



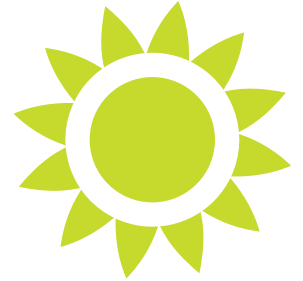
ROCKY MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



Land Acknowledgment Rocky Mountain School District No. 6 is honoured and grateful to be able to work, learn, and grow on the traditional unceded territories of the Ktunaxa and Secwépemc Nations. We honour the cultures, languages, and First Nations people of these territories.

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INTRODUCTION

In May 2021, Rocky Mountain School District No. 6 created a District Vice-Principal of Early Learning role with a portfolio focused on early learning and building relationships with child care providers. In 2022, the new Ministry of Education and Child Care was announced, and Rocky Mountain accessed Ministry funding to add a Director of Instruction, Early Learning and Child Care position. This has allowed the school district to form an Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) team made up of the Director of Instruction, Early Learning and Child Care and a District Principal of Early Learning.



This document will highlight some of the projects and initiatives facilitated by the ELCC team in 2023-2024 and will detail the team's plans for 2024-2025.

FUNDING 2023-2024

The Ministry of Education and Child Care (MOECC) will continue to support ELCC work through a variety of funds found in the Early Learning Funding Agreement. For Rocky Mountain these include:

- Early Learning Programs, Projects & Pilots
 - StrongStart BC (SSBC) Early Learning Centres and SSBC Outreach Programs
 - Ready, Set, Learn (RSL) Program
 - Changing Results for Young Learners (CR4YC) Project
 - Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) Project
 - JUSTB4 Project
- Capacity Building
 - District Early Learning and Child Care Lead



READY, SET, LEARN (RSL)

What is Ready, Set, Learn?

Ready, Set, Learn events are funded by the Ministry of Education and Child Care and provide preschool children (birth to five years of age) and their families with information about free programs and services that are available to them prior to entering school. These events are embedded in community and foster positive connections between families, the school system, and local community agencies. Rocky Mountain works with community services to put on these events and sits shoulder-to-shoulder with early years partners.



What is Currently Happening?

The 2023-24 Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) results from across the school district show that 36% of families did not use any programs or supports for children from three years of age to kindergarten which is down from 69% the previous year. Last year 21% of families indicated that a barrier to accessing preschool programs was that they did not know about them and this year only 12% said they were unaware of programs.

The Ready, Set, Learn events in Rocky Mountain are aimed at building more awareness of the wide variety of free programs and services available for families and the CHEQ results confirm the district's success in achieving this goal.

In the 2023-2024 school year the District Principal coordinated eight RSL events across the district. Below is a list of events by geographic area and the attendance that was recorded.

Golden Area

Parson – September 2023

- Six (6) program and service providers
- 10 families (13 children, 10 adults)
- First RSL event for all 10 of the families

Golden Arena Lounge – January 2024

- 10 program and service providers
- 36 families (58 children, 42 adults)
- First RSL event for 25 of the families

Kinsmen Park – May 2024

- Six (6) program and service providers
- 45 families (83 children, 54 adults)
- First RSL event for 25 of the families



Kimberley Area

Blarchmont Early Learning Centre – January 2024

- 10 program and service providers
- 27 families (39 children and 36 adults)
- First RSL event for 22 of the families

Blarchmont Early Learning Centre – June 2024

- 14 program and service providers
- 52 families (66 children and 73 adults)
- First RSL event for 34 of the 52 families

Columbia Valley Area

Columbia Valley Centre – November 2023

- Eight (8) program and service providers
- 34 families (49 children and 43 adults)
- First RSL event for 29 of the families

Edgewater Community Centre – April 2024

- Seven (7) program and service providers
- 13 families (19 children and 13 adults)
- First RSL event for 10 of the families

Pothole Park – May 2024

- Nine (9) program and service providers
- 25 families (42 children and 31 adults)
- First RSL event for 18 of the families

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

Rocky Mountain’s goal for the 2023-2024 school year was to create RSL dates that will remain similar from year to year in each community, so events are predictable and consistent. Having moved this goal into action, the district will continue to make efforts to host additional Ready, Set, Learn events in smaller, outlying communities to connect with more rural children and families.

Read more about RSL [here](#).



