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# STRENGTHENING EARLY YEARS TO K TRANSITIONS

MAKING CONNECTIONS: BUILDING  
RELATIONSHIPS  
FINAL REPORT  
2020-2021

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# 1. CONTEXT

**Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) Initiative** is a community and school district partnership that works collaboratively to increase the exchange of knowledge, experiences and information about transition practices and experiences to support children and their families in a local community. SEY2KT identifies and address the barriers in both systems and determines what would be enabling conditions (e.g., shared pedagogical practices, joint professional learning opportunities) to strengthen early years to Kindergarten transitions. There are currently 12 Community-School District SEY2KT partnerships with the possibility of expanding the number of provincial sites in 2022 – 2023.

SEY2KT reflects key themes that emerged from eight regional sessions, held across BC in 2017 with over 1500 participants that identified the need to:

- Increase the use of **restorative transition policies & practices** that are strength-based, child & family-focused, holistic, and emphasize the importance of cultural identity
- Establish a local **context for partnership, strong relationships, and collaboration** in planning and decision-making
- **Include children and families in the collaboration process** as well as a broad range of professionals that the family identifies as critical to include
- Work collaboratively to **increase the exchange of knowledge, experiences and information** about transition practices and experiences. Ongoing communities of practice – at every level.
- Identify and address the barriers in ‘both systems’ and determine what would be **enabling conditions** (e.g., shared pedagogical practices, joint professional learning opportunities)

**Additionally, SEY2KT was grounded in research findings from OECD (2015)**

### **OECD research: Transitions from Early Childhood Education to Primary School**

The transition from early childhood education to primary school is a big step for all children, and a step that more and more children have to take. Quality transitions should be well prepared and child-centred, managed by trained staff collaborating with one another, and guided by an appropriate and aligned curriculum. Transitions like these enhance the likelihood that the positive impacts of early learning and care will last through primary school and beyond.

### **OECD research: Successful Transforming Education Jurisdictions embrace a ‘Learning Leadership’ model**

Successfully transforming education jurisdictions embrace a ‘learning leadership’ model where all system partners work *collaboratively* to shift programs, policies, and practices simultaneously in thoughtful and sustainable ways. The Ministry of Education becomes a collaborative learning partner; rather than an ‘authority’ over field processes (OECD, 2015)

With the publication of revised *Early Learning Framework* (2019), SEY2KT increased the focus on on-going collaborative professional learning to better support children as they transition from community-based early care and learning to kindergarten contexts.

“

*We learned that everybody is at a different point in their “journey” with the ELF, and in their careers and experience. It was really lovely to see how the diverse group comes together to share experiences, perspective and learn from each other.*

”

## 2. PARTICIPATION AS OF JUNE 2021

- 12 communities/school districts, in their second or third year
  - For one or two school districts, participation in 2020 was minimal and team membership changed so much that the 2020-21 year has been almost like year one

Over 230 educators, including:

*From school districts*

Early Childhood Educators (including Strong Start)

K-3 teachers

Learning support teachers (including Early Years Support teachers)

School administrators

District programs (e.g., Family Hub; Learning Services; Early Years Navigator))

District coordinators (e.g., Strong Start Coordinator; Early Years Leads;

Superintendents, Directors)

*From community partners*

Early learning and child care providers

Tribal schools

- Over 100 community-based partners
  - local government
  - local First Nations (including Friendship Centres)
  - MCFD
  - Literacy Societies
  - Family Resource Centres
  - Locally based programs (e.g., Options, First Steps)
  - Local and regional collaborations (e.g., Community Resources; Early Childhood Advisory Committee; Alliance for Literacy; Children's Centre; Child Care Societies; Child and Family Services
  - YMCA/YWCA
  - Libraries
  - Public health
  - Nursing students



- Over 2000 families/children (Note: this includes those participating virtually)

## Participation as of June 2021

- Each site had a core group that met regularly to analyze local needs, gather information, plan and carry out activities. Some sites had both a working group, responsible for designing and carry out activities and materials, and an Advisory Group, that provided direction.
- Groups submitted regular reports to the project researcher. Most groups submitted a report each month.

“

*Most felt that by being together a sense of team was enhanced. Trust, collaboration and relationship building were enhanced when we come together. Even having the opportunity to eat together allows for deeper conversations and sharing to occur.*

”

### **A NOTE ABOUT COMPASSIONATE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP**

THE MINISTRY OFFERED A SERIES OF COMPASSIONATE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP TRAINING SESSIONS TO COINCIDE WITH SEY2KT PROVINCIAL SESSIONS; MOST OF THOSE WHO WERE CONNECTED TO SEY2KT CHOSE TO BE PART OF THE CSL SESSIONS.

## 3. RESEARCH PROCESS

Research on the processes and impact of SEY2KT was a collaborative process that involved both local sites and overall SEY2KT project:

- **Team self-assessment.** Teams at each site submitted a self-assessment based on factors identified during the pilot that contribute to successful projects. They also respond to open-ended prompts about their focus and growth. (The self-assessment form is included below.)
- **Monthly reports.** Teams submitted brief monthly summaries of their actions and plans that often included artefacts illustrating their work. (Some of these appear in the Appendix to this report.) These reports also tracked the number of educators, children, families and organizations involved. (The monthly form is included below)

The researcher offered brief feedback, and mid-project, developed a summary and written feedback for each team.

- **Sharing on regular video conferences.** Teams provided informal reports where they shared their activities and progress on both CSL and SEY2KT with the other sites.
- **Compassionate System Leadership (CSL) report.** Each team presented a 10-minute report on their experiences and observations as part of the CSL initiative. While these did not involve all participantS and were not a formal part of the evaluation, they offered insights that provided additional background for the evaluation.

“

WE DRAW ON THE COMPASSIONATE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP TOOLS ALL OF THE TIME. THE ICEBERG ACTIVITY LAUNCHED US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, AS IT GOT US IN THE ROOM HAVING HONEST CONVERSATIONS...AND THEN HELPED US CO-CREATE A VISION WE WERE EXCITED ABOUT. THE MAPPING AND THE CREATIVE TENSIONS CHART WILL BE TOOLS WE WILL CONTINUE TO USE AS WE GROW AND PLAN TOGETHER.

THE PRACTICES OF: GENERATIVE CONVERSATIONS, DEEP LISTENING, SELF-COMPASSION, CHECK-INS, AND MINDFUL MOMENTS ARE NOW INCORPORATED INTO ALL OF OUR MEETINGS. THEY ARE A PRACTICE – AND WE ARE COMMITTED TO PRACTICING THEM.

”

An interim report, presented to the Ministry of Education in February 2021, described strategies various teams were developing to plan and organize their work, to gather information and make initial contacts. It confirmed the four broad themes that emerged in 2019-2020, and identified work in progress to:

- Build relationships and collaborate with community partners
- Develop professional development opportunities and build communities of practice
- Engage with children and families by going out into the community
- Welcome families into schools

In 2020-2021, much of the work with families and children was conducted virtually through websites, Facebook, zoom, and video conferencing (e.g., Zoom and Teams.)

