4YC will no longer be available moving forward. Given the significant number of educators in Rocky Mountain that have taken part in this project since 2021, the focus on social emotional learning outcomes will remain a core part of the teaching and learning that happens in schools, StrongStart programs, and child care facilities.

“I feel (CR4YC) has changed a lot of educators’ mindsets from having to deal with students’ tricky behaviours to being more curious. The more curious we are, the more we can help children to develop the skills they need.”

“I think the more we can help a child understand themselves and the world around them the better the outcomes.”

“I was surprised by these (my wonder child’s) outcomes and did not expect to see such a huge difference across a variety of developmental domains. I was also surprised how much this changed my view of educating children and helping to inspire my staff to teach in an intentional, connected and caring way.”



# KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION TIMELINE DOCUMENT



## What is the Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document?

The Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document was created to align timelines and processes across the school district to ease the transition for children and families into kindergarten. The Director of Instruction created a draft template in the fall of 2023 and in January 2024 held a series of engagement sessions in each community for stakeholders to collaborate on the timeline. The first iteration of the timeline was implemented in the 2023-24 school year.

## What is Currently Happening?

Community engagement sessions were held again in the fall of 2024 and participants included a variety of school district staff, Supported Child Development, speech language pathologists, early years programs, child care providers, Child Care Resource and Referral, Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, local First Nations, Métis, and Community Action Program for Children. After these sessions, the timeline was tweaked based on the input and feedback and suggested checklists were also created for schools, child care, and early years to help support the ongoing utilization of the timeline document.

**“The kindergarten transition timeline document has become a useful tool for educators as it gives an easy visual reminder to reference for when each step needs to happen. This process has also bridged the gap between child care and schools, opening the lines of communication to ensure children the most successful start to their school years.”**  
*(Child Care Centre)*

**“The kindergarten transition timeline was very beneficial in supporting children and their families; ensuring families in our care were getting the most current and helpful information which allowed them to make informed choices for their child(ren). The increased communication between our centre and the school staff was a bonus and allowed for opportunities to make connections and share information and resources, which again, only benefits all the families we serve in the community.”**  
*(Child Care Centre)*

**“My families have never felt so comfortable and confident sending their children to kindergarten.”**  
*(Supported Child Development)*



The implementation of the timeline's second iteration yielded positive results by building stronger connections between early years and schools, providing consistent information to families related to kindergarten, and allowed schools to proactively put supports in place for children with diverse needs.

"The timelines document schedules and spreads the transition through the entire year in predictable, manageable steps. It supports a more mindful kindergarten transition for children, families, school staff, community care providers, and our administration team. This is especially true for children who require additional resources to experience success starting kindergarten day one."

*(Principal)*

"The structured timeline has contributed to lowering the worry and anxiety that families often feel during kindergarten transition. With transparent steps and supportive staff (both school and childcare), families are now better informed and feel more confident in navigating this important milestone. Parents have expressed gratitude for the clarity and support they received throughout the transition, which affirms the value of our efforts."

*(Principal)*

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

The Director of Instruction will work with a graphic designer to create a final version of the timeline document that incorporates all the stakeholder feedback. Once completed, this timeline will be made into posters and shared widely across the district. The goal is that this process will be fully operationalized and become embedded in the transition work that early years and schools do annually. Additionally, this timeline will be used shared as a template that can be used for other transitions in the school system (grade 3 to 4 and grade 7 to 8).

View the Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document [here](#).





# THE EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK & LEARNING IN THE PRIMARY YEARS



## What is the Early Learning Framework (ELF)?

The ELF was first introduced by the Ministry of Education and Child Care in 2008 for educators working with children from birth to five and it presented an image of the child as capable and full of potential. In 2019 the ELF was revised in response to the redesigned curriculum.

The ELF now establishes a vision for respectfully living and learning with children from birth to eight years of age and focuses on building play-based learning environments. This document incorporates elements of the redesigned curriculum such as the Core Competencies and the First Peoples Principles of Learning which allows for consistency in pedagogy as children transition from early learning into school.