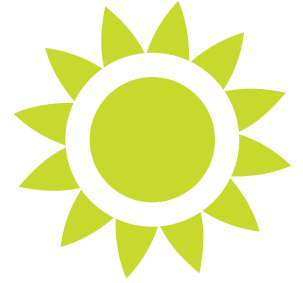
STRONGSTART (SS)

What is StrongStart?

StrongStart BC is a program that provides rich learning environments designed to support early learning development for young children (birth to five years old) and their caregivers.

The overall learning experience is shared as parents and caregivers attend with their children and are encouraged to get involved in activities like telling stories and playing games that focus on developing language, physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. Qualified early childhood educators lead learning activities where children find opportunities to make friends and interact with others of similar ages.

Additionally, StrongStart provides caregivers information about services and programs available in the community while supporting families in making valuable connections with their child and other caregivers.



What is Currently Happening?

StrongStart programming is now available for families in every K-3 and K-7 school in Golden and the Columbia Valley. In Kimberley, StrongStart operates in the Blarhmont Early Learning Centre along with other early years programs such as Baby Goose and Baby Steps. CBAL (Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy) holds the third-party contract for running StrongStart within Rocky Mountain and together we have built a collaborative, valued partnership.

While StrongStart facilitators are not Rocky Mountain employees, the school district involves facilitators in professional learning, and they actively participate in projects like Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) and the K-ECE Collaboration. StrongStart facilitators contribute to and implement the school district's Kindergarten Timeline Transition document and the Rocky Mountain early learning team plans and facilitates professional development for StrongStart facilitators on all non-instructional days throughout the school year.



Pro-D session for SS facilitators.

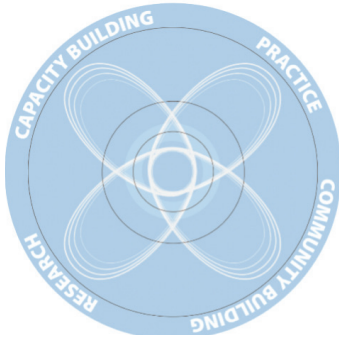
Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

StrongStart will continue to operate seven programs across the school district and the StrongStart schedule for each community can be found on the Early Learning and Child Care webpage. StrongStart facilitators will continue to engage in professional development planned and facilitated by the Rocky Mountain early learning team focused on the Early Learning Framework, First Peoples Principles of Learning, and place-based learning.

Read more about SS [here](#).



STRENGTHENING EARLY YEARS TO KINDERGARTEN TRANSITIONS (SEY2KT)



What is Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT)?

SEY2KT is a Ministry of Education and Child Care initiative that focuses on building strong, meaningful relationships between the early years sector, schools, and community through collaborative dialogue. Using the Compassionate Systems Leadership (CSL) approach, SEY2KT groups engage in CSL tools like collective visioning and creating generative social fields in order to work towards providing a seamless transition for children and families from early years into kindergarten.

What is Currently Happening?

SEY2KT is based in the Columbia Valley. This year the SEY2KT participants included:

- Rocky Mountain employees - District Principals and Vice-Principals, a school principal, and a teacher
- Representatives from CBAL, Family Dynamix, ?Aksiq'nuk First Nation, Shuswap Band, Interior Health, Childcare Resource and Referral, and the public libraries from Radium and Invermere

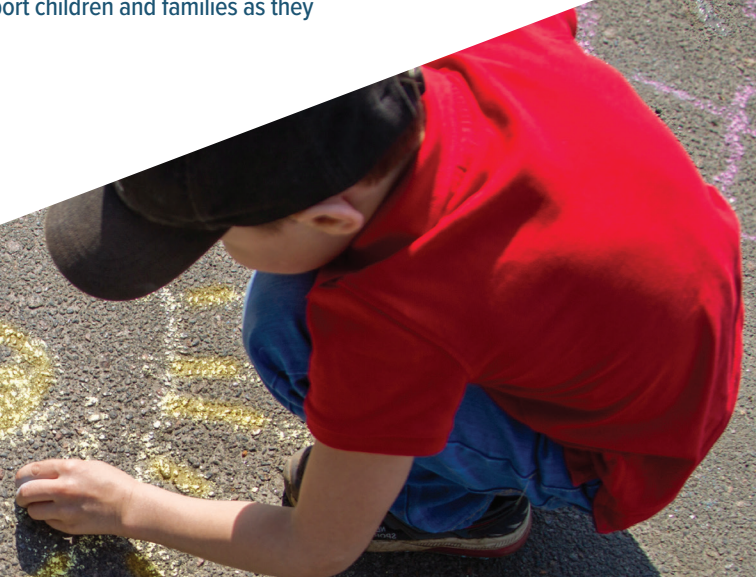
**Representatives from the Métis Nation were also invited but were unable to attend.*

