

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING
INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: March 1, 2023
TO: Education Committee
FROM: Diane McGonigle, District Principal of Early Years and Care
SUBJECT: Early Learning and Care

Board Goal: Continuous Improvement in support for students with diverse abilities and disabilities, Indigenous and overall student population on student achievement

Objective: Improve opportunities for early intervention and learning

Strategy: Build a framework for Early Years and Childcare

Overview

This Information Sheet is intended to provide the Board with an overview of Early Learning and Care in Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools. As outlined in the Childcare BC Plan, the province is working to establish an integrated early learning and child care (ELCC) system. Responsibility for child care transitioned to the Ministry of Education and Child Care in April 2022.

The Early Years and Childcare work is supported by myself, Diane McGonigle, District Principal of Early Years and Care; Aimee Blow, one of our District Learning Coordinators, and Sue Derosa, Vice-Principal of Bayview who also holds .3FTE early learning portfolio.

This work is grounded in the Early Learning Framework (ELF). Revised in 2019, the ELF expanded the focus to now be on children from birth to age eight. The ELF resource:

- connects with BC's curriculum and core competencies,
- strives to contribute towards lasting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples,
- strengthens the vision of inclusive spaces and practices for all children,
- and envisions learning and being as a holistic process that happens as children and adults come together in relationship with each other, ideas, materials, places, and histories.

This framework is complimented by the Play Today resource which is a guide for offering high quality, play-based learning experiences. It provides examples of how a diverse range of play experiences can be supported and integrated into programs for young children to guide and shape their learning.

Background

Outlined below is a high-level description of the project and initiatives the Early Years team is currently focused on:

1. Oversee district programs that support children 0 - 5 years old and their families including supporting our eight parent/caregiver participation Strong Start facilities and planning and organizing Ready Set Learn events for 3-5 year olds. There are almost 1200 children currently registered to attend our Strong Start programs. We also have nine Ready Set Learn events planned for this year – three in schools and five in local parks.
2. Support Welcome to Kindergarten and Gradual Entry plans for our incoming Kindergarten students. Two years ago we developed new Welcome to Kindergarten Play Pack bags inspired by ELF and developed around four living inquiries - including locally developed books. They have been shared with districts on and off the Island.
3. Participate in inquiry projects that include:
 - a) Changing Results for Young Children – series of collaborative interactive learning sessions that uses the BC Early Learning Framework and focus on the joy and well-being of children.
 - b) Strengthening Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions – working collaboratively with Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society to support the Kindergarten transition for newcomer families.
 - c) Early Childhood Pedagogy Network - provincial group of pedagogists who support early childhood educators in British Columbia. The ECPN creates spaces for vibrant public conversations about pedagogical projects and processes that matter to early childhood communities in BC. Aimee Blow is a part of this network and supports teachers in a number of schools on different projects.
4. Community Partnerships – Work with a number of networks (Island, Nanaimo, and Ladysmith) and community agencies (e.g. Child Development Centre, Pacific Care Resource and Referral Centre) to support early learning in our communities. Examples include planning and participating in the Family Wellness Hubs in Nanaimo and Healthy Start to Learning Fair in Ladysmith. We are working with the Island network to plan for an Early Years conference to be held in Nanaimo in October 2023.
5. Organize participation in the Early Development Indicator (EDI) through the Human Early Learning Partnership at UBC. We participate every three years and our Kindergarten teachers will be participating in the next school year. We will also participate in the Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (CHEQ) for the first time. It is completed by parents/guardians of incoming Kindergarten children that focuses on early experiences in key areas of development that are strongly linked to children’s health and well-being.

6. Working on completing an Early Years Scope and Sequence for the District.

In the last couple of years, we have also expanded our connection and support with the childcare sector:

1. As reported by Secretary-Treasurer Mark Walsh at the February 8, 2023 Business Committee Meeting, the District has received funding to build childcare at 10 sites. The childcare sites include a combination of infant and toddler care, ages 3-5 care, and before and after school care. We anticipate the first of those sites, Forest Park, to open in March of 2023. With the addition of these childcare spaces, we will have before and after school care available in 25 of our 28 elementary schools. We have been adding these additional spaces without disrupting current childcare providers, some of which have been operational in our district for more than twenty years. We are looking to apply for funding for additional childcare spaces by identifying the needs and appropriate school sites.
2. Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulth School Early Learning Center – Preschool program for up to 10 children with 5 children enrolled currently. The program is enhanced by the exploration of the hul'q'umin'um language and Coast Salish cultural knowledge.
3. Seamless Day Kindergarten Pilot Project –Two Early Childhood Educators (ECE) lead before and after school care and work in partnership with the Kindergarten teacher in the classroom. We are in year two of a three-year pilot for this program and have 12 licensed childcare spaces with Kindergarten to Grade Two aged children.
4. Before and After School Pilot – Planning continues to operate a before and after school pilot project with 24 childcare spaces operating out of Ecole Hammond Bay. Next step is to meet with CUPE to share survey results and a draft proposal. We would then return to the Board for final approval to proceed and begin the registration and staffing process.
5. Working with our current third-party providers to ensure their Before and After School programs align with the Early Learning Framework as per AP 528 Childcare Services and Early Years Programs.
6. Completing an extensive, comprehensive Environmental Scan Inventory including developing an inventory of existing early learning and childcare programs and resources on school grounds; reviewing and analyzing district policies, procedures, and programs that relate to early learning and care; and learning more about the local context to inform an integrated approach to planning for child care on school grounds; and reflect on the level of integration of early learning and childcare on school grounds across the district.
7. The expansion of Early Years programs and initiatives in our district has been exciting and we look forward to upcoming opportunities and supports for families in our community.