

LEARNING TOGETHER

NO. 23

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ISSUE NO. 23





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LEARNING TOGETHER IN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 (SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY)



As we move further into spring, our schools are filled with energy, creativity, and a strong sense of purpose. This season of growth is reflected not only in the changing landscape around us, but also in the meaningful learning experiences taking place across the District. Each story in this month's newsletter reflects our shared commitment to supporting every learner, every day.

Our Strategic Plan and Framework for Enhancing Student Learning continue to guide this work, with a focus on student success, equity, and meaningful engagement in learning. Across this issue, we see clear examples of how these priorities are being brought to life in classrooms, schools, and communities throughout the District.



Red Dress Day provides an important opportunity for reflection, remembrance, and awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit people. This work supports our ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion, helping students deepen their understanding and respect for the experiences of Indigenous Peoples.

Our focus on early learning is evident in the expansion of child care spaces at Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary School. Strengthening access to early learning opportunities supports student success from the earliest years and reflects our commitment to building strong foundations for learning and well-being.

High-quality instruction and engaging learning environments are highlighted throughout our schools. From hands-on numeracy and inquiry-based literacy to innovative experiences in our District Design Labs, students are developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. These learning experiences align closely with our Framework for Enhancing Student Learning by emphasizing active, student-centered approaches that deepen understanding.

Our Learning Services teams continue to demonstrate the importance of inclusive and responsive supports. By recognizing and supporting diverse learning needs, and by creating opportunities that honour student identity and voice, we are working to ensure that each student experiences a sense of belonging and success.

Outdoor and environmental education experiences further reflect our commitment to engaging, relevant learning. Through place-based opportunities such as geocaching, outdoor skill development, and experiential learning, students are building resilience, collaboration, and a connection to the world around them.

Student success is celebrated across the District, from achievements in science fairs and the performing arts to capstone projects that reflect personal growth and applied learning. These accomplishments demonstrate the impact of providing students with meaningful opportunities to explore their interests, develop skills, and take pride in their learning.

As we look ahead, we are excited to connect with families and community members through upcoming Community Engagement Nights. These gatherings are an important part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement, as we share progress on the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning and our Strategic Plan, and invite feedback to help guide our next steps.

Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting our students and schools. Together, we are creating inclusive, engaging learning environments where all students can succeed and thrive.

V. Johnson

Viveka Johnson,
Superintendent



Indigenous Education



Orange Shirt Day Sign

Mrs. Andrew, Indigenous Education Support Worker at Steeples, presented 7aqamnik Principal, Mr. Bishop, and Nasu7kinnana, Marcus, with an Orange Shirt Day sign. It was created from Steeples Sixth Annual Orange Shirt Day Honour Walk in September. Our joint Orange Shirt Day event and honour walk recognizes the experiences of Residential School Survivors and their families.

Sundaes

Miss Teri, Indigenous Education Support Worker from Highlands Elementary came back from being away and hosted a Sundae Bar for some of the students at Highlands.



Laurie Middle School invites you to attend

RED DRESS DAY EVENT

To bring awareness to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people

Tuesday May 5, 2026
Rotary Park, Cranbrook

Event begins at 11 am, to be followed by a commemorative walk back to Laurie



Blue Jean Jacket Day

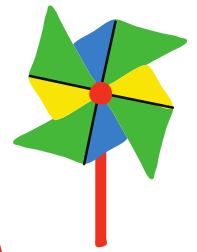
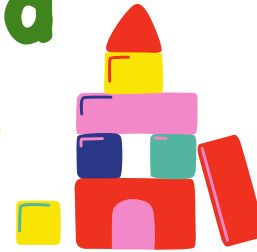
Blue Jean Jacket Day was launched in 2023 in Edmonton on June 6 to create awareness about missing, murdered and exploited men and boys.

For more information, please see the [article from CBC](#).