The SEY2KT group focused on promoting and supporting the Ready, Set, Learn events in the Columbia Valley and worked to build stronger connections between service providers, the school district, and families. The group participated in all the Ministry's province-wide morning sessions and then worked in the afternoon on our local Columbia Valley context.

Actions for the 2024-2025 School Year

SEY2KT has been in place in Invermere since its inception in 2018 and over the past year it was decided to move this opportunity to Kimberley for the 2024-25 school year. In Kimberley, many early years programs and services are shared with the neighboring community of Cranbrook. This cross-over of programs and services has at times posed challenges and even confusion for schools and families because Cranbrook is in a different school district. It is hoped that by moving SEY2KT to Kimberley, the school district will be able to bring together all the supports and services in the area to further understand exactly what is available and allow everyone to work more collaboratively and efficiently to support children and families as they transition into Kimberley schools.

Read more about SEY2KT [here](#).



CHANGING RESULTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN (CR4YC)



What is Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC)?

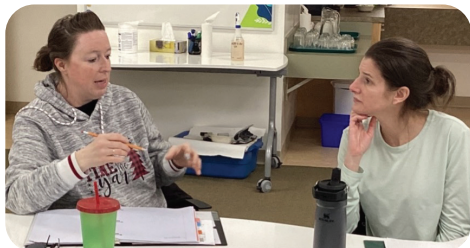
CR4YC is a Ministry of Education and Child Care funded project that brings together community based ECEs, including StrongStart facilitators, and Kindergarten teachers. CR4YC is focused on the social and emotional well-being of children and how ECEs and Kindergarten teachers can work together to share ideas and collaborate using the Early Learning Framework. By building relationships between early years and schools through collaboration and inquiry, CR4YC seeks to improve outcomes for children.

What is Currently Happening?

In the 2023-2024 school year, CR4YC continued in both Kimberley and the Columbia Valley. Participants in each community reported significant positive change for their individual Wonder Child. They also noticed improvement in their overall classroom environment and their understanding of the Early Learning Framework including social/emotional learning. Participants valued the connections and collaboration with each other and the reflections they were able to share.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

CR4YC will continue in the Columbia Valley next year but not in Kimberley. A new CR4YC group will be formed in the Golden area to provide the ECEs and teachers in that community with the opportunity to engage in this valuable learning experience. The focus will remain on the ELF and social emotional learning outcomes for children while deepening relationships between educators in the early years' sector and in schools.



“I appreciate having time to pause and connect with colleagues in such a safe, honest, inspiring way. This time has helped me feel more open, relaxed, and confident with my approach to teaching kindergarten and caring for young children.”

“I have enjoyed watching the growth of interactions between daycare and school facilities. I am grateful for the program reminding me to slow down and observe my world as a child would exploring it for the first time.”



“I believe I am a better educator as a result of being able to participate in CP4YC. In the past I struggled to carve out time for reflective practice. This (CP4YC) was what I needed to be able to design learning experiences based on in-depth reflections.”



Read more about CR4YC [here](#).



JUSTB4 PILOT PROGRAM



What is JUSTB4?

JUSTB4 is a Ministry of Education and Child Care provincial pilot project and is specifically designed to provide early learning experiences for children in the year prior to entering kindergarten. JUSTB4 is a licenced preschool program that is facilitated by a certified Early Childhood Educator and a certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant.

The focus of JUSTB4 is on utilizing the BC Early Learning Framework and taking a whole-child approach to teaching and learning. Children play an active role in guiding the learning through play-based activities and social interactions. JUSTB4 prioritizes the social and emotional well-being of children by building a sense of curiosity and wonder about the world around them and celebrating each of their individual gifts. By maintaining a close connection with primary schools throughout the year, JUSTB4 allows for a seamless transition into kindergarten for children, their families, and schools.

