

# LEARNING TOGETHER

NO. 12



JANUARY 2025  
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A picture says a thousand words...

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



As we step into 2025, we extend a warm welcome to all students, staff, and families. The start of a new year is always an exciting time, full of promise and opportunity.



It is hard to believe that semester one is almost behind us, and with it, so many incredible accomplishments. From academic achievements to extracurricular successes, the first half of the school year has been a testament to the resilience, creativity, and dedication of our students, staff, and families. Let's carry that same energy into the months ahead and make the second half of the school year just as remarkable!



**Mark your calendars! Kindergarten registration begins on February 3!**

As part of the registration process, adjustments to the catchment areas in Cranbrook have been made following the feedback from the Amy Woodland fire discussions. These changes impact only kindergarten students and students new to Cranbrook; all other students will remain in their current schools. Out-of-catchment requests for the 2025-2026 school year will open on February 3, with priority given to former Amy Woodland Elementary students wishing to remain with siblings. We encourage families to review these updates as part of the registration process. Additional details can be found on our website.



Please join us in wishing a wonderful retirement to Diane Casault, our Director of Student Learning and Innovation. Diane's leadership and vision have profoundly shaped the District, leaving a legacy of excellence and innovation. Her contributions have made a lasting impact, and she will be greatly missed. We are in the process of hiring her replacement and will announce the successful candidate soon. Thank you, Diane, for your unwavering dedication and service to School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay). We wish you all the best in this exciting new chapter of your life.



We are excited to announce the adoption of our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, a guiding document that reflects our shared vision, mission, and values. This comprehensive plan serves as a roadmap for our District's future and is supported by the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning. Our vision is a dynamic learning community where students love to learn, staff love to work, and families love to gather. Our mission is to empower every student to graduate with dignity, purpose, and options, providing engaging and personalized educational experiences that nurture curiosity and foster lifelong learning. Our values: respect, equity, collaboration, integrity, vision, and inclusion—guide everything we do, ensuring that every learner feels supported and inspired to reach their fullest potential.

We are thrilled to highlight one of the Strategic Plan's key priorities: Early Learning and Child Care. Ensuring a strong start for our youngest learners is essential to their future success. The District is committed to supporting a seamless transition for all children from pre-kindergarten to grade four, implementing strategies aligned with the Early Learning Framework, and enriching the educational experience with Indigenous perspectives.

By promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion, we are creating an environment where every student feels welcome, valued, and prepared to thrive. This priority exemplifies our dedication to fostering growth and success for all learners from the very beginning of their educational journey.

*(continued on next page)*



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

*(continued from page three)*

In line with our commitment to fostering community well-being and supporting staff, we are also thrilled to announce an exciting new project in Elkford. The District, in collaboration with BC Housing, has secured property in Elkford to be used as a teacherage, childcare, and/or recreational space. This initiative is a direct response to the ongoing housing shortage in the region and underscores our dedication to the retention and recruitment of staff. By providing these essential resources, we are building a stronger, more connected community and ensuring that our staff and their families feel supported. This is a remarkable step forward, and we look forward to sharing more updates as this project progresses.

We invite everyone to explore the Strategic Plan and learn more about the exciting work happening across the District. A special thank you to our Board of Education, students, staff, and community members for their dedication in creating an inclusive and forward-thinking plan that reflects the values of our community.

As we embrace the possibilities of 2025, we look forward to the opportunities and achievements that lie ahead. Thank you for being part of our vibrant and supportive school community. Together, we are shaping a bright future for all our students!