Early Learning and Child Care

District Principal of Early Learning and Child Care,
 Laura-Lee Phillips



New Child Care Spaces Open at Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary School

We are pleased to announce the opening of 30 new child care spaces for before- and after-school care at Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary School (JESS). The new spaces will be operated by South Country SPC Society, operating as South Country Kids Care, helping to improve access to child care for families in the Jaffray community.

The new spaces reflect the District's ongoing commitment to supporting young children and families by creating accessible, community-based early learning and child care opportunities. Located within Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary School, the program will provide families with greater local access to before- and after-school care while strengthening connections between early learning and the school community.



Grand Opening Ceremony - April 15, 2026

ÉIDES
 KINDNESS CONNECTION COURAGE

PLAY BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

FOR CHILDREN STARTING KINDERGARTEN IN SEPTEMBER 2026!

APRIL 10
MAY 1
MAY 8
MAY 22

ACTIVITIES MAY BE INSIDE AND OUTSIDE - DRESS FOR THE WEATHER
 SNACK WILL BE PROVIDED

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM
ÉIDES LIBRARY

Welcoming families to our **ÉIDES** community.

Families are invited to play, explore, and connect with our school and staff before September.

For more information contact
 laura-lee.phillips@sd5.bc.ca 250-417-2082
 250-423-4651 ÉIDES

cba
 Columbia Basin Alliance for Learning



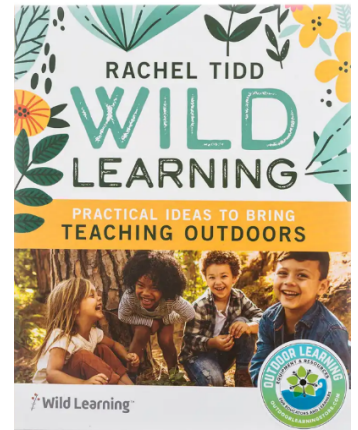
News from District Teachers

District Numeracy Teacher, Nicole Fulton

This month's classroom visits focused on deepening mathematical understanding through games and hands-on activities. In a grade two/three classroom, we continued exploring the meaning of multiplication. Using counting collections, students worked on grouping objects and counting in equal groups. This helped them connect multiplication to real quantities rather than just repeated addition. We extended this thinking with arrays through a Roll an Array game. Students used dice and grid paper to create arrays and keep track of their totals, reinforcing the idea of rows and columns while building fluency with multiplication.

In a grade one classroom, we focused on place value and regrouping. Students used dice, ten frames, and base-10 blocks to build numbers to 50. Each time they filled a ten frame, they regrouped by trading for a ten rod. This helped students see how numbers are composed and supported their understanding of "making ten" in a concrete way.

With the weather improving, this is a great time to explore math beyond the classroom, whether through patterns in nature, measuring, or building with natural materials. Research shows that when students learn through play, hands-on experiences, and exploration, their understanding deepens.



District Literacy Teacher, Laura-Lee Phillips

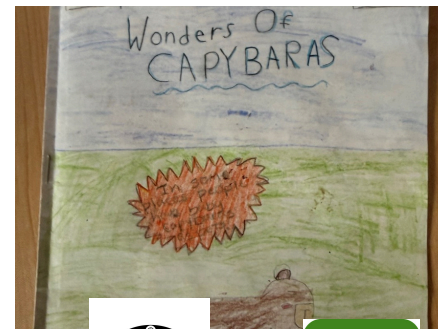
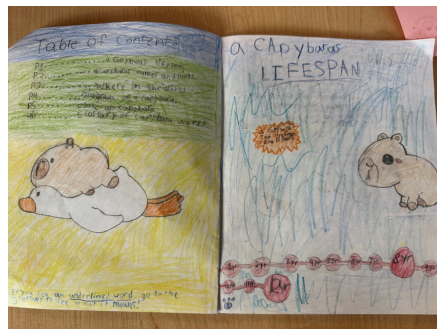
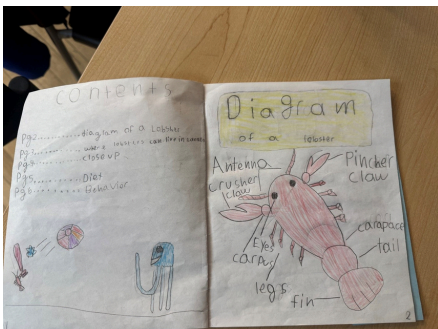
Non-Fiction Writing at Rocky Mountain Elementary School