## What is Learning in the Primary Years (LIPY)?

Learning in The Primary Years is a revision of the Primary Program Framework that was first published by the Ministry of Education and Child Care in 2000. LIPY supports the holistic learning and pedagogy found in the ELF and extends this to include the K-3 BC Curriculum.

## What is Currently Happening?

In the 2024-25 school year, ELF implementation resumed with the District Principal visiting classrooms in schools. The purpose of these visits was to continue to provide support to principals and educators in deepening their understanding of the ELF and LIPY documents and embed these in their classroom teaching and learning.

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

Since 2021, Rocky Mountain has been successful in actively and purposefully introducing and implementing the ELF across the district through projects like CR4YC as well as school-based working groups with principals and educators. It is now expected that The Early Learning Framework is visible in teaching and learning in schools and StrongStart, as well as in several early years programs across the district. The Learning in the Primary Years framework will continue to be an extension of the ELF with K-3 principals and educators.

Read more about the ELF and Learning in The Primary Years [here](#).



# KINDERGARTEN – EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR COLLABORATION

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

The K-ECE Collaboration is a project that began in 2021 and is unique to Rocky Mountain. Educators from childcare facilities and kindergarten teachers are put into partnerships and are provided with release time to observe and interact in each other's classrooms throughout the school year.

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?

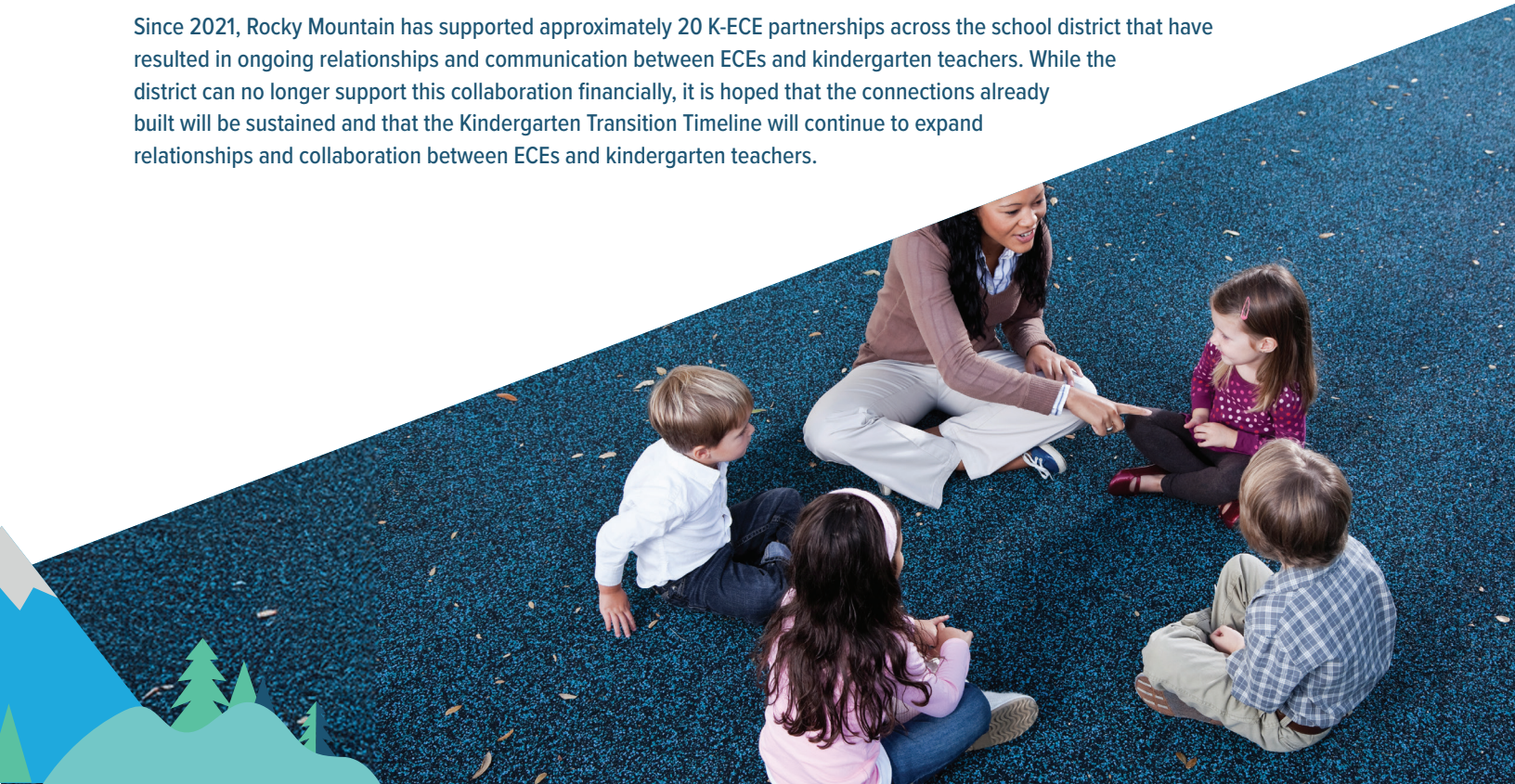
The K-ECE collaboration was reimaged in the 2024-25 school year in response to budgetary constraints. The project this year only included Kindergarten teachers and ECEs that were new to their roles.