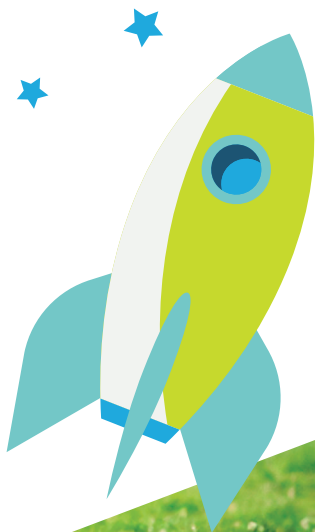


What is Currently Happening?

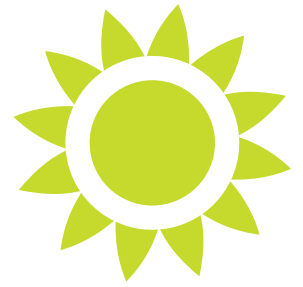
JUSTB4 opened for its second year in the StrongStart room in the Blarchmont Early Learning Centre in September 2023. This year seven students were registered, and they enjoyed an independent early childhood experience. Under the guidance of an Early Childhood Educator and an Early Childhood Educator Assistant, these children developed important social and emotional skills prior to starting kindergarten.

Actions for 2024-25 School Year

Due to multiple factors including staff shortages, low enrollment, and a new child care facility opening in Kimberley, Rocky Mountain will not be participating in the last year of this pilot project.



KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION TIMELINE DOCUMENT



What is the Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document?

The Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document was created to align timelines and processes across the school district to ease the transition into kindergarten. The Director of Instruction created a draft template in the fall of 2023 and in January 2024 held a series of engagement sessions in each community for stakeholders to collaborate on the timeline. Participants included school principals, Supported Child Development, speech language pathologists, Indigenous partners, early years programs, daycare managers, Child Care Resource and Referral, Community Connections, Community Action Program for Children, as well as Directors of Instruction and District Principals and Vice Principals. After these sessions, the timeline was tweaked based on the input and feedback and sent out to all daycares, early years programs and services, and schools across the district to initiate its implementation.

What is Currently Happening?

The implementation of the Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document resulted in several positive outcomes including:

- Schools connecting earlier and more often with child care providers than in previous years.
- Early years providers supporting families in connecting with schools, specifically those families with children who require additional supports.
- Many schools holding “Play at K” events for child care providers to visit the school with their children and build connections with school staff as well as a sense of belonging prior to starting Kindergarten.
- Many child care facilities holding meet the principal events for parents at drop off/pick up times.
- Schools being able to work more effectively with early years providers and families to proactively put supports in place for children with diverse needs.
- Everyone gaining a better understanding of how to share information between early years, schools, and families.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

In the fall of 2024, the Director of Instruction will hold another series of engagements in each community to review the document and discuss what went well, what was challenging, and what was missing. Using this feedback, a second iteration of the timeline will be created and implemented for the 2024-25 school year.

View the Kindergarten Transition Timeline Document [here](#).



Kimberley engagement session



EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK (ELF)



What is the Early Learning Framework (ELF)?

ELF is a guide and support for educators in early childhood and primary grades. The ELF establishes a vision for respectfully living and learning with children from birth to eight years of age and focuses on building play-based learning environments. This document incorporates elements of the redesigned curriculum such as the Core Competencies and the First Peoples Principles of Learning which allows for consistency in pedagogy as children transition from early learning into school.

What is Currently Happening?

Since the 2022-2023 school year Rocky Mountain has been successful in actively and purposefully implementing the ELF across the district. In the 2023-24 school year, the community of practice shifted from K-principals to grade 2-3 teachers.

This group of educators engaged in three learning sessions focusing on play, pedagogical narration, and critical reflection. In between learning sessions, teachers were supported with in-class observations, feedback, and support from the District Principal of Early Learning. Teachers were able to deepen their understanding of the ELF which positively impacted their lesson planning, curriculum delivery, and reporting of student learning.



“I have learned the value of pedagogical narration in terms of students monitoring their growth and setting goals for their learning.”