*SEY2KT: Team self-assessment*

*Fall 2020/Spring 2021*

*At your first meeting, please work together as a team to come to consensus about a rating for each question as it relates to SEY2KT. Please send your responses to Sharon [sjeroski@icloud.com](mailto:sjeroski@icloud.com) right away.*

*Community/district \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_*

*Team members: \_\_\_\_\_*

<i>Please check the response that is best describes your SEY2KT team at the start of your 20 20-21 work:</i>	<i>This is not like us YET</i>	<i>This is a bit like us</i>	<i>This is quite like use</i>	<i>This is a lot like us</i>
<i>1. We are a well-functioning and committed <b>TEAM</b>.</i>				
<i>2. We have an explicit common <b>PURPOSE</b> that focuses all our work.</i>				
<i>3. We focus on supporting each other's <b>SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING</b></i>				
<i>4. We have informed and supportive <b>DISTRICT LEADERSHIP</b>.</i>				
<i>5. We are building <b>RELATIONSHIPS</b> with individual families.</i>				
<i>6. We are <b>CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY</b>.</i>				
<i>7. We bring a sense of <b>JOY</b> to this work!</i>				
<i>8. We are <b>CONFIDENT</b> that we are making a difference in our community (Spring Only)</i>				
<i>Please choose <b>one</b> of the criteria in the list above that your team will focus/focused on strengthening over this year and record the number.</i>				

<p><b>Pre only</b>  <i>When your team thinks about your work on SEY2KT this year ....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is one thing you are <b>curious</b> about?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is one thing you are <b>confident</b> about?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is one thing you are <b>committed</b> to?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is one thing that is special about your team?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Post only</b>  <i>When you reflect on your work on SEY2KT this year ....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What is one thing you <b>wonder</b> about?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is one thing you accomplished that you are <b>satisfied</b> with?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is one thing that is special about your team?</i></li> </ul>



**Monthly Reports.** Teams were asked to complete and submit the following summary after each meeting. The researcher responded to these as they were submitted and selected short excerpts to share with the Ministry team.

The number of reports from each site varied according to the challenges they encountered. Most teams were able to submit 5 or 6 reports between October and March. At the end of February, the researcher reviewed all the submissions, created a short summary, and offered feedback to each group.

ACTIONS: What did you do?	OBSERVATIONS: What happened?
UNDERSTANDING: What did you discover/learn?	PLAN: What's next?
Interactions/connections this month. How many .. Educators _____ Families _____. Children _____. Community partners _____	

**CSL REPORTS**

THE MINISTRY OFFERED A SERIES OF COMPASSIONATE SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP TRAINING SESSIONS TO COINCIDE WITH SEY2KT PROVINCIAL SESSIONS; MOST OF THOSE WHO WERE CONNECTED TO SEY2KT CHOSE TO BE PART OF THE CSL SESSIONS. AT THE END OF THE PROJECT EACH GROUP PRESENTED A BRIEF REPORT FOCUSED ON THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH CSL.

CSL PROVIDED TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY TO SUPPORT THE TEAMS IN LEADING WITH COMPASSION TO BRING COHERENCE TO THE TWO SECTORS.

MOST REPORTS INCLUDED SOME ANALYSIS OF THEIR SEY2KT WORK AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH CSL HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THAT WORK. THESE REPORTS BECAME PART OF THE PROJECT ARCHIVE AND CONTRIBUTED INSIGHTS INTO THE IMPACT OF BOTH CSL AND SEY2KT.

## 4. THEMES

Research and analysis in 2021 confirmed the four themes of interest that had been tentatively identified in 2020.

**COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS**  
**CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**  
**GOING OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY**  
**WELCOMING FAMILIES INTO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Because of COVID-19 protocols, groups were often unable to interact directly with families, community partners and team members in ways they had anticipated but they continued to find innovative ways to engage.

### **Collaborating with Community Partners**

This continues to be a strong focus for almost all groups. Some have developed quite strong networks and working relationships with an amazing array of partners; others are in early stages. The nature of the partnerships varies a great deal. In some cases, the partners are primarily providing information and advice; in others, the partnerships involve extensive collaboration and consultation. Some sites have quite formal structures. Many had planned for opportunities to share food; under COVID-19 protocols, that has not been possible.

- The number of teams reporting that connecting with their community is “a lot like us” or “quite like us” increased from 4 to 10 between October and May.
- One group described their highlight: “working with other people in our district and community, teachers, district partners and experts in their field—they helped to shape our vision and highlighted different viewing lenses.”
- Another team reported that other community partners were now approaching their team to collaborate.
- One team is engaging extensively with TRU nursing students.
- Another is focusing on the local Indigenous language and culture.



*We learned that child care providers like the idea of being invited into the transition process. They appreciate that their experience and knowledge is honoured!*



As well as strengthening their connections with community partners, teams also strengthened relationships among members of the team. In most cases some members were new to each other. While they came with different perspectives and experiences, they all shared a common purpose: ensuring that children in their community had the best possible opportunities and support.

They indicated strong growth as a team in their self-assessments. For example, using the response options: *Not like us yet---a bit like us--quite like us -a lot like us*, 11 or 12 (out of 12) chose “quite” or “a lot like us” in response to:

**We are a well-functioning and committed TEAM**

**We have an explicit common purpose that focuses all of our work**

**We focus on supporting each other’s’ social and emotional well-being**

**We have informed and supportive district leadership.**

In their monthly reports, teams often referenced the positive impact of participating in Compassionate Systems Leadership (which was optional): 9 of the 12 teams indicated that exploring and practicing the CSL tools “quite or a lot like us.

### **Creating Communities of Practice**

The frequent interactions, the opportunities to share and work together to develop activities promoting learning and social and emotional well-being for children, often nudges team members and others to come common understandings. They report a high level of confidence that we are making a difference.

**Eleven of the 12 groups assigned the highest rating “a lot like us” to  
We bring a sense of JOY to this work!”**

Several groups are making strong progress in developing shared Pro-D activities, and some have been able to involve ECEs and school-based teachers in planning together.

For example:

- A “signage” project, where the team is designing signs, including contact information and QR codes, that inform and engage communities in activities that support young children
- Participating in Compassionate Systems Leadership sessions with educators that have different roles and contexts (note: some groups found shared visioning especially helpful)
- A shared Professional Development series for ECEs and primary educators
- Wonder-full me Posters: children, families, ECEs and primary teachers work from the same template to honour and learn about each child (see Appendix for details)
- Moving closer to having an Early Care and Learning Educator and a K teacher working together
- “As communities of practice of SEY2KT we have been part of creating something absolutely amazing!”