This year, a theme emerged from the participants' classroom observations and collaboration around ensuring that educators slow down and give more time for students to experience their learning. Conversations around social and emotional well-being led educators to the realization that it is important to slow down and provide students with time and space to experience, explore, expand, and reflect on their learning activities.



## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

Since 2021, Rocky Mountain has supported approximately 20 K-ECE partnerships across the school district that have resulted in ongoing relationships and communication between ECEs and kindergarten teachers. While the district can no longer support this collaboration financially, it is hoped that the connections already built will be sustained and that the Kindergarten Transition Timeline will continue to expand relationships and collaboration between ECEs and kindergarten teachers.



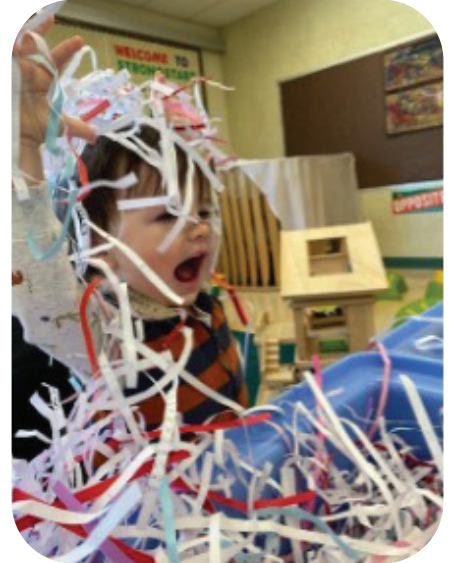
# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR DUAL CREDIT PROGRAM



## What is the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Dual Credit Program?

The Ministry of Education and Child Care's ECE Dual Credit project was initiated in 2021 and concluded in 2024. Rocky Mountain has worked with the College of the Rockies to ensure the continuation of this opportunity through regular dual credit programming if there is a threshold number of students registered.

The ECE Dual Credit Program allows Grade 12 students to take four courses online 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 Director of Instruction has continuously promoted the ECE Dual Credit opportunity since 2021 in high schools across the district at grade-level meetings, in Career Life Education 10 classes, and Career Life Connections classes. This year the Director also worked with the District Principal from Southeast Kootenay, but despite these efforts we were unable to meet the minimum number of students required for College of the Rockies to offer the program this year.

However, Rocky Mountain's participation in the expanded dual credit initiative has provided funding to hire a Dual Credit Enhancement Manager. This has allowed for a dedicated position to focus on recruitment for all dual credit offerings this spring including the ECE Dual Credit program.

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

The Director of Instruction is optimistic that with the support of the Dual Credit Enhancement Manager combined with students from Southeast Kootenay, we will meet the threshold number of students to offer the ECE Dual Credit program in February 2026.

