

Surrey/White Rock

Make Children First

Year Four Update

April 2007



**Valuing Our Children:
Taking
First Steps
Together**

Make Children First

- Is a community partnership focused on the health, wellbeing and learning potential of children during their first six years of life. The initiative is based on research which clearly shows that those children who experience good health, loving care, positive relationships and play-based, language enriched learning opportunities prior to school entry, are at a distinct advantage and have increased chances of lifelong success
- To date, nearly 50 organizations and public partners have become involved in Make Children First - including representatives from Fraser Health, School District 36 (Surrey), City of Surrey, City of White Rock, United Way of the Lower Mainland, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Membership is open to anyone living or working in the Surrey/White Rock area, who is committed to our vision and interested in collaboratively advancing the “First Steps” early childhood community plan. Contact pcoates@sd36.bc.ca

Our Collective Vision

- A community where all young children can live, learn, play and dream in safe healthy surroundings, knowing they are loved by their families and valued by the broader community
- A community that understands the fundamental importance of the first six years of life to later health, wellbeing, learning and success, and knows that in order to support children, we must support and respect parents and other caregivers of young children
- A community that ensures all parents of young children have access to the necessary financial resources, supports, skills, information and services to meet the basic needs of their children for food, housing, clothing, healthcare, education, childcare and transportation
- A community that acknowledges its shared responsibility for supporting and investing in young children and works together with families to create a better future

Our Priorities

- Advocating for the removal of barriers which limit parents' abilities to meet their children's basic needs
- Improving access to and knowledge about existing community resources, supports, skills, information and services available for young children and their families
- Building and sustaining a network of community supports and services which are culturally appropriate, strengthen families, and ensure that children acquire the early skills and confidence to interact with peers and adults outside their family circle
- Addressing those gaps which research indicates will significantly improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable young children and families

Our Accomplishments in 2006/2007

- The Office of Early Childhood Development, Learning & Care (ECDL&C) jointly established and sponsored by City of Surrey, Fraser Health, MCFD, School District 36 and United Way of the Lower Mainland has been actively involved in supporting Make Children First activities. The responsibilities of the Office include: community research, planning, capacity-building, co-ordination, project management, resource development and public education
- Make Children First is acknowledged in the City of Surrey's Plan for Social Wellbeing as the key group addressing early childhood issues. Early Childhood Services also recognized as fundamental to a successful crime prevention strategy. Mayor's Taskforce on Literacy and Early Childhood examining ways to support our priorities.
- Took advantage of key community events to reach out to parents to raise their awareness and knowledge about the early years, healthy parent/child attachment, positive parenting, early literacy and the development of early social skills within a multicultural environment. A community-wide Ready Set Learn & Play parent-child interactive conference for preschool aged children and their families, was sponsored by the District in collaboration with the Office of ECDL&C and Make Children First members. Workshops focused on physical health and fitness, social emotional growth, early literacy and the importance of learning through play. D
- The first ever city-wide Surrey "Early Years" Festival sponsored by the Surrey Parks Recreation & Culture in April attracted over 2000 children and parents and we are now planning a second event with the goal of reaching at least 3,000. School District has agreed to become actively involved in the event.
- Lobbied successfully for preschool programming at the Surrey Children's Festival
- Successfully fought proposed cuts to the Child Care Resource and Referral Program. Raised concerns that the new \$100 month child care benefit will not create the high quality, affordable child care spaces that are desperately needed by many families in Surrey and White Rock.
- Numerous contacts made with School Principals interested in the development of ECD services and parent involvement strategies within their schools. Early Childhood programs incorporated into the Community-Schools Partnership initiative
- School District invited the Children: Heart of the Matter conference to use the Bell Centre, allowing the conference to expand to 300 participants, primarily from the child care sector. A number of other joint training events organized to enhance the professional development of those working in early childhood settings