### **Going Out Into the Community**

Groups continue to be energetic and innovative in finding ways to connect with families outside of the school building, often through a “Pop-up” (sometimes virtual) where they go into community spaces (e.g., parks) and offer opportunities for children to play. Over the three years of the program, these have been challenging to develop (especially during COVID), but highly successful and appreciated. And fun! For example:

- Producing and sharing Story Workshop kits
- Pop-up Play
- Visits to preschool/child care centres

## Welcoming Families Into the School Community

Increasingly, SEY2KT teams have explored ways to engage more families in the school community. Some have established a regular schedule of events that involve both children who are currently attending school and younger children. Many of these are part of an extended “welcome” or “transition” program that takes place over several weeks. Although there have been challenges with COVID-19 protocols, some activities with early learners and their families have been able to continue. For example:

- “Play in the K” where early learners are invited into the Kindergarten on Fridays at the end of each month
- Creating outdoor gathering for small groups of families
- “Kindergarten Connections” that used to have 15-20 families now has 60 families and a waiting list “It’s really spoken to how much families are looking to connect”
- “Let’s Play” series linking information from the Ministry’s Let’s Play
- Creating A Day in the Life of Kindergarten video for children and families (this proved to be enormously popular!)
- One group surveyed current K and Strong Start families to identify “missing connections” and are using that information to design more outreach activities
- K Days – invited early learners and their families into the building for 1 hour each week (included daycare) (created K Day bags for 350!)
- Inviting a few families to join neighbourhood walks/outdoor learning with K class
- “pumpkin painting day” when families came to the school to choose and paint pumpkins outside

**Every ounce of connection we offer to parents and children will enable us to be better partners**



## 5. DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

The conclusions presented in this section reflect what we have learned over three years of SEY2KT and are based on written records, observations, interviews and discussions, and previous reports. They are related to the previous sections of this report, but also draw on experiences in 2018-19 (the pilot year), and 2020-21 (the first year of full implementation.)

**Common purpose, new perspectives and challenges are causing educators and community members to revise their thinking and consider new ways of working together.**

As it has evolved, SEY2KT has offered an opportunity to think about ways of doing things differently – of building new relationships, working with new partnerships, altering roles, using tools and technology to solve new problems, challenging assumptions, and being open to asking **What if? Why not?**

*We learned that we want to connect more with our colleagues and families in the Squamish Nation, but we were unsure about the best way to do this. We learned that we were a bit anxious about reaching out, but that we need to take that first step in order to start building a relationship. We also recognize that this will take time.*

### We are learning that ...

- The SEY2KT framework works
- SEY2KT makes young children more visible and integrated in their communities
- SEY2KT has helped to initiate shared professional development and further the communities of practice that enhance early care and learning.
- The educators and community members engaged in this project are strength-based, optimistic, and innovative problem-solvers, often in the face of complex challenges

## THE SEY2KT FRAMEWORK WORKS

SEY2KT follows a simple design where teams connected to a variety of groups within the community and school district come together to support and engage with early care and learning. At each site, the team focuses on a locally chosen site or program and emphasizes building relationships. Teams share their processes and their learning with colleagues at other sites.



SEY2KT offers the flexibility to meet groups where they are and support initiatives that create continuity for families and children. For some sites, SEY2KT supports and extends existing local initiatives; in others, SEY2KT sparks new initiatives. Individual sites come to this work with a wide range of experience: some have doing similar work for decades, and have strong community school connection; others are new to building these partnerships. The flexibility of the design, while continuing to focus on common purpose and values, enables all teams to participate, contribute and grow.

The structure includes regular connections with groups across the province, monthly reports, along with feedback and support from the project team, and has proven highly adaptable for a wide variety of contexts and intentions (purposes?). Frequent personal contact between the provincial team and the sites has enabled “localization” of the individual projects.

## THE SEY2KT FRAMEWORK WORKS

In 2020-2021, groups/individuals were offered further support by having the option to participate in Compassionate Systems Learning sessions; most teams were highly appreciative of their experiences and the tools and strategies they developed.

### Strengths of the SEY2KT framework

- Accommodates communities where they are
- Creates a sense of belonging to something “bigger”
- Encourages problem-solving and innovation
- Places a high value on collaboration
- Incorporates accountability to the group and partners
- Creates a foundation for system change



*Mrs. S playing Ukulele with the 4 year olds*

## SEY2KT HAS HELPED TO MAKE YOUNG CHILDREN VISIBLE AND MORE INTEGRATED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

SEY2KT focuses on enhancing early learning opportunities for children, while fostering connections and communication among school district and community members. As an unanticipated benefit, in many communities, awareness and “visibility” of young children increased.



*Virtual Strong Start*



Some groups created a steering or resource committee of community members to offer advice and feedback about SEY2KT activities; others conducted focus groups or surveys. These activities helped to reveal how many diverse people and groups in the community were interested in what was happening for families and children, and eager to become involved.

As they worked to connect with families and children, groups were energetic and inventive, finding ways to take early learning out into the community, rather than waiting for families to come to them. For example, one group is working on “signage project” where signs promoting play and developmental learning are posted at key areas in the district. Several groups implemented “Pop-up Play” at various sites such as parks, and libraries. Others included nontraditional sites in the community, such as food banks.

Because of constraints caused by COVID-10 protocols, SEY2KT groups also developed new ways to connect with families and to deliver services and materials directly to children’s homes or neighbourhood schools. For example, one group used a school bus (driven by the principal); another group did bicycle deliveries. Another group invited a small number of Strong Start children to come on Kindergarten “neighbourhood walks” each week.

All of these activities highlighted young children and early learning, and often provoked curiosity, that turned into excitement and awareness of children’s importance as community members.

## **SEY2KT HAS HELPED TO INITIATE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND FURTHER THE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THAT CAN HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO ENHANCE EARLY CARE AND LEARNING.**

SEY2KT is designed to support the connections and collaborations that are essential to developing communities of practice. Several groups initiated specific professional learning opportunities that brought together Early Learning and primary educators. Educators who attended these sessions were enthusiastic about the opportunity for shared learning from each other as well as from the presentations and activities. (Note: many activities remained in the planning stages or were substantially curtailed.)

SEY2KT focuses on enhancing early learning opportunities for children, while fostering connections and communication among school district and community members.

Perhaps the most powerful work toward communities of practice came from the initial design of SEY2KT. District teams were required to reach out and form partnerships with educators and community members outside of the school district. For some, this was just a continuation of the way they had “always” worked; for others it was initially an enormous challenge that sometimes took them far out of their comfort zone. For many, the tools they were learning about from Compassionate Systems Leadership were extremely helpful; and for almost everyone, the support and stimulation of hearing about other teams’ successes and challenges was critical.