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





# AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS



## What are After-School Programs?

In the summer of 2022, Rocky Mountain began working in partnership with third-party providers to license after-school care programs in five primary/elementary schools. While Rocky Mountain does not operate these programs, the school district is in a formal partnership with third-party providers to offer School Age Care on School Grounds enabling a seamless day for children and families.



## What is Currently Happening?

Rocky Mountain continues to work collaboratively with third-party providers to offer school age care on school grounds in five schools. Programs include after-school care and full-day care on non-instructional days, winter break, spring break, and through the summer.

### Programs in 2024-25 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
- **\*\* NEW \*\*** Rocky Mountain Childcare Marysville – Summit Community Services Society

Additionally, the StrongStart room at Alexander Park Elementary School (APES) was licensed in October 2024 with Mountain Child Early Learning Centre as the third-party provider however, low enrolment made it impossible to run the program. An attempt was made in May 2024 to use the licensed space at APES to offer a licensed school age summer program but again a lack of registrations did not make running a program viable.

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

All the current programs will continue to be operational, and some will be supported by the Director of Instruction to expand as the growing expression of interest from families for this service requires additional spaces.

The Director of Instruction will continue to work with Mountain Child Early Learning Centre in Golden to try and offer school age care on school grounds at Alexander Park Elementary School and possibly Nicholson Elementary School depending on interest and registrations. Additionally, the Rocky Mountain Childcare project in Invermere will be opening during the 2025-26 school year and will include an additional 24 after school care spots for children at Eileen Madson Primary School.



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



# CHILDCAREBC NEW SPACES FUND



## What is the ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund (NSF)?

The ChildCareBC NSF provides funding to create new licensed child care spaces in an effort to help families access affordable, quality, and inclusive child care. The Rocky Mountain Board of Education approved two NSF applications, one to build a 148-space child care facility on the grounds at Marysville Elementary School, which was submitted in August of 2022. The second NSF application to build a 148-space child care facility on the grounds at Eileen Madson Primary School was submitted in January of 2023. Both applications were approved.

## What is Currently Happening?

In Kimberley, the school district hosted an Open House on January 6, 2025 to celebrate the construction completion of the NSF project at Marysville Elementary School. Over 200 community members attended this event to tour the new Rocky Mountain Childcare facility and learn more about the project and what it means for the school district, children and families, and the community. In partnership with Summit Community Services Society, the centre began operations in March 2025.

In Invermere, the NSF project being built on the property behind Eileen Madson Primary School broke ground in July 2024 and construction completion is projected for the fall of 2025. This Rocky Mountain Childcare facility will be operated in partnership with Windermere Valley Child Care Society.



*L-R: Mayor McCormick, Cheryl Anderson, Christine Lloyd, Martina Danzer, Crystal MacLeod, Aaron Callaghan*



*Invermere NSF, spring 2025*

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

The school district will finish procuring furniture, equipment, and resources for the Invermere NSF project in the summer and will host an Open House once construction is complete in the fall of 2025. The Rocky Mountain Childcare - Invermere facility is projected to open for children and families in the winter of the 2025-26 school year.

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



# CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE

## What is the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ)?

The CHEQ gathers important information about children's experiences prior to entering kindergarten from the perspective of the child's caregivers. The CHEQ was first piloted in 2018, and Rocky Mountain has participated since its inception.

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 prior to entering the school system.

Reports can be generated by classroom/school, by neighborhood, and by district. All participating school district and neighborhood reports are publicly available on the Reports Page of HELP's website.

## What is Currently Happening?

In 2024-25, Rocky Mountain again had the highest CHEQ completion rate in the province at 90%. With a focus on using the CHEQ data intentionally since 2021, schools have built a strong understanding of how to read, interpret, and utilize this information to better understand and support our youngest students and their families who are new to the school system.

Some examples of how Rocky Mountain schools use this data include providing evening information sessions and/or sharing links and resources related to sleep, screen time, nutrition and mental health. The CHEQ data continues to provide feedback to early years programs and services on when/how/why families are or are not accessing their preschool programs and services allowing them to adjust their programming accordingly. The CHEQ results were also used by the SEY2KT group to better understand the early years context in Kimberley.

