

SURREY/WHITE ROCK MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS

PROFILE AND CONTEXT OF MIDDLE YEARS



Children's Partnership
Surrey – White Rock

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The Surrey/White Rock Middle Childhood Matters Steering Committee (MCM), whose focus is the geographical area of School District 36 and the two municipalities of Surrey and White Rock, was formed in 2007 with funding support from the United Way of the Lower Mainland. The MCM committee is comprised of a diverse group of professionals and community members who are dedicated to ensuring that our community examines the needs of our children during their middle childhood years. The Committee meets on a bi-monthly basis to collaborate, research and coordinate middle childhood initiatives. The goal of MCM to ensure that the importance of middle childhood is well understood and that the necessary supports in the form of quality child care and after-school programming are available to as many children as possible whose families are seeking these programs.

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The Profile and Context of Surrey-White Rock Middle Years' Children

Introduction

Middle childhood, sometimes called the middle years, refers to the years between six and twelve. Building upon the experiences and skills acquired during early childhood, middle childhood is a time for children to forge a personal identity, establish their orientation toward achievement, navigate new relationships, and learn how to engage within the community as an individual, while remaining strongly connected to and supported by their families.

For the most part, children during their middle years are attending school for a full day. Although school plays a significant role in a child's life during this period, it is important to recognize that much of a child's day is outside of the classroom; this includes critical hours before and after school, weekends, professional days and extended Winter, Spring and Summer Breaks, when there is no supervision by teachers and increasingly parents may not be available. It is during these discretionary hours, that children can explore other skills and interests, expand and enhance their overall competency, and observe and learn from adults acting in different social roles as well as interacting with different adults acting in similar roles. Yet without appropriate guidance and support, problems can arise that if not quickly identified and addressed, can lead to unhealthy coping strategies and behavioural patterns that are only exacerbated by the changes and challenges of puberty and adolescence.

Responding to the need for constructive out-of-school activities and greater adult supervision, a patchwork of community and commercial services has emerged for 6 to 12 years olds. Recent research has found that these services may not always be evidenced based, developmentally appropriate, accessible, affordable or successful in supporting and strengthening the essential child/family connection.

There is a significant opportunity to influence this critical period of development to ensure that children reach their full potential. In recognizing this, the Surrey/White Rock Middle Childhood Matters Steering Committee (MCM) wants to ensure that the importance of middle childhood is well understood and that the necessary supports for quality programming are available to as many children as possible whose families are seeking these programs.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a demographic profile of middle years' children living in Surrey and White Rock, where possible presenting this information by the City of Surrey's six town centres and the adjacent City of White Rock. This paper is part of a two-part series, spearheaded by the Surrey/White Rock Middle Childhood Matters Steering Committee, to shed light on the importance of supporting middle years children. The companion paper is entitled *Middle Years Research Brief*.

Note: Census 2016 data is expected to be released throughout 2017. See here for expected timeframes:
<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>



Why Do the Middle Years Matter?

Middle childhood is a unique period during which brain development undergoes a dramatic shift. The resulting maturation in all developmental domains, particularly the social and emotional, builds upon experiences and skills acquired during the early childhood years. Middle childhood is a prime time for children to:

- forge their personal identity
- master new academic, critical thinking and healthy lifestyle skills
- establish their orientation toward learning and achievement
- navigate new relationships
- understand and practice decision-making, personal responsibility, and peaceful conflict resolution
- find healthy ways to cope with the difficulties and stress of everyday living
- become less dependent on their families, while still remaining strongly connected to and involved in family life
- learn how to engage within the community as individuals, and contribute as active citizens

However middle years' children need the appropriate healthy environments, and positive relationships, experiences and supports to work through these developmental tasks and successfully make the transition to adolescence.

Given all the changes in family composition, growing household mobility, flattening of family incomes, increased parental employment rates, heightened concerns about community safety, the inundation of technological developments, and the complexity of living in a diverse, fast paced, consumer driven global economy, just to name a few of the pressures surrounding children today, it is not surprising that we need to re-think what is required to support our middle years' children. With almost 34% of Surrey/White Rock children already developmentally vulnerable in at least one domain at time of entry into kindergarten, it is imperative that we find effective ways to promote healthy life trajectories and foster the resiliency of all children, as well undertake strategic interventions to support those children who experience serious challenges that place them at undue risk.

