

# Framework for Enhancing Student Learning



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5  
SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)  
Early Learning and Child Care



September 2025

## Early Learning and Child Care

The District remains deeply committed to fostering an inclusive atmosphere where every student can pursue graduation in ways that recognize and celebrate their unique strengths. This academic, social, and personal journey is shaped by ongoing efforts and a dedication to excellence. Establishing school age care on school grounds is the result of thoughtful collaboration, creative solutions, and careful planning, all working together to support the needs of learners and their families.

### Child Care Spaces

The District, working alongside not-for-profit providers, successfully secured more than \$2.5 million through the province's ChildCareBC New Spaces Funds. This innovative approach minimized the need for new construction and enabled a smooth transition between the school day and child care, benefiting students and families alike.

Set to open in September 2025, the District is working in partnership with the Elkford Women's Task Force Society to introduce twenty-four (24) before and after school care spaces at Rocky Mountain Elementary School in Elkford. They also partnered with the *South Country Social Planning Committee Society Jaffray* to create thirty (30) spaces at Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary School in Jaffray. In Cranbrook, Steeples Elementary School, partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Cranbrook to create thirty (30) spaces. The District will continue to build upon relationships between early years and the schools as well as explore new opportunities for connecting and collaborating in the coming years.

The District also partnered with Elk Valley Kids Club to expand school age care at the Fernie Learning Centre, adding twenty-one (21) new spaces set to open in September. Conveniently located near Isabella Dicken Elementary School, this initiative further enhances access to quality care for local families.

The expansion of school age care within School District No. 5 reflects a growing commitment to meeting the diverse needs of families across the region. By securing significant provincial funding and partnering with dedicated community organizations, the District has been able to open new doors for children before and after school. These initiatives have not only increased the number of available care spaces but have also emphasized accessibility and inclusion, ensuring that children from a variety of backgrounds can participate fully in school life.

As more families benefit from the expansion of school age care, the District continues to monitor and adapt programming to address emerging needs. Ongoing evaluation, partnership building, and community engagement remain central to sustaining and growing school age care, ensuring that every child has a supportive place to learn, grow, and thrive both during and beyond the traditional school day.

The early years' programs contributed to the ongoing work of the Strategic Plan. Our early years programs prioritize relationship building between schools and the community. By fostering trust and open communication, children feel supported and safe in the school environment.

### CR4YC (Changing Results for Young Children)

One of the main goals of the CR4YC project is to improve social and emotional well-being outcomes for children. The project brings together community early childhood educators, StrongStart facilitators, and primary teachers to engage in collaborative inquiry. CR4YC focuses on social and emotional well-being to improve outcomes for young children. One of the CR4YC

goals is to identify and apply a strengthened understanding of quality practices associated with improving the social and emotional well-being of young children. Another goal of CR4YC is to align instructional practices between early childhood educators and primary educators using the Early Learning Framework.

## SEY2KT (Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions)

The SEY2KT group is a collaborative, multi-partner, initiative designed to improve early learning experiences and transition processes for children and families in British Columbia. Comprised of principals, vice principals, district staff, kindergarten teachers, community members, speech and language pathologists, early childhood educators, StrongStart facilitators, childcare providers, and school trustees, the program brings together educators from both the District and community settings to design and implement ongoing collaborative actions, based on local resources and needs.

Looking ahead, both CR4YC and SEY2KT will experience changes in the coming year as they adapt to the absence of direct Ministry funding. Despite this challenge, the District is committed to sustaining these vital early years programs. Efforts are now focused on leveraging the new, upcoming Ministry-supported documents as key resources for continued growth and improvement. By integrating these materials, educators and facilitators will be equipped to maintain and enhance the high standards and collaborative spirit of both initiatives. The District's approach ensures that, even in a shifting funding landscape, the foundational work of supporting young children's social, emotional, and educational development remains strong, and these programs continue to serve families with creativity and resilience.

## StrongStart

StrongStart operates in the communities of Fernie, Sparwood, and Cranbrook. StrongStart provides accessible early learning opportunities to families across these communities. Each StrongStart centre welcomes children and caregivers into a nurturing, play-based environment where foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional development are fostered. Skilled facilitators lead interactive activities such as storytelling, music sessions, and creative exploration, designed to engage young minds and prepare them for the transition to kindergarten. The presence of StrongStart in multiple communities ensures that more families can benefit from supportive early learning experiences, building strong connections between home and school. Through these inclusive programs, children gain confidence, parents and caregivers find guidance, and communities are strengthened with each shared moment of learning and growth.

In partnership with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), the District fosters a collaborative environment that enhances the professional growth and support of our StrongStart program and Early Childhood Education (ECE) facilitators. Through regular meetings, shared workshops, and the exchange of best practices, CBAL works alongside educators to develop innovative programming tailored to the unique needs of families in our region. These collaborative efforts include co-hosted literacy events, mentorship opportunities, and access to a wide range of resources and materials. By leveraging CBAL's expertise and community connections, our StrongStart program and ECE facilitators are empowered to deliver high-quality, inclusive learning experiences, ensuring that children and their families receive the guidance and support they need to thrive in their earliest years.

## Ready, Set, Learn

Ready, Set, Learn is a welcoming event designed for families with children aged birth – 5 who are not yet in kindergarten. It is a fun and engaging way to introduce children to the school environment, meet early childhood educators, and learn about resources that support early learning at home and in the community. These events often feature story time, hands-on activities, music, crafts, and opportunities to ask questions about the transition into school life. These events are a partnership between the province, the school district, and the early learning and community partners in the Elkford, Sparwood, Fernie, Jaffray/South Country, and Cranbrook area communities.

## Summary

The District's Early Learning initiatives strongly align with the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning by supporting children's development and strengthening family-school-community connections.

The expansion of school age care, funded through ChildCareBC New Spaces and partnerships with community organizations, increases accessibility and inclusion, ensuring families have consistent and supportive care before and after school.

Programs such as CR4YC and SEY2KT enhance social-emotional well-being and improve transitions to kindergarten through collaborative practices across educators, caregivers, and community partners, directly supporting Human and Social Development Goals 1 and 2 of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning.

StrongStart and Ready, Set, Learn provide play-based, inclusive early learning that foster literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional growth while building confidence and trust for families, advancing Intellectual Development Goals 1 and 2 of the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. Through partnerships with CBAL and local organizations, the District ensures high-quality programming, professional collaboration, and equitable opportunities, preparing young learners with the foundations and confidence to thrive in school and beyond.

Child care is an integral part of the District's Strategic Plan, providing families with accessible before- and after-school care while fostering strong connections between home, school, and community. Through programs such as CR4YC, SEY2KT, StrongStart, and Ready, Set, Learn, the District supports early literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional growth, ensuring that children enter school with confidence and belonging. These initiatives build strong foundations for lifelong learning, directly advancing the goals of equity, inclusion, and student success.