Two ongoing challenges continue to make developing communities of practice among Early Childhood Educators difficult:

- Providing release time
- Job instability among Early Childhood Educators

**Challenges in providing release time.** For ECEs there is often little or no coverage available, so all activities take place when classes are not in session. It is challenging to find ways to release both teachers and ECEs at the same time. This year, for example, there was such an extreme shortage of TOCs that many professional development events were cancelled. This is a critical issue across the educational system, but it is particularly important when working with young children and families. Coverage needs to be provided by qualified educators, ideally ones that are familiar with the children (and with whom the children are familiar) and the program. In BC there is currently no structure or mechanism to support this.

**Job instability works against developing communities of practice.** This year, several ECE positions and programs were cancelled. While those connected to Strong Start generally had continuous employment, others did not. It is difficult to seriously address professional development without a stable workforce.

## EDUCATORS IN THIS PROJECT ARE STRENGTH-BASED, OPTIMISTIC, AND INNOVATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVERS WHO CAN MAKE ENORMOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO SYSTEM CHANGE

These qualities have enabled sites to continue and extend their work with children and families in spite of challenging circumstances. Groups were often most saddened by the fact that they could not offer the same in-person communication and support to families as in previous years (e.g., families not permitted in classrooms or centres; in-person “events” cancelled.)

Reports from individual sites described growing and strengthening networks of educators and community members that are determined to offer care and support for early learning, no matter what different pathways.

Most groups were able to find alternate ways of engaging with families – through videos, Face Book, phone calls, outdoor activities with small numbers, bicycle “drive-by visits”, and interactive “assignments” for children. For example, one district, with the help of current K children and teachers, created a short video “a day in the life of Kindergarten” to help families and children “see” what would be happening when they went to Kindergarten. These turned out to be extremely popular. Another created “Activity Cards” under various names with examples and play-based activities related to various pathways.

Several districts created “bags” or backpacks with play-based activities, family resources and information, and suggestions for outdoor age-appropriate learning. The deceptively simple materials and activities the groups provided were important to families and children, creating connections, in a time when many were isolated, and offering anchors or “touch-points” that reminded them of activities they had learned about. Groups were able to refer to and extend these activities through virtual connections or in phone calls.



*Families in particular seem to value the connection via primary choir. We are noticing and learning that students in K-3 are talking about when they were in Strong Start . **“I remember when you were my teacher!” ; “I used to go to school there!”- pointing to Strong Start room.***



As well as developing new ways to continue some of their traditional activities, groups worked to increase their connections with families, especially those “hard to reach.” For example, one group conducted a simple survey (e.g., “Check all of the community programs you and your child have attended”) and then used that information to determine who is/is not attending current transition programs and where there might be opportunities to be more inclusive. The results led to new initiatives and ongoing problem-solving. Another group focused on identifying and making explicit connections with “trusted” people in the community who could both offer advice and help to assure families that the early learning activities were safe and enjoyable.

Groups also nurtured links with community day care operators and (where possible) invited visits from children in day care, a few at a time, to participate in outdoor K “walks” and other activities. (This had the added benefit of connecting day care operators and workers with those working in early care and learning in school settings - to the benefit of both and to further the work of creating a community of practice.)

### **A note about COVID-19**

Educators, families and children working under COVID-19 protocols experienced critical gaps in learning and in relationships.

While virtual connections worked in amazing ways we often had never imagined, and the amazing ingenuity of educators supported children and families, much was lost, particularly in terms of relationships and support for families.

“*If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far, go together*”

– African Proverb that resonates with us as we slowly, but surely, make progress in a year of setbacks.

## LOOKING AHEAD

SEY2KT is a unique initiative where educators and community organizations are enhancing the experiences of young children, families and educators. Initially focused on strengthening transitions into Kindergarten, SEY2KT has developed into a way of strengthening connections and relationships across early all learning contexts. Common purpose, new perspectives and challenges have caused educators and community members at many sites to revise their thinking and consider new ways of working together. Their work demonstrates the potential for success when communities work together to focus on young children, their families, and their caregivers. Coherence that brings about systems change is the intended result and is magnified through this work.

All of the sites from 2020-2021 are continuing in 2021-2022, with plans to enhance and deepen the connections they have developed, and create new opportunities for children, families and educators. In many cases, they have already established action plans. Some of their plans include:

### CONNECTIONS

- Creating more connections and “buddy” activities with day cares and early other childhood sites
- Continuing to seek out and create ties with community partners
- Connect and support with the “Seamless Day” initiative in our community
- Find ways to involve some of our outlying communities in more activities

### EVENTS

- Developing and extending community events that help families learn about what is available in their community
- Hosting family events that focus on building relationships and connections to the school and deepening their understanding of how to nurture their child’s positive school experience

### AWARENESS

- Expanding perspectives beyond traditional educational experiences.
- Developing community awareness of the joy and importance of early learning both in and outside of school.

### PROGRAMS

- Summer learning programs
- Planning options for gradual entry into Kindergarten

### PRACTICES

- Continuing to work on shared professional development opportunities that include early learning educators.
- Developing resources and strategies that involve both school-based and community-based educators in developing common practices.
- Initiate and support ways for ECEs and K teachers to work together.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

- Continuing to seek out ways to increase community voice in planning our work.
- Creating clear referral pathways to support families and reduce uncertainty.
- When health restrictions allow, more learning on the land experiences, connections between students at various levels to share cultural knowledge and language.

## 6. APPENDIX

- SD 6 Rocky Mountain
- SD 8 Kootenay Lake
- SD 36 Surrey
- SD 45 West Vancouver
- SD 46 Sunshine Coast
- SD 60 Peace River North
- SD 61 Victoria
- SD 62 Sooke
- SD 63 Saanich
- SD 70 Pacific Rim
- SD 71 Comox Valley
- SD 73 Kamloops

# SD 6 ROCKY MOUNTAIN

We celebrated Global School Play Day on Feb. 3rd with our parents at home, in StrongStart and with our school community. Our early learner parents received a copy of Play Today!



*"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation." -Plato*

to Early Years family,

On **February 3rd, 2021**

**Eileen Madson Primary School** will participate in **Global School Play Day** celebrating the **benefits of play.**

We **invite** our **early years families** to **join** in the **celebration**

by taking some **time** at home or in the community to **"play"**

Here is how: **Take a photo** of your child playing and send it to the SEY2KT (Strengthening Early Years to School Transition) school lead teacher at EMP on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. **Send it** to the following **email address** ([kim.culler@sd6.bc.ca](mailto:kim.culler@sd6.bc.ca)). Upon receiving the photo we will give you a copy of **Let's Play! Activities for Families** with many great ideas for you and your child(ren).

This day celebrates the **benefits of play.** Students at EMP will have time throughout the day to experience the benefits of unstructured play. Internationally the day was developed to build awareness of the benefits of unstructured play with over 563, 283 participants across 75 Nations.