Overall Population

Children in Surrey are living in the second largest city in British Columbia and the 12th largest city in Canada. The overall population of Surrey in 2015 was estimated to be over 514,390 and it is expected to be close to 785,000 within 25 years.¹ Surrey's fast growing population is projected to surpass the City of Vancouver's within the next 8 years. Each month, almost 1,000 people move to Surrey and nearly 500 new babies are born. Each of Surrey's six town centres is larger in population than many of the communities elsewhere in BC and in Canada, and four of Surrey's six town centres are projected to grow significantly by 2041 as neighbourhood density increases and large tracts of farmland are developed¹:

Town Centre	2015	2041
Newton	133,390	183,470
North Surrey (incl Central City)	102,100	155,980
South Surrey	85,470	143,880
Cloverdale	71,100	126,540
Guildford	61,940	98,900
Fleetwood	60,390	75,340
City of White Rock	19,340	23,000

Source: City of Surrey Population Estimates and Projections

The adjacent municipality of the City of White Rock has a total population of 19,340 in 2015 and projections of only 23,000 by 2041.

Middle Childhood Demographics in Surrey and White Rock

According to the 2011 census, there are over 41,514 children aged 6-12 years living in Surrey and 840 in White Rock (total 42,354), representing 8.7% of the total population across the two municipalities. This constitutes the largest cohort of middle years' children in BC.²

¹ City of Surrey, Population Estimates and Projections included in the United Way Community Profile – Surrey and White Rock: A Snapshot – September 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.uwlm.ca/resources/surrey-and-white-rock-profile/>

² Children's Partnership Surrey-White Rock. (2014). A Profile of Families, Children and Youth in Surrey-White Rock. Retrieved from <http://www.childrenspartnershipsurreywr.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/WEB-A-Profile-of-Children-and-Youth-in-Surrey-White-Rock.pdf>

The geographical distribution of middle years' children across Surrey and White Rock varies by town centre. As shown in the 2011 census table below, 50% of Surrey's middle years' children live in Newton and North Surrey. More recently, South Surrey and Cloverdale are both experiencing significant growth in their numbers of children.³

Population Aged 6-12 for Surrey/White Rock Communities 2011	
Town Centre	6-12
Newton	12,776
North Surrey (including City Centre)	7,985
Fleetwood	5,422
South Surrey	5,147
Guildford	5,139
Cloverdale	5,045
White Rock	840
Total Surrey + White Rock	42,354

Source: Children's Partnership Surrey-White Rock. (2014). A Profile of Families, Children and Youth in Surrey-White Rock.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of Surrey and White Rock's middle years' children attend the District's 101 elementary schools. Forty (<0.1%) children are home schooled, while the remaining 14.9% attend private schools.⁴ There are 26 independent schools in Surrey and White Rock.

There are over 3500 students that have a special education designation ranging from learning disabilities to severe mental illness School District 36.⁵

³ City of White Rock Official Community Plan. (2008) Retrieved from <http://www.whiterockcity.ca/assets/City~Services/Bylaws/Official-Community-Plan-1837.pdf>

⁴ BC Ministry of Education annual student statistics report for Surrey School District. Data extracted from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/district.php> and Watson, E. (2015). Surrey School District. Personal communication.

⁵ Brenda Neveu (2016). Surrey School District. Personal Correspondence on December 20, 2016.

Approximately 9% of students across all grades in the Surrey School District have a designated disability that is recognized for additional funding.^{6,7} This does not include the children who are waiting for assessment or who are assessed but not eligible for a Ministry of Education funded designation or who are no longer designated because there are no longer programs to support them.

Family Context for Middle Years' Children

While there is no middle years' specific data relating to family composition, we do know that 85% of Surrey's children 0-18 years live in two parent families. More than a quarter of families with children live in Newton, and the largest number of single parent families are clustered in Guildford and North Surrey. Surrey has the largest proportion of children living in multiple family households in British Columbia.⁸

It is estimated that over 82% of mothers whose youngest child is six or older are in the paid labour-force.⁹ Ensuring adequate care and supervision of children after school is a significant issue for many

⁶ BC Ministry of Education annual student statistics report for Surrey School District. Data extracted from <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/district.php>

⁷Specific data for the middle years was not available. Enrolment figures reported by the Ministry of Education reflect the number of students “identified with a special needs designation, and do not include students awaiting assessment, students in need of learning support who have no designation/planned assessment, or students who are not designated because there are no longer programs to support them (i.e. gifted program).” British Columbia Teachers Confederation. (2012). 2012 BC Education Facts. Retrieved from <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedfiles/public/publications/2012edfacts.pdf>

⁸United Way of the Lower Mainland. (2015). The United Way Community Profile – Surrey and White Rock: A Snapshot. Retrieved from <http://www.uwlm.ca/resources/surrey-and-white-rock-profile/>

⁹ Schonert-Reichl, K. A. (2007). Middle childhood inside and out: The psychological and social worlds of Canadian children ages 9-12. Report for the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Vancouver: University of British Columbia. Retrieved from <http://lin.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/MiddleChildHighlights2007MarUWLM.pdf>

families and conservative estimates suggest that well over 5,000 Surrey/White Rock children, mostly in Grade 4-7, are regularly at home alone in self-care. This number could be considerably higher.

