

StrongStart Caregiver Guide



Welcome to StrongStart!

StrongStart BC programs provide rich learning environments designed for early learning development - language, physical, cognitive, social and emotional. Qualified early childhood educators lead learning activities where children find opportunities to make friends and interact with others of similar ages.

Our StrongStart Centres

**Okanagan Falls Elementary
1141 Cedar St.
Okanagan Falls, BC
250.497.5414**

**Oliver Elementary School
809 School Ave.
Oliver, BC
250.498.3468**

**Osoyoos Elementary School
8507 68th Ave.
Osoyoos, BC
250.485.4444**

Participate with your young child (age 0-5) in play-based early learning activities including stories, music and art. At no cost to families, this early learning program helps prepare children for transition to Kindergarten. We offer support, information, resources and a chance to meet other parents.

The programs follow the school year and are closed during school holidays.



**Okanagan
Similkameen
SD53**



StrongStartBC

Guidelines and Registration

General Guidelines

Attendance: Sign in and out everyday with child's first and last name with birthdate.

Wash Hands: Wash your hands and your child's hands before you begin to play.

Hang Belongings: Hang your jackets and personal belongings on the coat hooks

Clothing: Paint smocks are available and we try to use washable materials but clothes may get dirty. Outdoor clothing is needed for fresh air adventures.

Screens: Cell phones must be silent and used only for emergencies. If you need to take a call, please take it outside the classroom and remember to take your child.

Leaving the room: If you need to leave the classroom for any reason, please take your child with you.

Snack time: A healthy snack is an important part of StrongStart every day. The StrongStart Facilitators prepare snacks for children at the Centre to ensure compliance with food safety standards. Adults and children must wash their hands before eating and handling food.

Water Bottle: Please bring a water bottle for your child.

No smoking on school grounds or on any StrongStart activities off site.

Strollers: Park strollers in designated areas.

Hallways: When in the hallway, please be quiet and show respect for others in the school.

Washrooms: Parents and caregivers must supervise their children in the washroom.

Registration

Please bring the following documentation to register on your first day:

- Proof of Child's Birthdate
- Child's care card
- Proof of Residency (two documents)

Be sure to check in with the facilitator or office staff as soon as you arrive at the StrongStart BC program- they can assist with this process and answer any questions you might have.



ADULT PARTICIPATION AND ROLES

Adult Participation

Adult involvement in StrongStart BC early learning centres and outreach programs is fundamental to the purpose of this program.

Research tells us that parents who are active partners in their children's education and development increase the chance of children's success. Adult participation in the program is mainly through the adult interaction with your child but can also take additional forms, such as welcoming new families, providing suggestions for new program ideas or materials, or participating in some way that feels meaningful to you.



Wellness / Illness

It is our collective responsibility to protect the children that are attending our StrongStart Centres. Please keep your child at home if ill.

- Flu like symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, fever, chills, etc
- Pink eye or head lice that have not had proper treatment.
- Any communicable disease such as chicken pox. Call your Public Health officer for further information.
- Coughing, sneezing or runny nose.
- Not feeling well enough to participate in the program.

Role of Participant and Educator

Research shows that parent / caregiver involvement in early childhood settings supports positive outcomes for children.

Role of the Parents / Caregivers

- Participate in all activities with your child (ren) - circle time, play activities, clean up and serving a healthy snack.
- Guide your child (ren) to - be kind, patient and curious; put toys away and tidy up before moving to something else; take turns and share; listen to others and use a quiet indoor voice.
- Come prepared to play, laugh, and have fun with your child.

Role of the Early Childhood Educator

- Encourage adult and child participation.
- Create learning environments and activities that positively influence children's learning.
- Model strategies that can be used by parents and caregivers to support children's learning.
- Provide information to foster adults' understanding of children's development and learning.
- Maintain a welcoming, kind, inclusive atmosphere that is safe and nurturing.
- Connect families to other community supports and services.
- Prepares and provides snacks for the children.

CHILD SUPPORT AND PLAY

Child Guidance

At StrongStart, we practice positive guidance strategies which...

- Help children develop the skills to understand their feelings and express them appropriately.
- Builds respect between children, parents, and StrongStart educators.
- Creates a positive atmosphere

Positive guidance strategies include:

- Establishing clear, consistent, and simple limits in a positive way.
- Offering straightforward explanations for limits.
- Reinforcing appropriate behaviour with words and gestures.
- Gaining a child's attention in a respectful way
- Redirecting
- Acknowledging children's feelings and supporting healthy expression.
- Modelling problem solving skills.
- Offering age appropriate choices.



