

**UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY YEARS  
FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION  
2010 – 2015  
KAMLOOPS/THOMPSON, BRITISH COLUMBIA**



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# EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN KAMLOOPS FIVE-YEAR PLAN 2010 – 2015

## FIVE PRIORITIES

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- Embrace the move to an integrated system of early care and learning
- Provide a continuum of accessible, targeted and universal supports and programs for children prenatal to 5 years old and their families
- Identify key early childhood research focus areas and implement a strategy to share and build knowledge and monitor change
- Educate the community on the importance of the early years from prenatal to age 5
- Build social capital

*The views expressed in this document are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada or the Federal Government.*

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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**INTRODUCTION . . . . . Pg 4**

**PURPOSE. . . . .Pg 5**

**BACKGROUND. . . . .Pg 6-7**

**PRIORITY 1. . . . .Pg 8**

**PRIORITY 2. . . . .Pg 9**

**PRIORITY 3. . . . .Pg 10**

**PRIORITY 4. . . . .Pg 11**

**PRIORITY 5. . . . .Pg 12**

**CONCLUSION. . . . .Pg 13**

# INTRODUCTION

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Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a national initiative that provides communities across Canada with quality research about how children are developing in the early years before they get to school. UEY research looks at family experiences and community factors that influence child development to help identify, and better understand, the strengths and needs of children and families. The goal is to enable communities to make informed, evidence based, decisions and implement the best programs, services and policies to fill the gaps, or meet the needs of children and families at a local level.

UEY began in 1999 as a pilot project and in 2004 became a national research initiative funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. Currently there are 36 UEY communities across Canada. The first group of 21 communities was funded in 2005 and the second group of 15 communities, including Kamloops/Thompson, was funded in 2007. The UEY project in Kamloops/Thompson is a partnership project with School District #73, the early childhood coalition in Kamloops – Make Children First, and the host agency – Interior Community Services. The project was completed in June 2010.

This document outlines a five year framework with early child development priorities and action items to be used as stepping stones to improve the health and well-being of young children, their families and the entire community of Kamloops/Thompson. The plan is a foundation to be built on and will evolve as we are informed by best practice.

The *Framework for Action* is a summary of information generated from a variety of sources including feedback from stakeholders, children and families and the following research reports:

- Growing Up in Kamloops Report – (2005-2006)
- Statistics Canada (2006)
- Early Development Instrument (2003, 2006, 2009)
- Community Mapping Report (2008)
- Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children (2008 – 2009)
- Community Dialogue – Child and Youth Healthy Living Expo ( 2010)

# PURPOSE

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Supporting the earliest years of a child's growth and development, from birth to age 6, is critical to creating a vibrant and healthy community and productive citizens for the future. By working together to address areas of need and enhance the lives of our children, the community will provide the children of Kamloops/Thompson the best opportunities to learn and thrive and improve the quality of life for all.

The *Early Child Development Five-Year Plan for 2010 – 2015* is a framework for action with key priority areas identified for the UEG Kamloops/Thompson project. It is intended primarily for the project funder and the project partners as a working document but will also be used as an engagement tool for the entire community.

The *Early Child Development Five-Year Framework for Action* presents priorities to support these three overarching project goals:

1. Build Knowledge - Increase the awareness of the importance of the early years
2. Mobilize Community – Share the research and promote community participation
3. Inspire Action – Use evidence based decision making to create change

The implementation of the plan will help achieve the following:

- Improve the ability of our community to make shared and logical decisions within the complexity of the system that hosts different partners, funders and initiatives.
- Strengthen the networks and connections which will lead to a more collaborative and integrated service delivery model.
- Complement and link with other early child development plans and frameworks, locally provincially and nationally
- Increase the ability to advocate for policies that support child health and development
- Reduce early childhood vulnerabilities

“Research on human behaviour and organizational change clearly demonstrates that change occurs amongst networks of relationships and that people at every level need to be creatively involved in the process of rethinking, redesigning and restructuring their organizations”.