While Surrey’s median family income was \$78,283 per year (2010), Newton, North Surrey and Guildford medians all fell below this threshold. Newton, North Surrey and Guildford also have the highest prevalence for low income ranging from 19.1% - 25.6%. Over 7,560 Surrey children aged 6- 12 live in poverty across Surrey and White Rock, and 70% of these low-income children are clustered in Guildford, North Surrey and Newton neighbourhoods.

In terms of numbers, most of these children come from two parent families, but there is a much higher *percentage* of children in single parent families living in poverty. All children whose families are receiving welfare (4.1% of children 14 years and under in the Surrey health area and 0.8% in the South Surrey area)¹⁰ or a disability payment are experiencing the greatest depth of poverty. The ever increasing cost of housing and lack of affordable school-aged child care continue to be huge challenges.

Cultural and Linguistic Context

Surrey has become a very culturally and linguistically diverse community, with over 40.5% of the population being foreign born and at least a third of these immigrants having arrived within the last 15 years, primarily from South East Asia. There is high variability in cultural diversity and length of time in Canada within and across town centres and between Surrey and White Rock.

In Fleetwood, Guildford, North Surrey and Newton, the percentage of foreign born is over 44% whereas in Cloverdale, South Surrey and White Rock over 74% of residents are Canadian born. Sixty four percent (64%) of Surrey’s young immigrants aged 5- 14 years old live in Guildford, North Surrey and Newton. See table below.

Immigrant Population by Age for Surrey-White Rock Communities 2011		
Town Centre	Under 5	5-14
Newton	4,240	8,145
North Surrey	2,885	5,830

¹⁰ BC Stats Socio-Economic Profiles (2012). Surrey and South Surrey local health areas. Retrieved from <http://www.bestats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/SocialStatistics/SocioEconomicProfilesIndices/Profiles.aspx>

Guildford	2,255	5,010
Fleetwood	2,005	4,165
South Surrey	1,985	3,560
Cloverdale	1,245	1,995
White Rock	465	805
Total Surrey + White Rock	15,080	29,510

Source: Children’s Partnership Surrey-White Rock. (2014). A Profile of Families, Children and Youth in Surrey-White Rock

This diversity influences the everyday experiences of middle years’ children in their homes, schools and communities. Within the Surrey School District, there are 164 different languages spoken within the homes of their students and 55% have a language other than English (LOTE). The 5 languages most frequently spoken by students in their home are: English, Punjabi, Tagalog, Hindi and Mandarin.¹¹

The Surrey School District currently has 12, 393 English Language Learners (ELL) in Grades 1 – 7 and 22% are fluently bilingual in English and their home language.¹¹

Student composition within Surrey’s public schools varies significantly by neighbourhood because of the ethnic and home language clustering that is occurring in many neighbourhoods. There are elementary schools in Newton where a school can be almost entirely reflective of the South Asian Punjabi speaking community, through to other schools in Newton, North Surrey, Guildford and Fleetwood that have a highly multi-cultural/multi-lingual mix, and then schools in Cloverdale, South Surrey and White Rock where visible minorities and languages other than English, are only a small but slowly growing presence within the school community. Interestingly while Surrey School District has 27% of all BC’s public school ELL students, the local independent schools have 75% of all BC’s independent school ELL students.¹²

¹¹ Brenda Neveu (2016). Surrey School District. Personal Correspondence on December 20, 2016.

¹²BC Stats Socio-Economic Profiles. (2012). Surrey School Districts. Retrieved from <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/SocialStatistics/SocioEconomicProfilesIndices/Profiles.aspx>

Refugee Children and Families

Between 2010 and 2012 the top five countries of origin for refugees were Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹³ Since the conflict in Syria, and the federal's international commitments, Surrey has become a primary destination and over 44% of Syrian refugees are settling here since November 2015.¹⁴ With the federal government's ongoing commitment, Surrey can expect to see many more Syrian refugee families over the coming years.