Students in Ms. de Bruycker's grade three class at Rocky Mountain Elementary School have been developing their non-fiction reading and writing skills through an engaging inquiry project inspired by Adrienne Gear's Powerful Writing Structures. As part of this work, students learned how to create informational books using a variety of non-fiction text features to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

Throughout the project, students explored high-interest topics and practiced organizing their research using features such as covers, tables of contents, labelled diagrams, close-up illustrations, fun fact boxes, and sections describing habitat, diet, and behaviour. Their finished books reflected both thoughtful research and creativity, with topics such as lobsters and capybaras capturing students' curiosity and encouraging them to read, write, and share their learning with confidence.

This learning experience supported the development of important literacy skills, including asking questions, gathering information, identifying key ideas, organizing facts, and writing for a specific purpose. Students also learned how non-fiction authors use text features to help readers better understand information.

It was rewarding to see students engage so fully in their work as they combined research, writing, and creative design to create their own non-fiction books. Projects like these help students strengthen their literacy skills while nurturing curiosity, confidence, and a love of learning.



News from Learning Services

District Principal, Kaley Wasyłowich

Check out this inspiring bulletin board as part of a Sparwood Secondary student's Capstone Project, "Where We Are From."

The bulletin board celebrates Frank J. Mitchell Elementary English Language Learner (ELL) students by sharing their cultures through maps, flags, favourite foods, and personal reflections. It has been a joy to see students stop, read, and connect and to see the pride shining from those featured.



Donald experienced his first-ever visit to the pool. Although expectations were modest, he exceeded them while showing clear joy and engagement.

This moment highlights the impact of intentional preparation, teamwork, and responsive support. We are proud to celebrate this success with Donald!



Learning electronics comes to life with Snap Circuits at Fernie Secondary!

Sammy is enjoying hands-on discovery as students build exciting projects like radios, doorbells, and electronic games while developing problem solving skills through play.

Haylee, a grade eight student from Parkland Middle School, proudly represented the District at the DHH Proud event in Burnaby, BC. Haylee participated in the annual Spotlight Competition at the Michael J. Fox Theatre.

Responding to this year's theme, "Not a Disability, but a Difference," Haylee delivered a powerful speech about her experiences as a deaf student using cochlear implants, celebrating identity and Deaf culture.

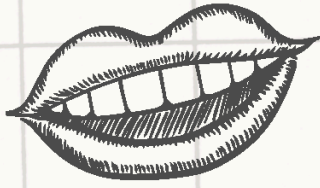
This was Haylee's second time attending the event, which also included a Friendship Day where over 200 deaf and hard of hearing students gathered to connect, use ASL, and experience accessible large scale programming.



News from Learning Services

District Principal, Kaley Wasylovich

May is Speech and Hearing Month



SPEECH

Speech production is the way a person uses the air in their lungs, vocal folds, and mouth to make sounds. The picture shows the position for the 'R' sound. A different position would make it sound like a 'W' or a vowel sound.

LANGUAGE

Language is the system that people use to communicate. It can be spoken, signed, and written. Language skills are the combined understanding and use. Language is complex and there are many areas that children can have difficulty with learning or using. For example, a child may not understand or use the past tense when speaking.

AAC

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to ways of communicating besides just speaking. AAC can be high-tech like an iPad or Eye-Tracking system, or low-tech like gestures or pointing to words/pictures.