Viveka Johnson,  
Superintendent

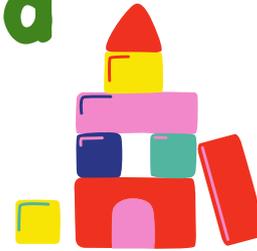
**The Strategic Plan**  
*School District No. 5  
(Southeast Kootenay)*

2024-2028



# Early Learning and Child Care

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



We would like to welcome Hailey Palmer as our new StrongStart facilitator in Sparwood at Frank J. Mitchell Elementary School. Hailey brings a wealth of experience in early childhood education and a passion for fostering young children's development. With her expertise, we are confident that the StrongStart program will continue to thrive and provide valuable learning opportunities for children and their families in the community. We look forward to seeing the positive impact Hailey will have on our program and the Sparwood community.

StrongStart is a high quality early learning program designed to support young children and their families across British Columbia. Delivered in local schools, StrongStart aims to provide a welcoming and enriching environment for children to develop foundational skills through play, exploration, and interaction. StrongStart BC programs offer enriching environments that support early learning development in areas such as language, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Skilled early childhood educators guide activities where children can make friends and interact with peers of similar ages.

You can join your young child (from birth to five years old) in engaging, play-based learning activities like stories, music, and art. This free drop-in program helps prepare children for a successful transition to kindergarten.

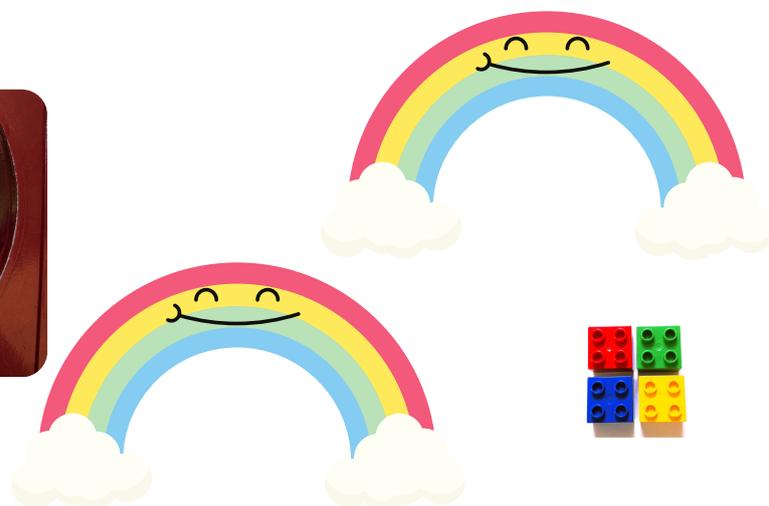
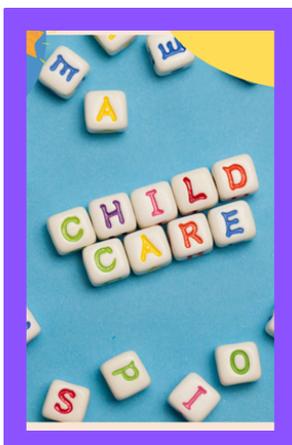
## The District StrongStart locations are:

- Cranbrook - Steeples Elementary School
- Fernie - Isabella Dicken Elementary School
- Sparwood - Frank J. Mitchell Elementary School



# StrongStart BC

By fostering curiosity, confidence, and community connections, StrongStart creates a strong foundation for learning and development. For more information about StrongStart, including program locations, and schedules, visit our [District website](#).



# News from District Teachers

## District French Support Teacher, Marzia Bottoni

### Joyeuse nouvelle année!

Happy New Year! Here is an update from the wonderful world of French Learning!



### Parkland

The Parkland French Immersion staff met to discuss goals, e-learning plans and student engagement through cultural activities. Look out for Pétanque, a French sport, outside Parkland in the spring!

### Professional Development

The annual French Immersion Teacher's Association (APPIPC) conference took place in October in Vancouver and six of the District's French Immersion teachers and administrators were there! It was an amazing learning opportunity. Upon their return, the District French Support Teacher, Marzia Bottoni, shared what was learned with various groups of French Immersion teachers during collaboration sessions.

