



STRONGSTART

Parents and Caregiver`s Guide



Ministry of
Education and
Child Care



New
Westminster
Schools



StrongStartBC

Welcome to StrongStart

ABOUT STRONGSTART

StrongStart BC programs provide rich learning environments designed for early learning development. Qualified early childhood educators (ECE) lead learning activities that focus on intellectual, social, emotional and physical development. Children are provided with many opportunities to interact with their peers and develop friendships.

Children (birth to aged five) are eligible to attend. This is a no cost drop-in program. Parents and guardians participate in play-based learning activities with their child.

LOCATIONS

Skwo:wech Elementary School

331 Richmond Street, New Westminster

Morning session 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday

Afternoon session 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday

Explore Outdoors on Thursdays from **9:30 to 11:30 a.m.** at Sapperton Park

Queensborough Middle School

833 Salter Street, New Westminster

Morning session 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday to Friday

Explore Outdoors on Mondays from **9:30 to 11:30 am** at Grimston Park

WE WELCOME YOU

- The program follows the district's school calendar from September to June.
- Strong Start Centers are closed for winter and spring break and statutory holidays.
- Strong Start accommodates a maximum of 20 children.
- To ensure centers adhere to space guidelines, we ask that only ONE adult accompanies their child(ren).



You may register your child for StrongStart at any – or all – of the centres and it is available on the New Westminster website.

To Register, please click here:

<https://newwestschools.ca/programs-services/early-learning/strongstart/>

- Registration is required prior to or on the day of the first visit.
- One piece of ID is needed. Please bring your child's birth certificate or passport when registering.
- Parents/caregivers can register their child in person at any StrongStart Center or online.
- Re-registration is required at the beginning of each school year.



Explore the outdoors

Every Monday from 9:30 to 11:30 am QMS StrongStart invites children and parents to learn outdoors at Grimston Park.

Every Thursday from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Skwo:wech StrongStart invites children and parents to learn outdoors at Sapperton Park.

Both programs run entirely outdoors and in all weather. All families are invited to attend!

General Guidelines

Attendance

Sign in and out daily.

Personal Belongings

Hang jackets and other items on the coat hooks provided.

Footwear

On rainy or muddy days, please remove outdoor shoes at the entrance. You are welcome to bring clean indoor footwear, such as slippers or soft-soled shoes, to wear while indoors.

Handwashing

Handwashing reduces the spread of germs. We invite adults and children to wash their hands upon arrival and before leaving the center.

Clothing

Dress your child in play-friendly clothes. Paint smocks are available, but clothes may still get messy. Outdoor clothing is needed for fresh air adventures, as each program offers opportunities for play outdoors.

Cell Phones

Keep phones on silent and use only for emergencies.

If you need to take a call, please step outside and bring your child with you.

Snack Time

We use an open snack model. Student can snack at the snack table when they are hungry. Providing opportunities for children to eat when they are hungry helps them to recognize and respond to their body's hunger cues. For children to listen to their bodies is a key step to foster positive eating routines. Children and adults must wash their hands prior to eating and handling food. Children are encouraged to bring a water bottle for regular hydration breaks.

Birthday celebrations

We will celebrate birthdays by singing together and sharing the birthday child's favorite book with the class.

Strollers

Park strollers in designated areas.

Hallway Etiquette

Kindly walk quietly through the school hallways.

Washroom Use

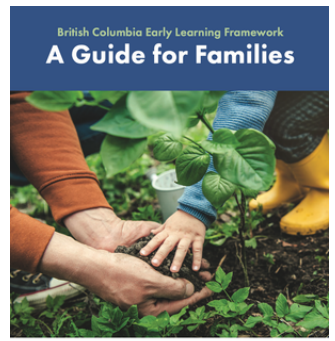
Parents and caregivers must supervise children in the washroom.

Leaving the Room

If you need to leave, please take your child with you. Please let the StrongStart educator know.

The BC Early Learning Framework

The resource from the Ministry of Education and Child Care supports ECE staff to plan activities for young children.



♥ Your Role in Your Child's Learning Journey

As a parent or caregiver, you play the most important role in your child's early development. The Early Learning Framework celebrates this by recognizing that a child's sense of well-being and belonging begins with their relationships—with you, their family, their community, and the world around them.

You are your child's first teacher. The stories you share, the songs you sing, and the traditions you pass down help shape their identity and connect them to their culture.

Educators are encouraged to work closely with families—sharing ideas, asking questions, and learning together. If you're curious about how the Early Learning Framework supports your child's growth, feel free to start a conversation with your child's educator. Together, you can build a strong foundation for your child's learning and development.

Source: British Columbia Early Learning Framework: A Guide for Families



Families can support the living inquiries at home through a variety of activities. Some examples of activities for each living inquiry are listed below:

Well-being and belonging:

- Share your family story with your child. Talk about what makes your family unique.
- Expand your family story to create a family tree.
- Cook with your child, or play pretend cooking.
- Plan a daily routine and schedule with your child. Invite their ideas for sleep, nourishment and physical activity.

My Well-Being and Belonging



Engagement with others, materials, and the world:

- Introduce or explore instruments or objects with your child. Use them to make sounds and rhythms. Use objects you can find at home or in your community.
- Explore nature and take your child on walks. Play outside. Notice the seasons and natural things.
- Create space and time for your child to have unstructured, child-led free play.