Play-based learning opportunities contribute to strong communication, critical thinking, ability to make friends, take responsibility, collaborate, persist, investigate, solve problems, innovate, acquire reading, writing, numeracy & digital literacy skills, and cross-cultural understanding. - Ministry of Education, 2019, Play Today

Unstructured play provides a variety of benefits for child and youth health and well-being:

- **Physical health and gross motor skills:** reduces sedentary behaviours, helps promote healthy weights and improves motor skills while improving musculoskeletal fitness and cardiovascular health.
- **Mental and emotional health:** promotes children's mental and emotional well-being, and supports the formation and maintenance of friendships and may decrease anxious behaviours.
- **Social health and team work:** improves emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy and the ability to communicate effectively in situations that involve compromise and cooperation.
- **Learning and attention at school:** promotes cognitive skills development (attention, concentration, ability to stay on task, and memory) and improve behaviour in class.
- **Resiliency and risk management skills:** develops emotional reactions, physical capabilities and coping skills, and improves capacity to manage adversity.

<https://www.cpha.ca/childrens-unstructured-play>

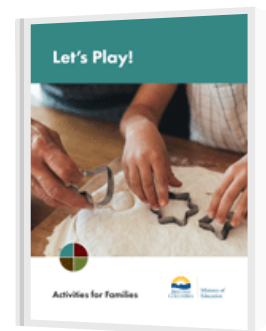


*"Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury. Play is a necessity."*

-Kay Redfield Jamison



Families sent in a photo of their child playing and received a copy of Let's Play!



*"Play is important! Over and over I heard teachers express how excited their children were. It was also noticed that there were not any "behaviours" during this time so children demonstrated the ability to regulate their social-emotional learning during this time."*

## SD 8 KOOTENAY LAKE

2021-22

- **Play in the K**
  - Covid Friendly
    - a. Fridays at the end of every months
    - b. Story walk
    - c. CCRR activities and/or staff members on site
    - d. Partner with SCC Junior Kindergarten programming
  - a. Y1: SEY2K - develop team, engage virtual initiatives, initiate projects, partnerships with SVECAC –
  - b. Y2: SEY2K projects continue; parent education; family events; early years programming
  - c. Y3: SEY2K projects continue; expanding partnerships; multi-age school programming to include younger years (ie - programming partnership with Children's Centre); family events; participation in community events



Salmo  
Elementary

“

*What will our message be?*


*We want you to feel comfortable as partners in your child's educational journey.*

”



# SD 36 SURREY

This year has provided us an opportunity to recognize that we are all connected and much like the roots of the cedar tree, we hold each other up. While face to face connection is preferred, we can still foster connections in virtual spaces and support one another in new and different ways.

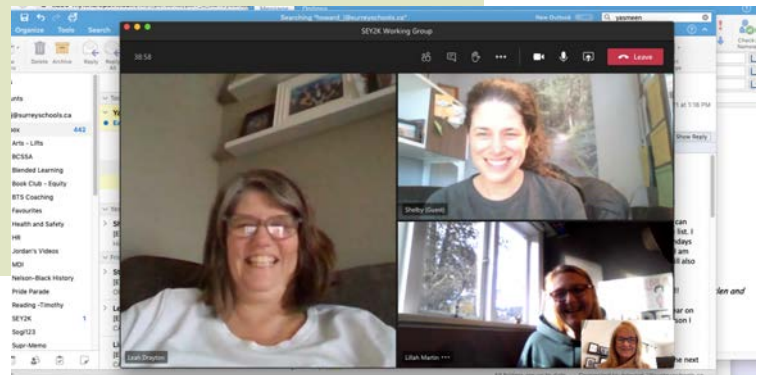


### Taking Action

- Creative Tension
- RSL, WTK and K Orientations (Virtual)
- Ongoing Professional Learning
- Summer Learning – PCL
- Kindergarten Gradual Entry
- Pathways to Kindergarten
- Videos for Families
- Revised Website
- Early Learning Programs
- IPALS



“ We continue to develop an understanding of the strength of our relationships with our community partners in bridging relationships with families. Participating in collaborative dialogue with First Steps (supports for refugee families) and our Indigenous partners helps broaden our understanding of the barriers and challenges families are experiencing in accessing early learning programs. Working as a team together helps us widen our compassionate lens and listen with intention so that we can work together, better, to support families. ”



# SD 45 WEST VANCOUVER

"We WONDER what opportunities we can provide to foster/strengthen relationships and a sense of belonging to places and people in our community?"

## Welcome to your West Vancouver POP-UP PLAY PACK (WV PUPP)!

We created this PUPP to help you foster joyful, healthy learning with your little one. These are all easy activities you can enjoy together!

When you learn along with your child, you both benefit: it forms the foundation for healthy well-being and a sense of belonging.

Inside this bag you will find:

- a copy of the book *Be You!*, by Peter H. Reynolds
- a selection of materials and activity cards inspired by the "Be" statements in the book.

Each activity card has questions to encourage conversation with your child and some activity ideas to get you started.

As you engage with the materials, activities and engage in conversations we invite you to consider how they relate to Well-Being and Belonging (of your child, yourself, your family, your community).

- Are there opportunities to explore and experience joy? A range of other emotions?
- How do you notice and celebrate differences with your child?
- What are you learning about your child's interests, inquiries and unique gifts?

Let's connect! Share your experiences, stories or photos on any platform using the hashtags- #CR4YC and #WestVanEd

And remember, **Don't Forget to Join Us for a Virtual Parent Playtime!**

We can't wait to see you on **April 26th from either 1:00-2:00pm OR 8:00-9:00pm!**

We will take you through some of the ways you can use these resources with your child to play, explore and learn together. Our session will also explore research related to child development, the importance of play, the British Columbia Early Learning Framework and more!

Thank you for pre-registering. Links for the virtual session will be emailed to you by April 23rd. Please contact **Allison de Boer (adeboer@wvschools.ca)** if you have any questions.

In Partnership with WVML and BC Ministry of Education  
We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the province of BC through the Ministry of Education



### Activity Card | BE YOU!



**Materials:**

- Mirror
- Paper, pencils, crayons

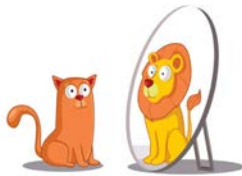
**Question:**

- What do you see?

**Why?**

These activities can help your child learn to...

- Recognize and label emotions in themselves and others
- Build self-awareness and empathy
- Build a sense of self and identity



SIDE ONE

“Families, children and educators continue to find JOY and connection through the virtual choir.”