### The Big Picture

Thank you to the Board of Education for approving the vision and mission statements along with the new logo. The French Immersion staff are excited to begin using them on informational pamphlets and swag!

Embracing courage, determination and joy in our language journey towards bilingualism.



**SDS**  
SCIENCE, INNOVATION, AND  
DISCOVERY FAIR

Inspire your students to become the next generation of innovators. STEM fairs provide a platform to explore, experiment, and create. More information will be coming on how you can host a STEM Fair in your class, grade, or school for 2025!

Got questions?  
Contact Kim Froehler  
or Ryan McKenzie at:  
tlt@sd5.bc.ca

Created by Alexis Yarwood, Design Hub student  
Sparwood Secondary School.

$ax^2 + bx + c = 0$

Coming  
**SOON!**



# News from the School Food Coordinator

School Food Coordinator, Vince Girimonte



Check out [Canada's Food Guide](#)! Are you and your family eating a variety of healthy foods each day?

Canada's  
food guide

## Eat well. Live well.

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day

Have plenty  
of vegetables  
and fruits

Eat protein  
foods

Make water  
your drink  
of choice

Choose  
whole grain  
foods



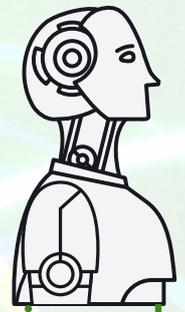
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Discover your food guide at

[Canada.ca/FoodGuide](https://Canada.ca/FoodGuide)



# DISTRICT DESIGN LABS



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

## Holiday Ornaments

Elk Valley students had the opportunity to design and make holiday ornaments at the Design Lab in Fernie. Students from Ms. Barras' class at Isabella Dicken designed Lego people that were cut on the laser cutter. Other classes assembled articulated reindeer cut from the laser cutter. Ms. Rooney's class from Frank J. Mitchell also created stop motion videos of dancing reindeer.

## Mine Managers

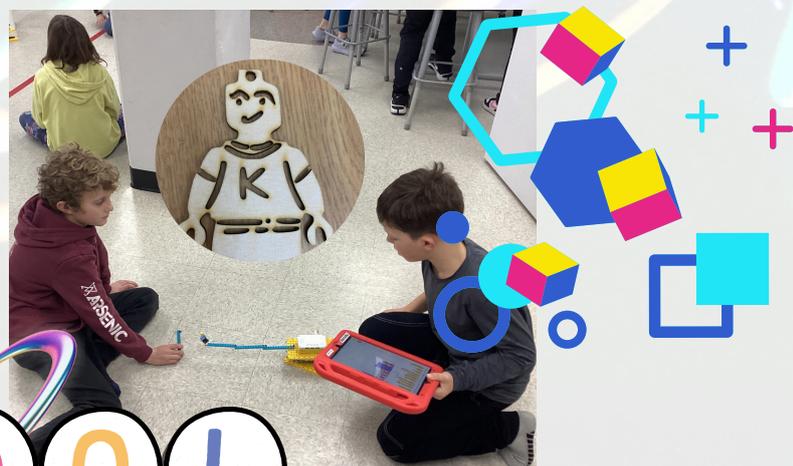
Mr. Buch's class recently had an exciting visit to the Design Lab, where they engaged in a variety of hands-on activities that combined the world of mining with Lego robotics. The students created their own mines and explored the fascinating world of autonomous mine robots. They discussed how jobs in the mining industry might change in the future and even built their own mines using cardboard and MakeDo Screws. These robots were coded to navigate the mines and retrieve precious resources, which, in this case, were Lego ingots and rare precious pom-poms. The class had the opportunity to use 3D printed excavator buckets, adding another layer of innovation to their learning experience. It was a day filled with creativity, collaboration and problem solving!