Meg Wheatley

# BACKGROUND

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“...a true system has three essential characteristics. First, the parts should be interrelated to the extent that they regularly interact. Second, the parts should be interdependent in the sense that a change to one part of the system will have an impact on other parts. And third, the parts should make up a unified whole; that is they should constitute a discernible, integrated and complete entity.”

- Building an Early Childhood Development System  
Utilizing a Population Health Perspective

## About Kamloops/Thompson

Located in the south central region of British Columbia, Kamloops/Thompson is a mix of urban, suburban and rural communities covering 45,000 sq. km. The city of Kamloops is the third largest city in BC's Interior with a population of 86,000 and is the major service centre for the region of 103,000 residents. There are 37 elementary schools with 15,054 students in the district and 5,515 children under 5 years old. 6.3% of the population is First Nations and 5.3% are minority groups, mostly South Asian and Chinese.

Since 2003, research about child development and community supports has been collected and used for planning, and preparing for this framework. Baseline measurements have been established to measure early childhood vulnerability; unfortunately the trends have not been positive. In 2009, 27% of children entering kindergarten were delayed in at least one area of child development, up from 22% in 2006 (EDI, 2006 & 2009). Furthermore, according to the 523 direct assessments of children, the pre-literacy skills of children in our region are below the national average (PIDAC, 2009).

Community assets are not equally distributed or universally accessible for families living in the region. Families in rural and sub-rural communities generally have fewer programs and services, experience longer wait times and deal with more barriers to access services than urban families. The most common barriers parents are facing, according to the parent interviews are: Times programs are available, programs are full, transportation and cost.

Socioeconomic data for 2006 indicates the average income in Kamloops/Thompson is 12% below the BC and Canadian average and there is a large discrepancy between neighbourhood incomes. Children in the lowest income neighbourhoods in the region on average have a higher rate of lone-parent families and are less likely to have a parent with post secondary education (Stats Can 2006). These children also demonstrate the highest vulnerability rates

in the school district however there are more vulnerable children living in middle class families.

According to over 500 Parent Interviews the largest attraction to living in the region is the green space and parks, 94% of parents said they liked to spend time with their children outside participating in un-structured/organized activities. Parents' engagement in literacy activities was similar to the national average except it appears that Kamloops parents are not necessarily teaching children to read words but that books and magazines etc. are available to their children. The interviews also showed a direct link between the numbers of hours of television watched and parent education. Children with educated parents watched less television and overall scored higher on the direct assessments (PIDAC, 2009).

Overall, there is a realization that the diversity of social, economic and environmental circumstances affecting children in Kamloops/Thompson speaks to the need for better planning and collaboration amongst funders, service providers and community.



# PRIORITY 1:

Embrace the move to an integrated system of early care and learning.

Actions	Who/What
Maintain strong relationships and networks between the ECD community and school district staff and administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECD Coalition/Committees</li> <li>• School District Board, Staff, and Administration</li> <li>• Childcare Providers and/or ECE's</li> <li>• Local PAC's</li> </ul>
Provide leadership and consultation to the integration process of moving to all day kindergarten.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Learning Framework (MoE)</li> </ul>
Stay current with provincial and/or federal initiatives which impact the structure and/or funding of the current early learning system for children under 5 years old.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School based literacy plans</li> <li>• Strong Safe Supported (MCFD)</li> <li>• First Call - Framework</li> <li>• Human Early Learning Partnership</li> <li>• Council for Early Child Development</li> <li>• MCFD</li> </ul>
Support the integrity and integration of the Early Learning Framework.	

“Our combined and collaborative work to improve outcomes for our province’s children is reflected in a common vision: BC children and youth are strong, safe and supported to reach their potential.”

Tom Christensen, Minister, MCFD

## PRIORITY 2:

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Provide a continuum of accessible targeted and universal supports and programs for children prenatal to 5 years old and their families.