- Fraser Health continues to distribute the Nippissing developmental screening tool to parents at time of the newborn visit and immunization clinics. Participated in regional discussions about development of a universal screening program for the Fraser Region.
- Library and School District continue to expand their early literacy initiatives i.e. Books for Babies, the SPARKLE initiative, Surrey Reads Program and parent workshops about the importance of reading to young children
- School District in collaboration with the City and OPTIONS developed their first StrongStart program at Bridgeview Elementary School. Discussions now underway regarding the development of a second StrongStart program
- The Mental Health Collaborative continues to expand the continuum of attachment/ bonding and preschool mental health supports and services. Right From The Start and Triple P programs now being offered regularly in the community. Work being done to bring Copeing with Toddler Behaviour facilitator training to Surrey.
- Continued work with UMOJA African Family Services to raise awareness with potential funders about the challenging health, literacy, education, housing and employment issues facing refugees.
- Maxxine Wright Place continues to be funded as a primary health care centre for mothers and babies at extreme risk because of substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence issues. Plans underway to build a new building that will include transitional housing and child care
- Developed a public awareness strategy including key messages around the importance of parent-child interaction and seeking out community services and supports
- Worked with other Lower Mainland Communities on the Success By 6® calendar which includes a community resource telephone list for parents with young children. The South Asian ECD Task Group again developed and distributed a Punjabi Child Development calendar. A Punjabi radio strategy developed.
- Several presentations and media opportunities focused on the importance of early childhood development, the priorities of our “First Steps” ECD plan and the need to properly fund early childhood services
- Information regularly shared amongst member agencies to encourage collaboration, innovative partnerships and effective use of resources
- Continued funding support through Make Children First, Building Blocks and Success By 6® for :
 - parent – child drop-in sessions at the 9 local family resource program sites
 - co-ordinating information sharing, staff training and public awareness activities for the family resource network in the Surrey/White Rock area.
 - operating Parent Child Mother Goose programs at all family resource program sites
 - school readiness parent/child sessions and workshops at several schools where few children have no access to community preschool programs
 - providing mobile child-minding services to support the participation of low income parents in parenting workshops, parenting support groups and community kitchen programs
 - encouraging access to information about existing community resources for young children through outreach programs to new immigrant, refugee and Aboriginal families
 - a home visiting program for high risk young children
 - the collaborative work of the Office of Early Childhood Development, Learning & Care

Directions for 2007/08

- Continue to update the Surrey/White Rock Child Profile as new health, education, EDI, census and ECD program statistics become available. Revise “First Steps” priorities as required
- Continue to strengthen the role of the Office of ECDL&C so it can effectively support both the Early Childhood Partners and the Make Children First initiative
- Develop the tools to implement the Make Children First public awareness strategy eg display materials, website, bookmarks, postcards. Host an All About Child Care event.
- Continue to support key ECD events such as Family-a-Fair, Surrey Reads, Children: the Heart of the Matter conference, the Early Years Festival and the Surrey Children’s Festival
- Develop and pilot a First Baby Strategy which supports and connects families having their first baby in Surrey
- Work with the School District on developing its new early learning mandate and ensure ongoing collaboration with other early childhood partners. Assist with the development of the second StrongStart program and pilot a new Grow and Learn Together model which combines a licensed preschool approach with a parent-child drop-in program
- Work with the City and the District on development of a community literacy plan with a focus family literacy
- Work with the Mental Health Collaborative to strengthen and support an evidence based parenting program continuum and to increase the numbers of parents participating in parenting programs
- Continue to explore innovative strategies to support refugee families who have young children and to raise awareness about the larger settlement issues that need to be addressed. Encourage Settlement and Multiculturalism to consider funding an ECD approach
- Explore opportunities to do research on multigenerational parenting
- Pilot use of the LEAP BC parent resource materials with families
- Continue to build professional development opportunities for local early childhood practitioners
- Support and participate in the Child Friendly Cities conference scheduled for November

Surrey/White Rock Make Children First contacts

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