"I came because I wanted to feel connected."  
- Caroline

"I like that it's about connection with the entire community, not just our family."  
-William

# SD 46 SUNSHINE COAST

## Wonderful Me

This idea started with our networks from CR4YC and SEY2K, together with our community partners who we work with in the early years. Our Indigenous Community and Vancouver Coastal Health – SLPs & OTs & Supported Child Care were most active in working with us on this project. We meet monthly as a large group, and we wanted to find a way to tell a ‘fuller’ story of the children who receive supports from our partner agencies.

In November/December, we decided to think of these children as our ‘wonder children’. However, we then began to wonder whether calling them ‘wonder children’ might just morph into the idea that ‘wonder children’ is simply a euphemism for our ‘vulnerable’ children (with a deficit implication) – which we did NOT want...

And then someone suggested that we do it with ALL of the children in the district.

And someone else suggested that it be from the voice of the child – and the family, and that it be totally strength-based.

And someone else suggested that instead of it being ‘Wonder Child’ that it be ‘Wonder-Full Me’ as this would really help this move into a strength-based approach to share the fullness of who each child is!

So now we are going to use this as documentation during each of our ‘in-person’ ‘KinderSPARK! Welcoming You to Kindergarten’ sessions that are offered in each of our elementary schools beginning in April.. At the end of each ‘in-person’ KinderSPARK! session, the families will ‘interview’ their child on two of the questions.

At the end of the 3 week KinderSPARK! sessions, all of the questions will be answered, and the families will then give their ‘Wonder-Full Me’ posters to the Kindergarten teachers who will be in attendance. The Kindergarten teachers are then going to post the ‘Wonder-Full Me’ posters up in their rooms in early September, so that the children will see the photos of themselves (small photos go on the front of the posters, but we are also going to print large photos of the families beside each poster). These will then form the talking points for the conferences that Kindergarten teachers hold with each family in the first week of school in September.

We are also going to use this as a tool to work with all of our child care providers on the Sunshine Coast – because we feel that they have strong relationships with their children and families, and can help facilitate the telling of their stories. I am hopeful that this will be a way for us to meet regularly with child care providers during the spring, and surface and celebrate the depth of the relationships they have with children and families. This honours the work that our child care professionals are doing, it gives messages that the school district values the ‘fullness and strengths’ of each child and family, and it is a way to work together with our child care partners. This is important given the changes happening in the province with child care slowly moving under the Ministry of Education.



# SD 60 PEACE RIVER NORTH



## Creating Space Connecting – Stronger Together



**Mindful Listening and Speaking**  
**Compassion Cultivation**  
**Setting the Stage**



Reflective conversation

**Community Partners**

- CCRR
- CDC

**SD 60**

- Administration
- Teachers
- ECE
- SWIS Program
- Learning Services Departments
  - School Counselor
  - OT
  - Deaf and Hard of Hearing
  - Inclusion
  - Speech and Language
  - Curriculum
  - School Psychologist

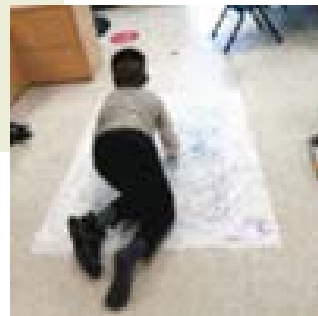





“

*A music drawing activity from the Let’s Play Ministry document was being done in a StrongStart. Some African music came on and this little kiddo ‘lit up’ and began showcasing his African dance moves. His drawing shows his emotion.*

”



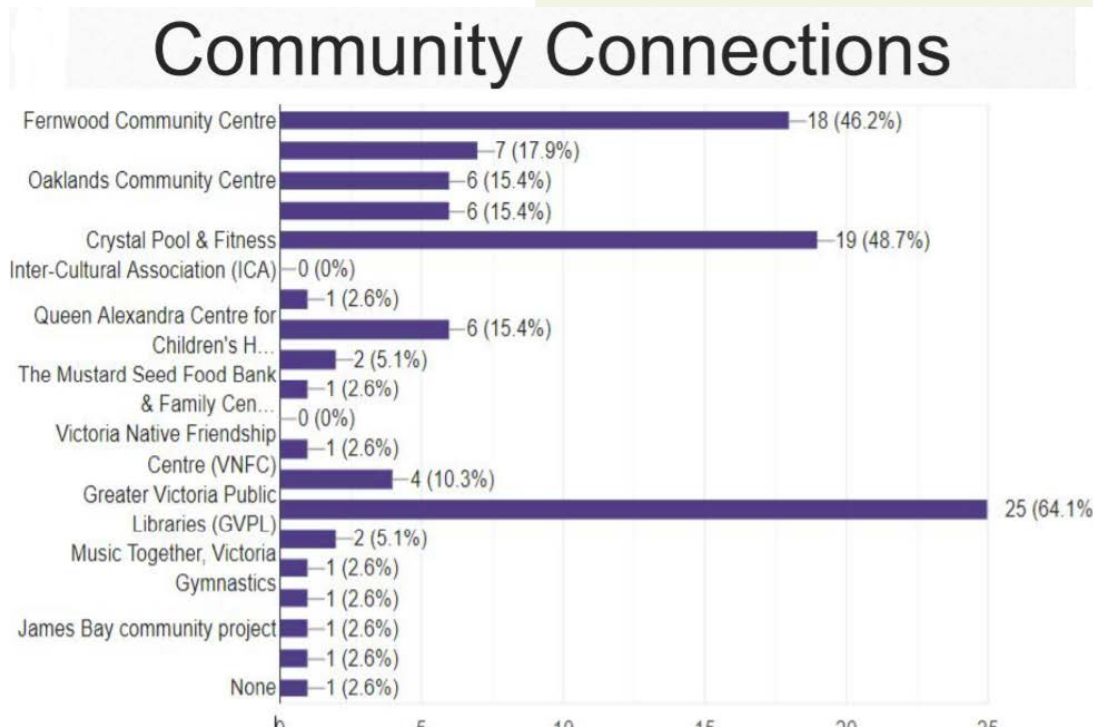
While it looks like “scribble” to some – the pedagogical narration would show the deeper learning that happened.

# SD 61 VICTORIA

We planned/created and then shared/hosted the Welcome to Kindergarten communications and activities with new K families. These included:

- Welcome video for families (Day in the Life of Kindergarten)
- Welcome to Kindergarten ‘drive-thru’ event with welcome bags and follow up communication
- Zoom Q&A session for new K families
- Small-group sessions hosted in the StrongStart room for new K families to sign-up to attend

## Has your family received services or attended programs at any of the following organizations?



“The small group sessions for new K families in the StrongStart room felt magical – it felt relaxed and positive. Children were connecting and playing together; staff were able to connect with families.”

# SD 62 SOOKE



*As we reflect on our initial gathering in November 2019, we are reminded of the valuable insights and thoughts that you, our Council of Advisors, brought to the planning process for this initiative. Recognizing that much has changed in our world since then, we welcome your continued input and involvement as we move forward to support our youngest learners in their transition to school.*



**Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions**  
2020 – 2021 Updates

Over the past year, the Ministry of Education has continued to implement this Early Learning Initiative, focused on working collaboratively with school districts and local communities to ensure children and families experience a supported transition into Kindergarten.

