

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 51 (BOUNDARY)

P O L I C Y

| SECTION | TITLE | NO. 3063 |
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| EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS/ SERVICES | <u>StrongStart Early Learning Centres</u> | |

DATE ADOPTED: June 12, 2007

DATE AMENDED:

The purpose of StrongStart Centres is to provide school-based, high quality early learning programs for children younger than school age accompanied by a parent or caregiver, designed to support the success of students when they enter Kindergarten.

The years between birth and school-age are a critical time in a child's life. The experiences that children have in the early years influence their future health, well-being, and life-long learning. By investing in children's early years we can positively affect the future lives of British Columbians. Children who have had exposure to language-rich environments and play-based early learning experiences are more likely to develop the skills, knowledge and dispositions to support their success in school.

R E G U L A T I O N S

The District will maintain StrongStart data and records.

The District will collect enrolment and attendance information about the adults and children (by age) attending the centre, including names, birthdates and ages of children, and other information necessary for the successful operation of the program and to report to the Ministry.

The District will endeavour to create quarterly reports regarding total monthly and average daily attendance at the centres for each month for both adults and children to be shared with the Ministry for the following dates:

- November 10 (attendance for September and October),
- January 10 (attendance for November and December)
- April 10 (attendance for January through March), and
- July 10 (attendance for April through June).

A format will be provided by the Province for this purpose.

Appendix 1

“StrongStart centres” - A free early learning program located in schools, for preschool children accompanied by parent, other adult family member or caregiver, created through an agreement between school districts and the Ministry of Education.

“Early learning” – the knowledge, skills and dispositions that preschool children acquire in the years before school entry in key developmental domains: cognitive, physical, language and communication, social and emotional.

StrongStart early learning centres should be designed and operated to meet the following standards:

- Promote language, physical and social/emotional development of preschool children (program emphasis will be on 3 to 5 year olds but designed to accommodate families with children age 0-5)
- Free of charge for parents/caregivers attending with their preschool children
- Demonstrate collaboration with community to meet the unique needs of the neighbourhood
- Provide opportunities for parents/caregivers to observe and practice activities that support early learning
- Open five days per week for 3-4 hours per day
- Operate on days in the district’s school calendar, or throughout the calendar year
- Link parents/caregivers to services offered by health authorities, community agencies and other social service providers (e.g., early screening, libraries, English as A Second Language services, parent resource centres, child care services, referrals for children who may have developmental or other special needs)
- Offer family-friendly environments where parents/caregivers can make connections

StrongStart early learning centres should include the following activities:

- organized activities such as story time, music, singing
- access to books, art materials, and puzzles
- play areas that promote creativity, exploratory individual and group play (such as water, sand, clay, blocks)
- movement and large muscle play activities
- snack time, with food that models healthy eating
- outreach component to reach the most hard to serve families

The District will ensure that :

- Facilitators running the centre are certified Early Childhood Educators
- StrongStart early learning centres are situated in appropriate, available school space, preferably schools offering Kindergarten
- Designated space is or will be surplus to school district need and will be dedicated to the Centre
- A parent, family member, or caregiver accompanies the child in the StrongStart centre at all times – the Service in the Strong Start centre is not designated child care.

General information on StrongStart Centres may be found at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/early_learning/ss_centres.htm