The Importance of Play

Play is a child's way of exploring, discovering, and learning about the world. StrongStart provides age appropriate materials and activities to promote learning. Programs are designed to support each child's emotional, social, physical, cognitive, and early literacy development.

Some of the play activities that you may enjoy at StrongStart include:

- Building - blocks, Duplo, Trains, etc
- Story time and books
- Singing and Music
- Science exploration
- Arts and crafts
- Hands-on with water, sand, dough, and other sensory materials
- Role play - kitchen centre, doll house, and dress-up, etc
- Puzzles and games
- Gym and outdoor adventures

ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

Circle Time

Circle time, a large-group time led by the facilitator, should be a daily scheduled activity at each StrongStart Centre. Facilitators use the Early Learning Framework to help reflect on and plan their circle times. Circle time is typically a gathering time to share poems, songs, stories and action games.

This activity builds literacy skills through the use of big books, puppet play, story reading and storytelling. Music and numeracy activities can also be incorporated into circle time. Both adults and children participate in circle time together. If your child does not want to come to circle time, please help them find something quiet to do.

Creative Art / Project Time

Most young children take a natural delight in art. They love to be creative through manipulating materials such as clay, paint, and glue. Adults explore alongside their children. Art materials are experienced by children using all their senses. Facilitators model the value of providing open-ended, sensory art materials, and using open-ended questions to help children describe what they are doing, seeing, feeling, and thinking. Open-ended questions to encourage children to talk and think about art include:

- How does the clay smell?
- How does the finger-paint feel?
- Tell me about your drawing.
- How did you make the paint orange?

Share a Book Time

Shared book time encourages adults and children to bond while reading books. Shared book time is a joyful time for both the adult and child. Adults are encouraged to use strategies that have been modelled by the facilitator at circle time or during their individual one-on-one book times with their child.



Snack Time

Offering healthy and nutritious snacks are a requirement of the StrongStart BC program. Routines like hand washing, using manners, and interacting with the group can all be learned and practiced during snack time. The StrongStart facilitator prepares and provides nutritious snacks for all children. Snack time connects to several learning goals in the British Columbia Early Learning Framework:

- Learn about ways to keep themselves healthy, including nourishment, sleep, and physical activity.
- Understand and follow routines.
- Build healthy relationships with both adults and children.
- Learn to accept diversity.

Snack time is a language-rich activity. Informal conversation occurs between children and between adults and children. Interaction is important during this time, so we encourage all children to join in.

ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

Learning Centre Time

Interactive play occurs when adults and children explore the learning centres together. Learning centres are designated areas of the room where materials and activities are arranged to guide children's learning. Learning centres are created with intention and with various materials to explore, including:

- Natural materials with 'found' objects
- Loose parts
- Sand table
- Water station
- Light table
- Dramatic play with puppets
- Play dough
- Blocks and puzzles

Some learning centres have a literacy and numeracy focus for children to explore. Play at learning centres is exploratory, with a "hands on, mind on" intention. Adults support and encourage alongside their child.



Gym Time

Gym time for large-muscle activities is important. Many children and adults do not have regular opportunities to move within such a large indoor space. Gym equipment for children age 0-5 years includes balls, hula hoops, scarves, bean bags, parachutes and cones for navigating around.

Our centres will have gym time at times that work with the schedule of the school. Adults play alongside their child.

Outdoor Time

StrongStart programs use the outdoor space available at the school, especially during good weather. We provide the opportunity to pause, look, wonder, and be curious of our beautiful spaces. We believe that nature will guide us in our learning.

"Children can experiment, investigate, and inquire in ways that are relevant and meaningful to them".

Since programs go outside when possible, please dress for the weather and for outdoor play and learning! Most children are curious explorers, so you don't need to do much to cultivate their nature connection - just join them outside and get out of their way!

Snack Time

Goodbye time is an important social ritual and routine at the end of the StrongStart session. This transition time can be challenging for some children. Facilitators aim to organize ways to signal the end of the session to make it easier for families to leave the session. Routines can include gathering art projects, dressing in outdoor clothes, and singing a good-bye song. Children learn that they can return to the program on another day and their favourite activities will still be in the program. Some families arrive and depart at various times throughout the session and may leave before goodbye time. Facilitators will often have a quick ritual or activity for these families, such as a special goodbye wave and message.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding our StrongStart programs, please reach out to Melia Dirk, District Principal of Early Learning and Childcare at: mdirk@sd53.bc.ca