The majority of resettled Syrian refugees who have arrived in Canada are family units consisting of a couple with three or more children. Families are quite extended in Syria; they include not only parents and children but also grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It is not uncommon for extended and immediate family members to live together in a single dwelling.¹⁵ The most recent wave of Syrian refugees between April and June 2016 included 18% of children 6-12¹⁶.

Refugee children and families have extensive settlement and psychological needs due to the dislocation and trauma they have experienced. Mental health is one of the most prevalent health concerns, as much of the Syrian refugee population has experienced some form of trauma, including losing family members, being subject to or witnessing violent acts, or suffering from conflict-induced physical disabilities due to the use of barrel bombs and torture.¹⁵

¹³ Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (2015). Refugees in Canada and BC. Retrieved on Nov 2, 2016 from http://www.surreylip.ca/sites/default/files/LIP-InfoSheet04-webFinal-Rev_0.pdf

¹⁴ City of Surrey (2016). Supporting Syrian Refugees in Surrey. Retrieved on Nov 2, 2016 from <http://www.surrey.ca/community/18207.aspx>

¹⁵ Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2015). Population Profile: Syrian Refugees. Retrieved on Nov 2, 2016 from <http://www.surrey.ca/files/SyrianRefugeePopulationProfile.pdf>

¹⁶ ISSofBC (2016). Government Assistant Refugee Bulletin April -June 2016. Retrieved on Nov 2, 2016 from http://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/GAR-Bulletin-July-2016_v2.pdf

Aboriginal Children and Families

Between 1996 and 2011, the Aboriginal population in Surrey effectively doubled in size. This increase is equivalent to an annual growth rate of 7.7%, compared to 3.6% for all Surrey residents. It is estimated that the current urban Aboriginal population in Surrey is already greater than the urban Aboriginal population in Vancouver. The demand for culturally appropriate services in Surrey will grow significantly over the next 10 years. It has also been noted that the majority of Aboriginal people that move to Surrey tend to stay in the city. Home ownership levels among Aboriginal households in Surrey (45%) are much higher than for Aboriginal households in Vancouver (23%).¹⁷

Urban Aboriginal community in Surrey is composed of Aboriginal people that have different legal status (status, non-status, treaty, non-treaty), come from very different cultures (e.g. Coast Salish, Cree, Dene, Anishinaabe, Nuu-chah-nulth), and represent different socio-economic aspects of the population (elders, students, working class families, LGBTQ2S+, professionals, single parents, etc.). Similarly, Aboriginal people come to cities for different reasons (to attend school, to find work, to advance careers, to start fresh, to be part of city life). The urban Aboriginal community is very diverse and shouldn't be considered a homogenous group.¹⁷

Surrey has the largest population of Aboriginal children and youth in Metro Vancouver.¹⁷ Aboriginal children aged 14 and under make up 29% of the city's Aboriginal population and 3.6% of all children in Surrey.¹⁸ School District statistics indicate that 1,757 Grade 1-7 children self-identified as of aboriginal ancestry; this represents approximately 4.7% of the district's overall Grade 1-7 student population.¹⁹ Guildford, North Surrey, and Cloverdale town centres have the largest number of urban Aboriginal

¹⁷ City of Surrey (2015). All Our Relations. Retrieved from http://www.surrey.ca/files/AllOurRelations_FINAL_WEB_VERSION.pdf

¹⁸ Statistics Canada. (2011). NHS Focus on Geography Series. Surrey, City. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Pages/FOG.cfm?lang=E&level=4&GeoCode=5915004>

¹⁹ Brenda Neveu (2016). Surrey School District. Personal Correspondence on December 20, 2016.

families. The majority of Aboriginal children speak English at home, but the School District LOTE report does now include several First Nations home languages.

Surrey also has one of the highest Aboriginal child and youth poverty rates in the region. 1,730 Aboriginal children and youth in Surrey live in low-income households compared to 1,025 in Vancouver.¹⁸

There is a high number of Aboriginal foster children living in Surrey. It is high relative to the number of Aboriginal children in care elsewhere in Metro Vancouver and also compared to the number of non-Aboriginal children in care. There are almost 300 Aboriginal foster children living in Surrey, compared to about 200 in Vancouver. The Ministry of Children and Family Development reports that at least 60% of children in care in Surrey are Aboriginal even though the Aboriginal population is less than 3% of the total population in Surrey. It is of note that over 95% of the children in foster care in Surrey live in non-Aboriginal foster homes; this increases challenges to supporting the children’s connection to their Aboriginal culture and identity.¹⁷