To strengthen connections between Sooke families and the Sooke School District (#62) for Kindergarten in **September 2020** (in the midst of COVID-19), the wonderful team at John Muir Elementary:

- reached out to families with a "Welcome to K" email
- created a video for families to view on a private YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/4i7qamrvwE>
- provided incoming K students with a "Welcome to K" bag, containing a welcome certificate, VIKL library card, information letter, and developmentally appropriate materials to foster early academic, physical, and social-emotional learning
- scheduled times for families to pick up their "Welcome to K" bag when there would be a Kindergarten team staff member available to meet them, so children would be familiar with one adult in September
- encouraged self-directed tours of the outdoor areas of the school (i.e. playground, field, garden)
- presented all students with a John Muir Jaguar t-shirt, so they could participate and be included in school-wide Friday Jaguar Spirit days
- planned the first day of school to be a "meet and greet" outside to facilitate the transition from family to school, allowing parents & guardians the opportunity to get information directly from the school team and ask questions in person

Additionally, to facilitate a smooth transition to John Muir in **September 2021** for all kindergarten families, the team has planned a Kickstart to Kindergarten initiative, which could include the following events (as per SD62 Health & Safety Guidelines during COVID):

- Pizza and Play (a dinner-hour gathering at the school with pizza provided by SD62)
- Friendly Forest Walk & Explore (an afternoon exploration of the John Muir school grounds and neighbouring forested area)
- Berry Picnic & Playground Play (an early evening get-together in the school's garden)
- Welcome to Kindergarten (with take-home resource bags)

As we reflect on our initial gathering at the Prestige in November 2019, we are reminded of the valuable insights and thoughts that you, our Council of Advisors, brought to the planning process for this initiative. Recognizing that much has changed in our world since then, we welcome your continued input and involvement as we move forward to support our youngest learners in their transition to school.

We encourage you to reach out and connect:  
Shelby Pollitt – [shpollitt@sd62.bc.ca](mailto:shpollitt@sd62.bc.ca) or Denise Wehner – [dwehner@sd62.bc.ca](mailto:dwehner@sd62.bc.ca)

Ministry of Education We gratefully acknowledge the financial support from the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education

## Our shift from Kickstart to Kindergarten to Story Workshops

**KICKSTART TO KINDERGARTEN SERIES**  
Giveaways at each event for all children who attend

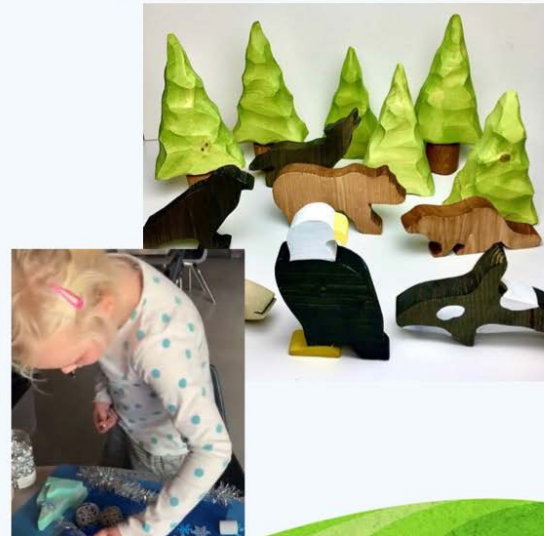
- Pizza and Play**  
Wednesday Feb 26th 5:30PM-6:30PM  
meet in the John Muir gym
- Friendly Forest Walk and Explore**  
Thursday April 23rd 1:30PM-2:30PM  
meet at the top field
- Berry Picnic and Playground Play**  
Tuesday June 16th 6:00PM-7:00PM  
at John Muir Elementary Garden

Watch for more information on the following events:  
Sooke Resource Fair April 6th 2020  
Welcome To Kindergarten Orientation May 2020

**Sooke Early Years Resource Fair**  
Saseenos Elementary  
Mon. April 6th 5:00pm - 6:00pm

Many community and school services will be available at this event with information, meet teachers and speak to community service agencies, and connect with friends and other Sooke families to others!

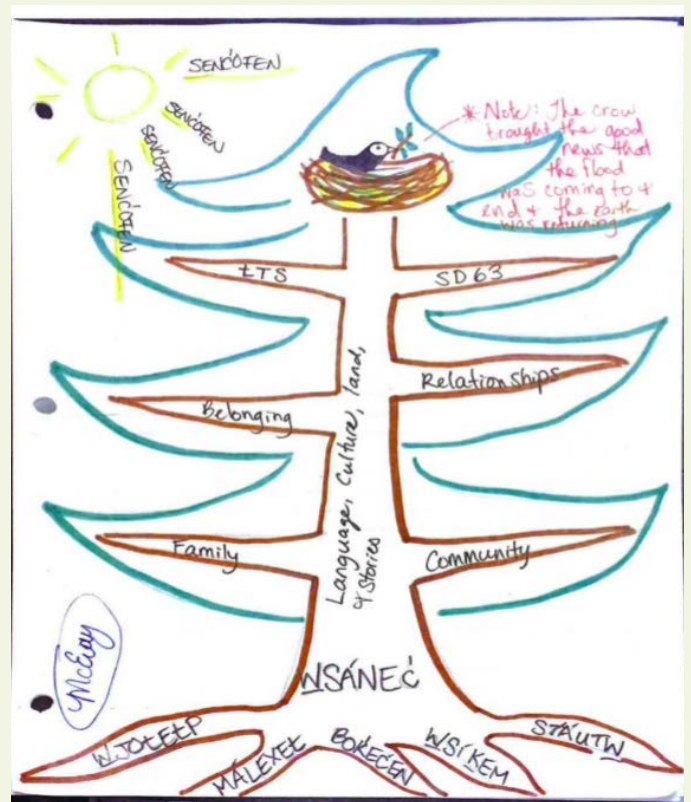
Connecting families to Community Services



# SD 63 SAANICH

## SD 63 Systems Map Details:

- participants each sketched a tree to represent ideas about our unique Systems Map in W SÁNEĆ.
- The CHILD and Language Nest is at the centre of our tree, anchored and supported by the roots (the Nations, W JOŁEŁP, W SÍ,KEM, STÁ,EU,TW and BOKEĆEN) the tree branches (ŁÁU, WELNEW Tribal School, neighbourhoods and families, school district and public schools, community programs, and Early Learning Centres).
- We must recognize and honour the gift of SENĆOFEN language to our school district. Language is a vital part of the W SÁNEĆ people. They are also sharing their culture, land and stories with us.
- We can work to share, liaise, communicate, and build relationships and connections between the public and Immersion schools and communities.