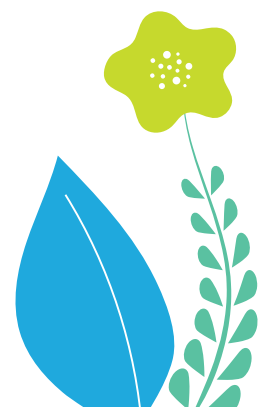
“In learning about the various kinds of play and the importance of each, I have developed new understandings of the application and importance of play in my classroom.”



Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

The Early Learning Framework will continue to be prioritized and supported not only in schools but with early years programs across the district. As the Ministry of Education and Child Care has now released the Learning in the Primary Years document, this will become an extension of the ELF work with K-3 principals and educators. Over the course of this upcoming year, with the support of the ELCC team, educators will delve into this document and collaborate on next steps toward implementation.

Read more about the ELF and Learning in The Primary Years [here](#).



KINDERGARTEN – EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (K-ECE) COLLABORATION



What is the Kindergarten – Early Childhood Educator Collaboration (K-ECE)?

The K-ECE Collaboration is a project that began in 2021 and is unique to Rocky Mountain. Educators from childcare facilities and kindergarten teachers are put into partnerships and are provided with release time to observe and interact in each other's classrooms throughout the school year.

The goals of the K-ECE collaboration are to build understanding about what teaching and learning looks like in both environments, to spark conversation and collaboration, to gain respect and appreciation for the work that is done by ECEs and K-teachers, and to ease the transition into kindergarten for children.

What is Currently Happening?

The K-ECE collaboration has been successful with participants representing every kindergarten school in Rocky Mountain since its inception in 2021. As new child care facilities open, educators from these centres have been invited to join and the collaboration has grown to include ten child care programs across the district. Participants determine with their partner the focus for their visits and then complete and submit their observation frameworks to the District Principal of Early Learning. Dinner meetings were offered three times in each community to provide time and space for partners to come together to deepen their connection, debrief their visits, and plan their potential next steps. The first two dinner meetings also included an opportunity for participants to engage in furthering their understanding of the Early Learning Framework.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

The K-ECE Collaboration has been very successful in creating lasting partnerships between ECEs and kindergarten teachers. Moving forward this opportunity will be available for teachers and ECEs who are new to their roles.

“We have built connections with each other, and we have people we can talk to at the different levels.”

“There has been a shift in what we know about each other, and there is value in this.”



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (ECE) DUAL CREDIT



What is the ECE Dual Credit Program?

The ECE Dual Credit Program is a Ministry of Education and Child Care project that was initiated in 2021. Rocky Mountain, Southeast Kootenay, Kootenay Lake, and the College of the Rockies formed a partnership and successfully applied to participate in this project. Unlike regular dual credit courses, students in the ECE Dual Credit Program had all costs (tuition, textbooks, technology, etc.) fully covered by the Ministry of Education and Child Care.

The ECE Dual Credit Program allows Grade 12 students to take four courses toward an ECE certificate through the College of the Rockies in their second semester. These four courses provide students with high school credits and College of the Rockies credits. Upon successful completion of these courses, students are eligible to apply to become a certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECEA) through the ECE Registry and can work in licenced childcare facilities. ECE Dual Credit students also get priority registration to continue their ECE courses the following September at College of the Rockies and can be fully certified ECEs by the following summer.

What is Currently Happening?

The ECE Dual Credit Program came with a three-year financial commitment from the Ministry and 2023-24 was the last year of funding. In this school year, Rocky Mountain had four students complete the ECE Dual Credit Program and these students were supported throughout the year with Learning Lunches. Three of those students have already applied to the ECE Registry for their ECEA certificates and they are planning to begin working in local childcare facilities to determine if this is the right career path before continuing their coursework.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

Although the ECE Dual Credit pilot project is finished, Rocky Mountain has worked with College of the Rockies to ensure the continuation of the ECE course offerings through the regular dual credit programming. The Director of Instruction has already connected with high schools and in the fall will continue to actively recruit and support Grade 12 students to begin this program in February 2025.

Read more about the ECE Dual Credit Program [here](#).



Child, Youth and Family Studies Dual Credit Semester



AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

What are After-School Programs?

In the summer of 2022, Rocky Mountain began working in partnership with third-party providers to license after-school care programs in five primary/elementary schools. While Rocky Mountain does not operate these programs, the school district is in a formal partnership with third-party providers to provide space within schools enabling a seamless day for children and families.



What is Currently Happening?