SPEECH- LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

Doing more than you think



LITERACY

There are foundational skills that will help a child read and write. A child may need extra support with the identification of letters, learning what sounds letters can make, or with the manipulation of sounds.

STUTTERING

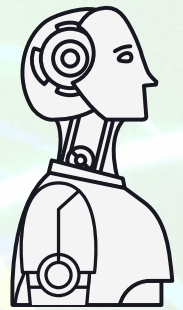
Stuttering affects the flow of a person's speaking. A stutter is the involuntary interruption of speech that can sound like repeated words or sounds, or like stretched out sounds. SLPs will support a child by reducing the impact of a stutter or support smooth talking strategies.

PRAGMATICS AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Pragmatics (social communication) allows people to share experiences, make requests, greet others, and follow social patterns. It is connected to executive function skills, which are mental processes of attention, focus, memory, self-control, and mental flexibility.



DISTRICT DESIGN LABS

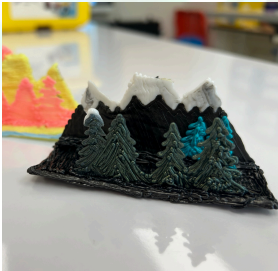


**Teachers of Transformative Learning,
Ryan McKenzie and Kim Froehler**

Design Lab Arts Education

Students from Ms. Wurmlinger's grade two class from Rocky Mountain Elementary visited the Design Lab to explore cubism through creative making. Using Chompsaws cardboard tools and paint, students created Picasso-inspired faces, experimenting with shape, angles, and colour. This work aligns with the BC Arts Education curriculum by encouraging creative expression, exploration of artistic styles, and use of a variety of materials.

Students at Frank J. Mitchell Elementary experimented with 3-D pens to create a 3-D art piece of the Three Sisters mountains in Fernie. Students were encouraged to explore different colour combinations and tree designs. Some of their final creations had a functional use by being able to hold a mobile device, pen, or a pair of glasses.



Cache-ing in on Learning

Mount Baker Secondary Outdoor Education students took their learning to the Cranbrook Community Forest and experienced geocaching. The class began with a session of in-class learning focused on GPS technology and how coordinate systems work, building a foundation and understanding of geocaching. This learning was then put into action over two afternoons in the field, as students navigated around Sylvan Lake searching for a variety of geocaches. Using GPS units and teamwork, students practiced problem solving, navigation, and outdoor skills while exploring the local environment.

STEAM at Kootenay Orchards

Arts in the Orchards was a vibrant, school-wide celebration of creativity, innovation, and STEAM learning. Students across the school participated in a wide range of hands-on activities that blended art, science, and design.

A group of students also visited the Design Lab, where they used 3D pens to create custom sunglasses.





OUTDOOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



Fernie Secondary Students Climbing in Cranbrook

Grade seven students had the chance to see where future adventures can lead as they watched Senior Outdoor Education students in action during a recent Cranbrook climbing trip. While younger students tackled the walls in their first introductory climbing sessions, they were also able to watch older students learn to tie figure-eight knots, clip into harnesses, belay, and manage climbing systems. Grade eight students also took on the challenge during their own trip. Both days finished with pizza, bowling, and plenty of laughs while building confidence, teamwork, and resilience. Over two days, five different Fernie Secondary classes were able to take part in the adventure at the climbing gym with Mr. Gulyas.



Fernie Secondary Outdoor Education Along the Elk River

The Outdoor Education grades 8/9 class recently enjoyed a beautiful afternoon along the Elk River, combining hands-on learning with the natural beauty of our local community.

Students began by learning about BC campfire regulations, the fire triangle, and essential fire safety practices. Working in small groups, they planned and organized their approach before preparing and cooking homemade bread over the campfire. Inspired by The Outdoor Boys, students also made a simple honey butter, adding a delicious reward to their efforts.