*Reciprocity between our public school and Language Nest teachers and students is SO important. What can we give back?*



Early Years Learning package for Head Starts and Language Nest students



SENĆOFEN Number Cards for K classes

# SD 70 PACIFIC RIM

*That our learning was so incredibly deep. As individuals and as a team. And as Communities of Practice of SEY2K! We have been a part of creating something absolutely amazing! And I LOVE that it doesn't "look the same" in each community*

## STRENGTHENING EARLY YEARS TO KINDERGARTEN TRANSITIONS

### A DAY FOR K Conversations April 23 9:00-2:45 via Zoom

We invite all educators, but please note there will be a focus on kindergarten children and their transition into our school system.

*Session led by:*  
Sonia Organ, Kindergarten  
Teacher @AES  
and supported by the  
Strengthening Early Years to  
Kindergarten (SEY2K) team.

Kindergarten transitions are as we know a huge step in a student's learning continuum and this session is designed to talk about, and share ways that schools are supporting these students and families with this transition.

Time will also be spent looking at how other districts are supporting this transition by having an

**Early Childhood Educator in a K Class working in partnership with a Kindergarten Educator**

**This session is designed to envision new opportunities to work together in supporting this transition and to honor and share the amazing work that is already being done by colleagues in SD 70 and our local communities.**

LET'S collaborate, discuss engage, and envision how we can strengthen how we support children and their families on their journey to and during Kindergarten

For more information please contact  
Sonia Organ  
sorgan@sd70.bc.ca



Made with PosterMyWall.com

“

*During the Family Literacy week event, we heard from families that they really appreciated the event to be able to get out in nature with their families and to connect virtually with other families and service providers. Many families commented that the Bingo Scavenger Hunt encouraged them be outdoors more than they have in a long time. We noticed that families are hungry for this connection and would like more opportunities.*

”

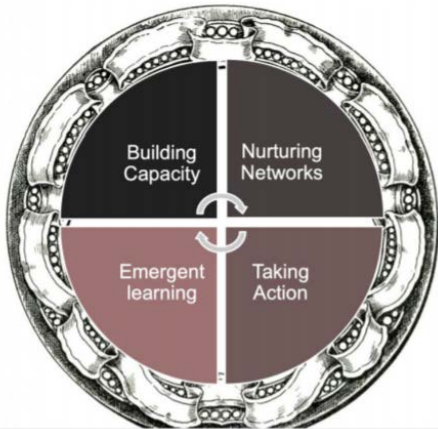


The SEY2K compiled 350 K Day Bags for distribution to all our elementary schools



# SD 71 COMOX VALLEY

Our 4 K1 teachers and our StrongStart facilitator enjoyed connecting as a team and looked at the 4 pillars of the Compassionate Leadership system



**ACTIONS: What did you do?**

**Cumberland CS:**  
 -visited ECE centres to read a story and meet individual children. (1<sup>st</sup> of 2 visits planned)  
 --used the survey feedback to create videos to send to families about the classroom and added items to the WTK bags  
 -Community School provided information booklet about accessing food and other community resources through the school

**Courtenay EI.:**  
 -connected with each family by phone;  
 -invited small groups (3-4) to join K class on neighbourhood walk (began with students particularly identified as needing extra support with the transition)  
 -created Community appreciation backpacks: (see attached photos), treat for ECE center staff, thank you letter from the school staff, gift book for the center, nature journals for each student (blank pages with cover)  
 -preparing for WTK: stations, community partners present, older students as "tour guides"

**OBSERVATIONS: What happened?**

This last month has felt like the culmination month—lots of momentum!  
 The Cumberland team pulled their strong connections together to spend time in the ECE centres, and the ECEs will be visiting the Kindergarten classes in September (as they did last year). They enjoyed thinking together about the things that are particular to their community for the WTK bags and will be going on their bike tour to visit families on their porches in the community in the next couple of weeks.

The Courtenay EI team has enjoyed getting to know the community ECEs through emails in planning their walks to deliver the backpacks. Each K class walked to a different center and delivered the backpacks and a card they had made a card for the kids at that centre.

**UNDERSTANDING: What did you discover/learn?**

The Early Childcare providers were so appreciative of the gift, and I think this is a valuable idea to employ going forward as we welcome these centers under the SD umbrella in the next couple of years.

Due to COVID, our actions have still been heavily dependent on, and revolving around, our familiar WTK events. I am so appreciative of how each team used this secure touchstone to do what they could to expand their thinking and actions with families.

Also interesting: There was clear division in the Cumberland group between the ECEs and the teachers on a couple of the questions. For example, the teachers felt they checked in with each other's SEWB but the ECEs didn't feel included in that. Also, the ECE's felt they were making good connections with families but the teachers didn't—likely due to COVID.

**PLAN: What's next?**

WTK events are happening in the next couple of weeks, and then I would like us to have a debrief at the end of the year to take stock of what we were able to do, and what we want to do next year. I have a feeling that once PHO restrictions are lifted, these teams will have lots of ideas about extending invitations to families in the fall and again next spring with the next bunch of new Ks.  
 There are some staff changes at both schools this year, and I would like to let new folks have some idea of what this is about before September starts; I know it was difficult for the new folks this year to get the gist of it at first. Including them in these conversations ahead of time, while everyone is still on the "high" of the momentum we've got going now, could be valuable.

From a "balcony view" perspective, I think we could also be considering about sharing some of these strategies with childcare centres more broadly as we "begin the beginnings" of bringing childcare under the district umbrella. I would like to share this information with the district admin and our SEY2K steering committee.

Now to visit our own school family of educators: JumpStart



- The kindergarten children sang their hand song...everyone liked it
- Ms H. said " Thankyou this means a lot"
- Ms. H. said "this came at a really good time we needed this today"

# SD 73 KAMLOOPS

*Distributed leadership is not about dividing tasks and responsibilities among individuals. Instead, DL is concerned with the interactions among individuals (leaders and those whom they lead) to drive change and improve Kindergarten transition through the development of a culture where all can thrive.*



**FREE!**  
Registration required

May 4th  
May 6th  
June 1st  
June 3rd

You may CHOOSE  
3:30-4:30pm  
or  
5:30-6:30pm

Location:  
StrongStart  
room 7

Arthur H.  
Elementary  
School

OUTSIDE door  
clearly marked

**TO REGISTER email:**  
Marlene Shey

## StrongStart Schools...

In person sessions!



**SPARK**  
Strong, Prepared And Ready for Kindergarten

**Is your child excited for Kindergarten?**  
Entering kindergarten is a major transition for children and parents.

**This free program includes:**

- Time spent in the SCHOOL environment
- Parent education
- Snack
- Take away activities

\*We can only permit one adult to attend with your

## SYSTEMS map: Community and SD73 team -