Rocky Mountain has formal partnerships with three third-party providers and after-school programs are currently operating in five schools. With our third-party providers, the district has provided after-school care for hundreds of children and families including full-day care on non-instructional days, winter break, and spring break.

In the summer of 2023 two programs offered full-day care in the summer and in the summer of 2024 that number doubled to four programs offering full-day care through the summer.

Programs in 2023-24 include:

- Edgewater Elementary School – Windermere Valley Child Care Society
- Eileen Madson Primary School - Windermere Valley Child Care Society
- Windermere Elementary School – Eva Joseph Early Learning and Cultural Society
- Marysville Elementary School – Summit Community Services Society
- Lindsay Park Elementary School - Summit Community Services Society



The ELCC team would like to express gratitude to all the third-party providers and acknowledge that the success of these programs is in no small part due to the support of the Rocky Mountain Operations Department staff, principals, and school-based staff.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

All the current programs will continue to be operational, and some will be supported by the district to expand as the growing expression of interest from families for this service demands additional spaces.

Additionally, the school district is working to support new programs in the 2024-25 school year. The New Spaces Fund child care facility in Marysville will be opening during the school year and will include an additional 24 after-school care spots. The Director of Instruction has also been working with a non-profit child care in Golden to open programs for children and families in that community.

Read more about after-school programs [here](#).



NEW SPACES FUND (NSF)



What is the New Spaces Fund?

The ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund provides funding to create new licensed childcare spaces in an effort to help families access affordable, quality, and inclusive child care. The Rocky Mountain Board of Education approved the submission of an application to build a 148-space child care facility on the grounds at Marysville Elementary School, which was submitted in August of 2022. Additionally an application to build a 148-space child care on the grounds at Eileen Madson Primary School, which was submitted in January of 2023.

What is Currently Happening?

With both New Spaces Fund applications approved, the school district has been busy moving these projects forward over the course of the 2023-24 school year.

- In Kimberley, the New Spaces Fund project at Marysville Elementary School being operated in partnership with Summit Community Services Society, broke ground in the fall and construction is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2024. The district has already begun to order furniture, equipment, and resources for the building in anticipation of supporting Summit with the licensing process as soon as possible.
- In Invermere, the New Spaces Fund project being built on the property behind Eileen Madson Primary School being operated in partnership with Windermere Valley Child Care Society, broke ground in July 2024. Silverado Industries Inc. was awarded the tender and is moving this project forward.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

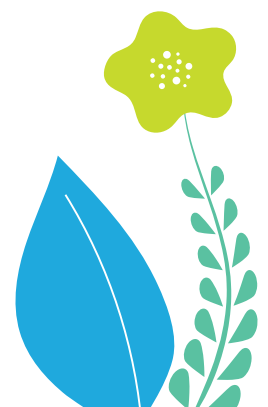
The Marysville child care facility will open this school year and the Director of Instruction is working with Summit Community Services Society on staffing. Knowing the significant challenges regionally and provincially in recruiting qualified Early Childhood Educators, Summit and the district are planning a gradual, phased opening of the 148 spaces in Marysville that will be dependent on securing staff.

The Invermere child care facility will move forward throughout the year with construction being predicted to finish in the summer of 2025.

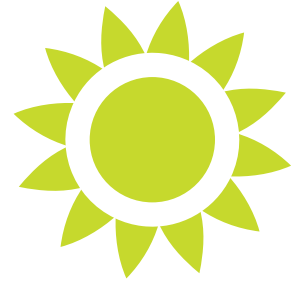


The Marysville child care facility, July 2024.

Read more about NSF builds in Rocky Mountain [here](#).



CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE (CHEQ)



What is the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire?

The Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) gathers important information about children's experiences prior to entering kindergarten from the perspective of the child's caregivers. The CHEQ was first piloted in 2018 and Rocky Mountain has participated since its inception.

Children's development in their early years is highly influenced by their experiences in their home and community. The CHEQ collects information that schools and communities can use to support children and families and ensure a solid foundation for healthy development and well-being.

What is Currently Happening?

In 2023-24, Rocky Mountain had the highest CHEQ completion rate in the province at 92%. With the support of the ELCC team, schools have built a strong understanding of how the information that is contained within the CHEQ is valuable and how it can be used to better understand our youngest students and their families who are new to the school system.