Actions	Who/What
Use current research to inform planning and decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Development Instrument</li> <li>• Parent Interviews and Direct Assessment of Children</li> <li>• Statistics Canada</li> <li>• Child Health Report Card</li> <li>• Mapping Report and Neighbourhood profiles</li> <li>• First Call Framework for Action</li> <li>• Royal Inland Hospital</li>   <li>• Human Early Learning Partnership</li> <li>• Thompson Rivers University</li> </ul>
Reduce barriers for families to access services	
Strengthen connections with funders, partners and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECD Coalition/Committees</li> <li>• School District</li> <li>• Public Health</li> <li>• City of Kamloops</li> <li>• Ministry of Children and Family Development</li> <li>• Urban and on Reserve Aboriginal and Métis organizations and agencies</li> </ul>
Participate in collaborative decision making	
Build on what already exists in the community	

## PRIORITY 3:

Identify key early childhood research focus areas and implement a strategy to share and build knowledge, and monitor change.

Actions	Who/What
Build on current national, provincial and local research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Development Instrument</li> <li>• Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children</li> <li>• Statistics Canada</li> <li>• Mapping Report and neighbourhood profiles</li> <li>• Human Early Learning Partnership</li> <li>• Thompson Rivers University</li> <li>• Council for Early Child Development (CECD)</li> </ul>
Continue to share knowledge with funders, partners, and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood Coalition</li> </ul>
Use research to inform practice and make evidence based plans and decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School District</li> <li>• City of Kamloops</li> <li>• Interior Health</li> </ul>
Actively support on-going ECD research and special projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)</li> </ul>

“Evidence from neuroscience is that the early years of development, from birth to age six, especially the first three years, set the foundation for competence and coping skills that will affect learning, behaviour and health for life”.

Dr. Clyde Hertzman

# PRIORITY 4:

Educate the community on the importance of the early years from conception to age 5

Actions	Who/What
Maintain an active social marketing campaign by delivering key messages about the importance of the early years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECD Coalition/Committees</li> <li>• Communication Plan</li> </ul>
Engage non-traditional stakeholders to become involved in early years projects and/or initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Engagement Team</li> <li>• Business Engagement Strategy</li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Service Clubs</li> </ul>
Continue collaborative practices with community agencies and organizations	
Provide opportunities to mobilize parents and caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent groups</li> <li>• Childcare Resource and Referral</li> </ul>

Our ability to develop systems that will help children have the best start in life is how they themselves develop. The connections that we do not nurture will fail to thrive, while those that we strengthen will influence our thinking, feelings and behaviour in our work to build strong, supportive systems around children and families.

# PRIORITY 5:

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## Build social capital

Actions	Who/What
Create ECD communities of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ECD professionals</li><li>• ECD Coalition &amp; existing committees</li><li>• Community</li></ul>
Continue with ECD Coalition activities and networking opportunities	
Respond strategically to local, provincial and national ECD issues.	
Disseminate ECD research and information widely to a variety of audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local, provincial, and federal research</li></ul>

### Social Change

- Builds community-based responses, not solutions that affect just a few individuals and leave the underlying social problems intact.
- Changes attitudes, behaviors, laws, policies and institutions to better reflect the values of inclusion, fairness, diversity and opportunity.
- Insists on accountability and responsiveness among institutions, including the government, large corporations, universities and other entities whose policies and actions profoundly affect the living conditions of individuals and communities, whether locally, nationally, or internationally.
- Expands the meaning and practice of "democracy" by involving those closest to social problems in determining their solutions.

[http://www.fundforsouth.org/social\\_change.htm](http://www.fundforsouth.org/social_change.htm)

# CONCLUSION:

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The Early Childhood Coalition in Kamloops is committed to implementing the *Framework for Action* priorities over the next five years. Keeping in mind the document is not static; it will evolve and stay current in response to research, policy and community voice.

The Five Priorities are intended to complement and synthesize with existing early years plans locally, provincially and federally.

