



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**Connecting Early Childhood  
Development and Schools  
in BC**



# Presentation Overview

- What is “Early Learning” in BC?
- Why this change?
- Early Learning Initiatives and schools
- Ministry of Education involvement
- Ready, Set, Learn
- New mandate
- StrongStart BC
- Legislation and funding
- Early Learning Framework
- Early Childhood Learning Agency
- The future



# What is “Early learning” in BC ?

- A phenomenon, not a program
- Growth in young children’s physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative capacities (birth to Kindergarten)
- The foundation for lifelong learning
- The basis for individual, social, economic, and environmental well-being
- Can take place in a multitude of settings, including schools



# Why early learning in BC's school system?

- Growing understanding of brain development
- Data-based decision making
- Search for creative ways to address achievement challenges
- Recognition that early parent involvement increases student success



## Early Learning activity started in communities

- Some community coalitions involved school district staff (2000 on)
- Some schools started partnering with ECD groups to jointly fund programs (ex. Mother Goose)
- School districts started participating in Early Development Instrument assessment
- Districts began using EDI results to plan



## MEd involvement added momentum

- 2005: Ministry of Education expanded mandate
- 2006: Creation of Early Learning Unit in the Ministry
- 2005/06: Some funding and programs began
- 2007: new legislation and funding
- 2008: *BC Early Learning Framework*
- 2007/2008: StrongStart BC programs expanded
- September 2008: early learning named Ministry's top priority
- February 2008: Early Childhood Learning Agency



# Early learning and the mandate of Ministry of Education

- *School Act* amendment planned (enacted Spring of 2007)
- Would allow boards of education to provide programs free of charge to children younger than school age
- Required involvement of parent or caregiver
- Early learning goals and measures required in district achievement contracts
- Allowed the ministry to set up a branch
- Kick started with early learning grants



# READY, SET, LEARN

- School readiness initiative for 3 year olds
- Incentive to collaboration between schools and ECD community programs
- School-based community event(s)
- Ministry creates RSL kits that include:
  - age-appropriate book;
  - parent/family booklet;
  - Districts add information about local programs/services
- 2007/08: 1,103 public schools (98 percent), 83 independent schools involved and over 20,000 preschoolers participated



# *BC Early Learning Framework 2007/2008*

- Sets common vision, principles, and early learning goals
- Supports adults to create quality experiences and environments
- Raises awareness of importance of early learning
- Stimulates reflections and dialogue about children's learning



## *BC Early Learning*

# *Framework* Implementation

- Partnership with 3 post-secondary institutions
- Collaboration on training strategies
- Field leaders trained 2008
- Workshops began in Jan 2009
- Goal to reach all ECEs and other ECD and school district staff



## StrongStart BC centre pilots 2006/08

- Free, drop-in early learning programs for children attending with their family or caregiver
- Located in schools, 5 days a week for 3-4 hours a day
- Facilitated by qualified Early Childhood Educators
- Designed to promote cognitive, language, social-emotional and physical development of young children
- Parents/caregivers can observe, learn and practice effective early learning strategies and support their child's learning at home.



## StrongStart BC expansion

- 12 pilot centres are part of a StrongStart BC evaluation conducted by UBC Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)
- Fall 2006, pilots opened
- Evaluation completed in 2008
- 191 programs open now
- 200 centres by June 2009



# Edmonds StrongStart BC



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# Early Childhood Learning Agency

- Announced in the Speech from the Throne in February 2008
- Created within the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Tasked with exploring feasibility of expanding kindergarten and pre-K



# Early Childhood Learning Agency

- Consultation from June to August '08
- Close to 3000 responses
- Themes from consultation
- Implications for human resources, facilities, funding, etc.



## Want to know more?

- For more information:  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early\\_learning/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/early_learning/)
- Susan.Kennedy@gov.bc.ca