## Hour of Code 2024

Gordon Terrace hosted an exciting Hour of Code event in December, led by the Helping Teachers of Transformative Learning, Allie Kostiuk from University of Victoria and student teachers. All classes from the school had the opportunity to engage in five different activities that explored the world of coding. Students used algorithms to solve Rubik's Cubes and participated in unplugged coding activities, such as coding their friends to navigate an obstacle course and using computational thinking to find pirate treasure. They also programmed robots like Ozobots and iRobots and explored Artificial Intelligence through coding. It was a fantastic experience that sparked creativity and interest in technology among the students.

## Lego Fighter Pilot Training

Ms. Schadeli's class at Kootenay Orchards School recently delved into the fascinating world of speed, time, and distance to combine math, science and ADST. Students created centrifuges and spun their Lego characters as fast as possible using different lengths of rotating arms. They explored speed, the concepts of circles, variables, the scientific method, and fair tests. Impressively, some groups managed to spin their Lego person close to 30 km/hr, almost as fast as Usain Bolt's World Record in the 100 metre dash! It was an engaging and educational experience that brought math concepts to life in a fun and interactive way.





# OUTDOOR AND



# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

**Michael Kelly, Principal**

## Quinzees in Fernie Secondary's Back Yard

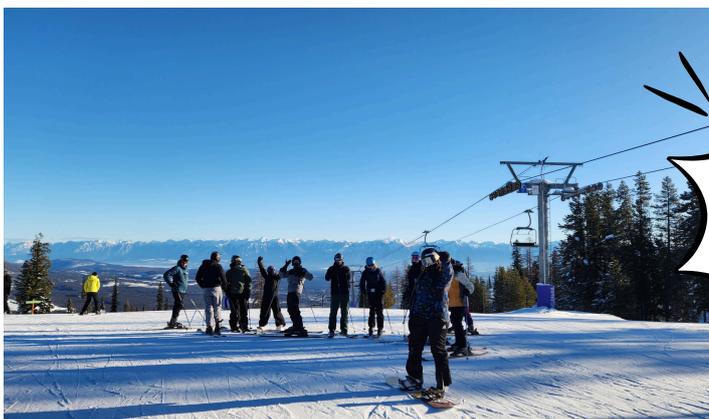
What an incredible adventure the Fernie Secondary Physical Education 10 class had building survival shelters in the school's back yard! These students truly showcased their teamwork and determination as they piled snow, worked hard, and honed their strength and coordination. Not only were they staying active, but they also learned valuable skills in survival shelter construction.



## Mount Baker Environmental Awareness Program

Students in Ms. Cormier's EAP class planned an awesome full morning session of climbing with Ms. Schadel's class from Kootenay Orchards. The group organized a warm up and cool down, top rope climbing, bouldering and games.

A fun chance to mentor and learn!



**MBSS EAP  
Skiing in  
Kimberley**



# AROUND THE DISTRICT

## Dawson Bernard - Indigenous Education Support Worker

Ki?suk kyukyit! My name is Dawson Bernard (she/her) and I am the new IESW for Kootenay Orchards Elementary. I am settler-identifying with Irish heritage, and I've had the great privilege of growing up, living, playing, and working on the unceded lands of the Ktunaxa people.

This past June, I moved back home to Cranbrook after completing my Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies at UBC-Okanagan, and my Masters of Education at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario (where my husband and I lived for the past four years). In my free time, I enjoy hiking (especially with my dog, Murphy), music, and boxing! I am so happy and grateful to be a part of the District, and I look forward to meeting and working with you all.



## Mary Elliott - Indigenous Education Support Worker

Ki?su?k kyukyit! Hu qaklik Mary Elliott, I am Indigenous Support Worker for the District and I am honoured to work, play and live in the territory of ?amak?is Ktunaxa.

My role centers on supporting the cultural, academic, social and emotional needs of all Indigenous students at Laurie Middle School. It is important to me that every indigenous learner leaves the District with a sense of achievement and success. Outside of school you can find me on a pickleball or a volleyball court. I also enjoy exploring the outdoors through biking and hiking, fully embracing the beauty of nature and the incredible land we call home.