As a result of Rocky Mountain's extensive use of CHEQ data, the support it provides to other school districts in how to collect and use the CHEQ data, and the strong connection that has been built over time with the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), the Director of Instruction was invited by HELP to participate in the BCSTA Academy in November 2024. As one of the HELPx speakers, the Director presented a series of slides that highlighted concrete examples of how Rocky Mountain uses CHEQ and EDI as well as other data to build relationships and guide decision making in early learning and child care.



From L-R: Dr. Mariana Brussoni, Duane Jackson, Crystal MacLeod, Dr. Eva Oberle, Kate Buium, Dr. Martin Guhn

## Actions for the 2025-2026 School Year

Rocky Mountain will continue to participate in the CHEQ data collection. The Director of Instruction will continue to support school teams, early years programs and services, and child care providers in using this information to better understand children and families and their early years experiences leading up to kindergarten.

Read more about CHEQ [here](#).





# EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT



## What is the Early Years Development Instrument (EDi)?

Like CHEQ, the EDi is facilitated by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). The EDi is a questionnaire that gathers information focused on 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. Depending on the year, the EDi has been completed by kindergarten teachers during the month of February since 2001.

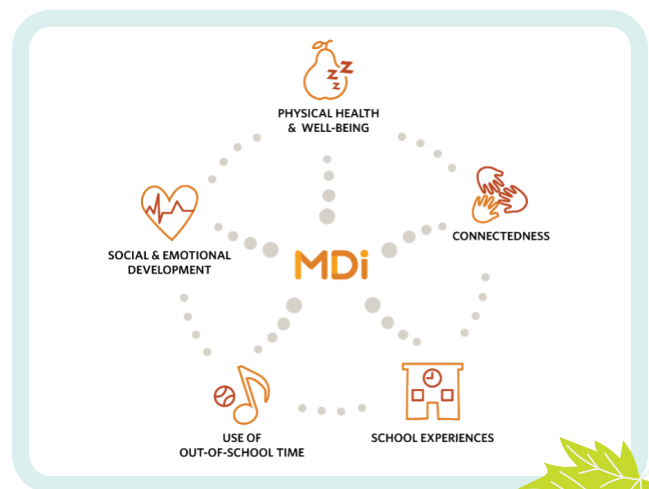
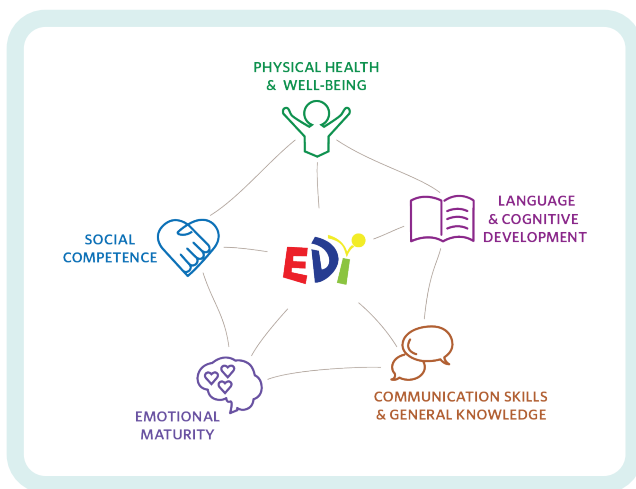
Up until Wave 8 (Sept. 2019- June 2022), each Wave was three years long and Rocky Mountain completed the EDi in the first two years of each Wave. EDi changed to a four-year cycle in Wave 9 (Sept. 2022-June 2026) with Rocky Mountain now completing the EDi in the first year only.

## What is Currently Happening?

Rocky Mountain completed the EDi as part of Wave 9 in February 2023. The school district will not complete the EDi again until February 2027 in the first year of Wave 10.

## Actions for the 2025 – 2026 School Year

While there is no cost associated with completing the EDi, there is a cost for completing the MDi (Middle Years Development Instrument). The school district is looking at how to align the collection of the EDi with the MDi in a cycle that would allow cohorts of students and their development to be tracked over time.



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