Rocky Mountain schools in each community come together with a team of staff to discuss what their CHEQ data tells them and how this information can guide and influence teaching and learning within their classrooms and schools. The CHEQ data is shared with early years partners as one way to better understand when/how/why families are or are not accessing their preschool programs and services so they can adjust accordingly. In January 2024, the Rocky Mountain ELCC team co-facilitated an information session with HELP for schools and early years providers in the Kootenay Boundary Region which includes Rocky Mountain, Southeast Kootenay, Kootenay Lake, Arrow Lakes, Kootenay-Columbia, and Boundary school districts.

As a result of Rocky Mountain's extensive use of the CHEQ data, the Rocky Mountain ELCC team was invited by HELP to participate in the UBC Early Years Pre-Conference in February 2024. Sitting as one of three groups on the data in action panel, the ELCC team shared success stories related to CHEQ data collection, data tracking, and data sharing and how all of these have positively impacted CHEQ results over time in Rocky Mountain.



From Left to Right: Kate Buium from HELP, Crystal MacLeod, Director of Instruction, and Glenn Goslin, District Principal of Early Learning

Actions for the 2024-2025 School Year

Rocky Mountain will continue to participate in the CHEQ data collection. Kindergarten principals and teachers proactively communicate with their incoming kindergarten families what the CHEQ is, why it is important, and their plan for collecting this information prior to their kindergarten gradual entry. The ELCC team will support schools in gathering and reviewing their CHEQ data and assist in developing plans and actions that are informed by their school and community data. Throughout the school year, the ELCC team will revisit these plans and actions with school principals and staff.

Read more about CHEQ [here](#).



EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDi)

What is the Early Years Development Instrument (EDi)?

Like CHEQ, the EDi is facilitated by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP). The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers for the students in their classrooms during the month of February.

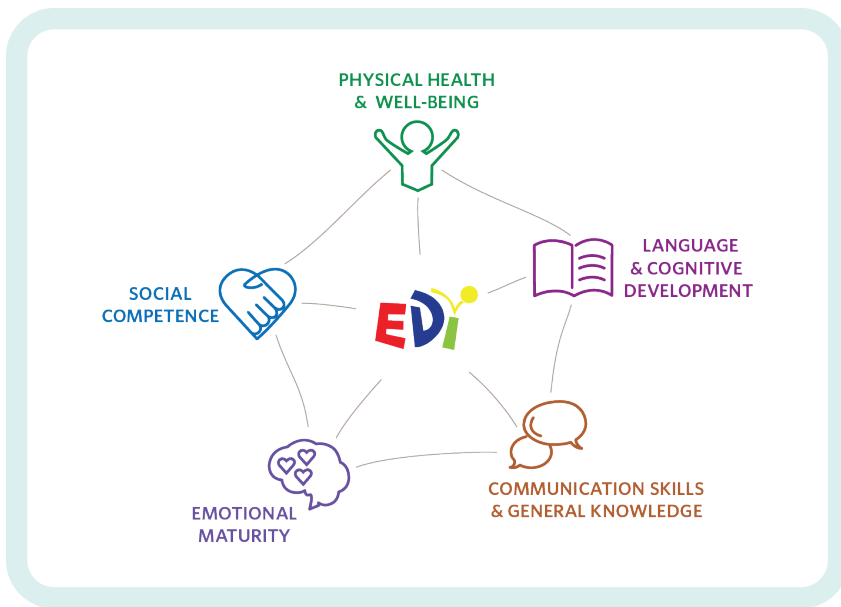
The EDi gathers information around five core areas of early childhood development – physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge. EDi data is collected in three-year waves and because of the size of our school district, ROCKY MOUNTAIN participates in two of those three waves.

What is Currently Happening?

The 2022-2023 year was the first year of a new wave and EDi changed from a three-year wave collection cycle to a four-year cycle which means that Rocky Mountain was once again in a non-collection year in 2023-2024.

Actions for the 2024 – 2025 School Year

Even though the EDi will not be administered in the 2024-25 school year, the ELCC team will continue to look at the data gathered from the last EDi collection in 2023 and will triangulate EDi from previous years with other data collected through the MDi (Middle Years Development Instrument) and YDi (Youth Development Instrument) to strategically plan how to better understand and support students going forward.



Read more about the EDi [here](#).