This experience highlighted teamwork, responsibility, and practical outdoor skills, while creating a memorable, shared experience outside the classroom.





IN THE SCHOOLS



News from Schools Across the District



Capstone Project in Elkford



Sean, a student at Elkford Secondary, has taken on a Capstone Project this year that reflects his steady effort and commitment to learning in a way that works for him. As a neurodiverse learner, Sean has been focusing on building life skills, using hockey and skate sharpening as a practical way to do that.

All winter, Sean has been sharpening skates at Elkford Secondary for donations. Through this, he's been working on things like staying organized, managing his time, and interacting with others, while also developing a hands-on skill. It's been a consistent way for him to keep learning outside of a traditional classroom setting.

Recently, Sean reached an important milestone by finishing his 100th pair of skates. He's worked on both hockey and figure skates, continuing to improve as he goes.

Sean was also able to attend a Calgary Flames game, where the Calgary Flames recognized the work he has been doing. During the visit, he got the chance to meet his favourite player, Dustin Wolf, a moment that connected his effort over the year to something he really cares about.

Sean's project shows how learning can take different forms, and how using personal interests can help build important skills over time.



At Sparwood Secondary, it was Food Truck Week in Foods class. Teachers were invited into the class to judge the dishes. Students made poutine, wings, waffles and bacon.



Senior Art students at Fernie Secondary School have been working diligently on their coffee-painted portraits for the past month.

Their learning task was to portray a person using a new painting technique. Instead of traditional water colour paints, they used instant coffee as their medium. The results are amazing!





STUDENT SUCCESS IN ACTION



Science Fair

Congratulations to students across the District who participated in the East Kootenay Science Fair. Among the top winners were Fernie Secondary grade 8 student Boden, who received Best in Show and a Gold Medal, and TM Roberts grade 6 students Ethan and Suvarn, who earned a Special Award.



Performing Arts Festival

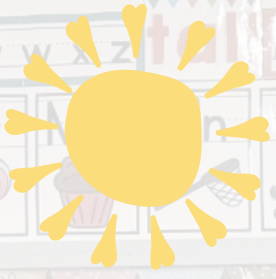
April is a vibrant time for performing arts across British Columbia, and the East Kootenay Performing Arts Festival brings our local community together in celebration of student talent.

In the High School Grade 12 and Under Choir category, the Mount Baker Concert Choir earned a Silver standing, while the Mount Baker Vocal Jazz ensemble, the Baker's Dozen, achieved a Gold standing with Distinction and a recommendation to the Provincial Festival in Prince George. Both choirs are directed by Mr. Bueckert.

Congratulations as well to the choir of intermediate students from Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary for receiving an outstanding Platinum standing and recommendation to attend the Provincial Festival. Choral leader Mrs. Yadernuck shared her pride in her students, and her connection as a former student of Mr. Bueckert highlights the strong sense of community that continues to grow through music in our schools. Congratulations to all of our choirs for representing the East Kootenay region with pride.



A Picture Says a Thousand Words...



SOUTHEAST KOOTENAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NIGHTS

Talk Openly, Share Opinions and Ask Questions

ELKFORD

MAY 19, 2026

6:00-7:00 p.m.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELEMENTARY

CRANBROOK

MAY 26, 2026

6:00-7:00 p.m.

MOUNT BAKER SECONDARY



TOPICS

The Framework for Enhancing Student Learning for the District and the Community

School Growth Plans

Strategic Plan



Approved Calendar

Southeast Kootenay School District 2026-2027 Annual School Calendar



July 2026							August 2026							September 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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							30	31												

October 2026							November 2026							December 2026						
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							29	30												

January 2027							February 2027							March 2027						
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31																				

April 2027							May 2027							June 2027						
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							30	31												

- School Breaks
- Professional Development Day
- Stat Holidays
- Administrative Day

Approved March 10, 2026



**Open until
May 14**

Southeast Kootenay School District
Community Learning Survey 2026



Open 2026