My Interactions with the World Around Me



Communication and literacies:

- Ask your child about something that they love, or something that brings them joy.
- Play games with your child, such as boardgames, card games, or movement games.
- Sing songs, read stories, share rhymes, and dance with your child.

My Ways of Communicating



Identities, social responsibility, and diversity:

- Talk to your child about changes that happen every day. Share observations about the weather, blossoming flowers, falling leaves, as well as children's own growing bodies.
- Help your child identify emotions and talk about them.
- Encourage your child to use all their senses to the best of their abilities (touch, taste, see, hear, and smell).
- Help your child to notice and celebrate similarities and differences across families.

My Sense of Who I Am



Source:

British Columbia Early Learning Framework: A Guide for Families

Fred Rogers said, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood".

StrongStart Sessions

StrongStart Sessions follow a regular shape to offer children a variety of learning opportunities. These include:

Gathering Time

This is a time to welcome everyone together. The activities promote language development and foster a sense of community. Activities may include storytelling, puppet play, music and movement, inquiry conversations and more.

Creative Art

Children and adults explore open-ended activities which encourage creativity, self-expression and collaboration.



Inquiry based play invitations

A variety of open-ended materials are available throughout the program to encourage children's curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Children are invited to explore, experiment, and use their imaginations as they build, create, investigate, and play. Through hands-on experiences with materials such as blocks, loose parts, art supplies, and natural items, children develop confidence, critical thinking skills, and a love of learning while following their own interests and ideas.



Hands on play

The learning environment at each center is designed to spark curiosity and creativity. Each space invites children to explore, discover and play in meaningful ways. Invitations for play encourage children to engage independently or with an adult.

- Natural materials
- Loose parts for building and imagining
- Sand and water play
- Light table exploration
- Dramatic play using various materials
- Sensory activities
- Problem-solving activities
- Literacy and numeracy learning centres



These play invitations encourage children to engage both their minds and bodies, with adults nearby to support and join in the learning.



Outdoor Time

We love spending time outside! StrongStart programs make use of the school's outdoor spaces. Nature offers endless opportunities to pause, wonder, and explore. We believe that outdoor play helps children experiment, investigate, and learn in ways that matter to them. Since we go outside as often as possible, **please dress your child for the weather—rain or shine!** Most children are natural explorers, so all you need to do is step outside with them and let their curiosity lead the way.

Gym time at StrongStart

Physical activity is a key part of early learning. Students have an opportunity to participate in the gym. This time provides children with opportunities to develop their gross motor skills at an age-appropriate level.

Gym time is generally scheduled once a week, based on availability.



Families are partners in play and learning

Research shows that when parents and caregivers actively participate in their children's early learning, it significantly enhances their development and long-term success.

In StrongStart, adult participation primarily involves engaging meaningfully with your child during program activities. However, your involvement can also take other valuable forms, such as: welcoming and supporting new families, participating in ways that feel meaningful to you, offering suggestions for program ideas or materials

Supporting Your Child Through Positive Guidance

At StrongStart, educators use positive guidance strategies to help children learn to understand and express their feelings in healthy ways. These approaches also build mutual respect between children, caregivers, and educators, while creating a welcoming environment that encourages positive behaviour.

Here's how we support children through guidance and play:

- We set clear, consistent, and simple limits in a kind and positive way
- We explain boundaries so children understand the “why” behind them
- We reinforce positive behaviour using encouraging words and gestures
- We respectfully gain a child's attention before reminding them of expectations
- We redirect behaviour when needed, guiding children toward more constructive choices
- We observe a child's mood and needs (like hunger or fatigue) to better support them
- We acknowledge and validate children's feelings, helping them express emotions in healthy ways
- We model problem-solving skills and offer age-appropriate choices to empower their decision-making

Play is central to all of this—it's how children learn best. Through play, children explore their emotions, build relationships, and develop the skills they need to thrive.

Wellness & Illness Guidelines

We request your help to keep children healthy at StrongStart. If your child is not feeling well, please keep them at home until they are ready to fully participate in the program.

Children should stay at home if they have:

- Flu-like symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, fever, or chills
- Pink eye or head lice that haven't been properly treated
- A communicable illness like chickenpox (please contact your local Public Health Office for guidance)
- Persistent runny nose, coughing, or sneezing
- General fatigue or discomfort that prevents active participation

Thank you for helping us create a safe and welcoming space for all children to learn and grow!

Media Consent & Confidentiality at StrongStart

The district takes privacy seriously. The district will not use a child's photo for communication purposes i.e. blogs, posters, websites, documentation, newsletters or social media without the written consent from a parent or guardian.

Please do not take photos or videos of other children or families during your time at StrongStart.

Protecting Your Privacy

StrongStart programs follow strict guidelines to protect personal information of families. Early childhood educators follow school district policy. Registration information will be kept confidential.

To maintain privacy, children and family names will not be used in newsletters or other public communication.



Thank You

For information on StrongStart, please contact
Ileana Neilson, Manager Early Learning and Child Care
Email: ineilson@sd40.bc.ca
Phone: 604 517 6398