## Jennifer Hutchinson - Indigenous Education Support Worker

My name is Jen Hutchinson and I was born and raised in beautiful Fernie. I have been working as an Indigenous Education Support Worker for the last 11 years and I am grateful for the many students and staff I have worked with.

When not working, I like to spend my time with family, I have two boys that like to keep me on my toes and spend most of my time cheering them on from the sidelines. I enjoy the outdoors and all this area has to offer.



## Johanna Kinsman - Indigenous Education Support Worker

Ki?su?k kyukyit, my name is Johanna Kinsman and I am an Indigenous Education Support Worker for Parkland Middle School. I have been an IESW for several years and I enjoy my connection with students and the community. Working with students and focusing on positive education and goals has been gratifying and amazing.

The joy of looking at our beautiful area, camping, walking or just sitting and reading in the backyard with family or friends is what brings me happiness.

I am honoured to work, live and play in Ktunaxa ?amak?is.



## Cara Lazar - Indigenous Education Support Worker

Ki?suk kyukyit, my name is Cara Lazar. I have worked in the District since 2012 in various support roles. Before this, I worked in School District 57 (Prince George). I worked within Indigenous Education while in School District 57 in various positions and also worked at the Aboriginal Choice school.

I have three daughters who graduated from Mount Baker Secondary and a new grandchild on the way in the spring of 2025. I enjoy family time at the lake in the summer and everything about the holiday season in the winter.



# AROUND THE DISTRICT



## Brenda Newlove - Indigenous Education Support Worker

I have had the privilege of working at Elkford Secondary School for the past decade as the Indigenous Support Worker. My role allows me to connect deeply with the students, and I cherish the opportunity to support and guide them through their high school journeys.

I love living in the beautiful town of Elkford, especially with my two wonderful sons by my side. Nathan, my eldest at 18, is following in my footsteps by pursuing studies in addictions and health services. Evan, my younger son, is currently in grade 10. They are my world, and I am incredibly proud of their achievements and the young men they are becoming. Outside of work, I find peace and happiness at my lake spot. Whether it's walking my dog Stella or simply enjoying the serene environment, I love being there. My family and friends are an essential part of my life, and I treasure the moments we share together.



## Susie Palmer - Indigenous Education Support Worker

I am Susie Palmer. I was born in Creston, then moved to Cranbrook. I have gone to visit other places, and I have always been happy to return to my home living within the homelands of the Ktunaxa. As an IESW, I enjoy bringing Elders and Knowledge holders into the schools to share knowledge, legends and art with the school classrooms and community.

One of my favorite things is to do is spend time with my family. I have many children and grandchildren. I have an unmeasurable amount of relatives. My favorite pets are my chickens.



## Kerry Peters - Indigenous Education Support Worker

Ki?su?k kyukyit. Hu qak?ik Kerry Peters! I am an Indigenous Education Support Worker at École Isabella Dicken School in Fernie and at Jaffray Elementary Junior Secondary School.

My passion for becoming an educator started as a young girl from Ontario when I used to play school with my two sisters. Little did I know at that time that one day I would work in the schools and support Indigenous students, their families, and educators. I am grateful every day for this opportunity!

Outside my work I enjoy walking and connecting with nature, writing stories, and learning new skills. Su?kni

## Rebecca Robinson-Bauer - Indigenous Education Support Worker

My name is Rebecca and I live in the beautiful town of Elkford. I am the IESW at Rocky Mountain Elementary. I am grateful to have been working with amazing students and families for the past seven years.

I have two incredible boys that keep me on my toes. Hockey and sports take up a lot of our weekends but I love every minute of it. I love spending time with family and friends, going for walks with my dog (Lily), playing baseball, volleyball or curling and just enjoying life!



Thank you to Executive Assistant, Kelly Armstrong, for collecting the biographies of the District's Indigenous Education Support Workers.



A picture says a thousand words...

