



Promoting Social and Emotional Well-Being in Young Children



How you feel affects how you learn. Educators know this is true, and it's backed up by the latest research into the connections between children's social and emotional well-being and their educational and life outcomes. The desire to support educators' efforts to enhance children's well-being led to the 2017 launch of Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC).

A partnership between the Ministry of Education and United Way of the Lower Mainland, CR4YC focuses on the connections between emotions and learning. This collaborative inquiry project brings together community-based early childhood educators, StrongStart facilitators and kindergarten teachers to explore practices that improve the social and emotional well-being of children and nurture greater collaboration between early childhood educators and primary educators.

"An additional goal of this program is to reduce the tension and anxiety of children and families entering the school system," says Maureen Dockendorf, CR4YC Program Lead for the Ministry of Education. "There are such strong links between young children's social and emotional competence and life and school success, and this becomes particularly important during the transition to kindergarten."



This year, 47 school districts and communities are participating in the program, up from 36 in 2018-2019. Twelve facilitators across the province meet with small groups of educators to explore and reflect on practices, record and share observations, interpret what they have observed and plan strategies to enhance the well-being of children. Release time for the six half-day sessions is funded by the Ministry of Education.

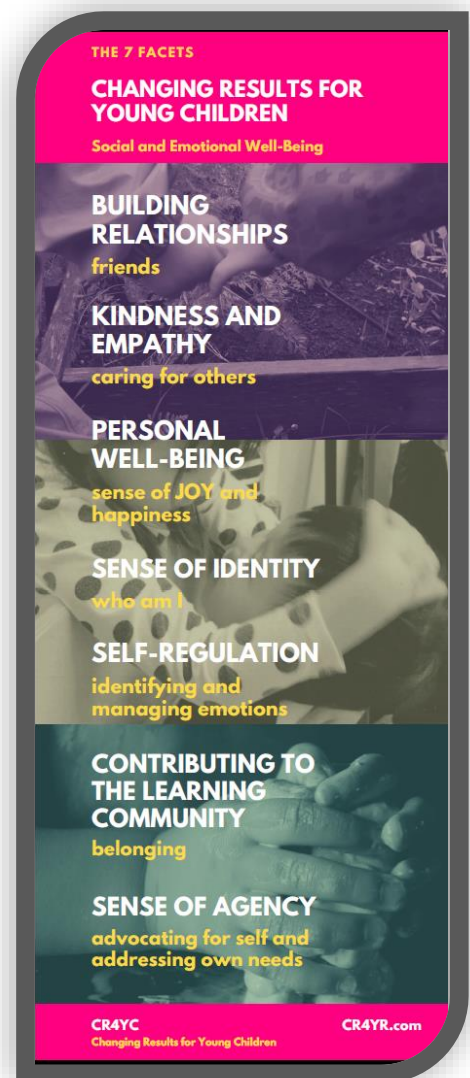
The wonder child

Each participant in the CR4YC chooses a “wonder child” and then observes, supports and records that child’s growth in various facets of personal and social well-being connected to the [Early Learning Framework](#) and related to the BC curriculum’s [Personal and Social core competencies](#).

“The purpose of choosing a wonder child is so that the educator can really focus on that one individual,” explains Dockendorf. “We ask educators to think about a child they are wondering about in relation to social and emotional well-being. It’s not about changing the child. It’s about wondering what you need to change in your own practice to support the development of that child in one aspect of their social and emotional well-being.”

Dockendorf gives the example of a teacher wondering about a particular child’s sense of belonging. “You might approach the child’s parent and say, ‘I’ve noticed this, and I’m wondering if you’ve noticed it too and what I can do to help strengthen your child’s sense of belonging.’”

The process is transparent: educators ask parents or guardians for permission, and the child is also included.





Educators complete observation sheets and submit data each month. At the end of the year, each of them completes a case study summarizing one aspect of social and emotional well-being that they worked on with their wonder child and an approach or strategy that they found useful in their work.

Three educators reflect on the transformative power of CR4YC

One of the key goals of CR4YC is to strengthen relationships between early childhood educators and primary educators. Participants are selected from the same community to bring together educators who may share connections with the same children and families.

Three educators in Prince Rupert are now in their second year of collaborating as part of the CR4YC program. Lisa Scherr (a kindergarten teacher at Conrad Elementary School), Anne-Marie Helin (the StrongStart BC facilitator at Conrad) and Angel Prevost (the Head Start Coordinator at Metlakatla First Nation) met six times last year for collaborative planning under the guidance of CR4YC Facilitator Fiona Morrison. During the half- and full-day sessions they discussed their observations and strategies and supported each other in their practice. The team also participated in cultural teachings and learnings grounded in the land and local traditions.

In the 2018-2019 school year, Scherr focused her inquiry on exploring strategies for helping her wonder child feel safer, more connected and less anxious in class. She says the child's growth in confidence has been astounding – she skipped into class on her first day of the 2019-2020 school year and welcomed the other children to the classroom. "She has completely come out of her shell and is now confident even to the point of being outspoken!" says Scherr.

Prevost describes working with her wonder child on her sense of identity by, among other things, creating a picture book about the child. "She was ecstatic when she saw the finished book and would bring it to school and go through it with me every day," says Prevost.



Like other CR4YC participants, Scherr, Prevost and Helin say that the work they are doing with their identified wonder child has ripple effects for the class as a whole. As Helin says, “thinking deliberately about one child gets me wondering more about all the children I see in my classes. I am wondering if their needs are being met, where certain behaviour stems from and how I can support different facets of their social and emotional well-being.”

The collaborative planning sessions guided by Fiona Morrison offered real benefits for the educators, enabling them to develop a deep sense of connection with each other that transcended the traditional silos of early childhood education and the primary years.

“Having the time to sit down and talk with Anne-Marie and Angel was such a privilege,” says kindergarten teacher Scherr. “Many of the children from Anne-Marie’s and Angel’s programs will be in my kindergarten class the following year, and it is so powerful to already know the children and their families before they come to me.”

Helin adds that the collaboration has allowed her to directly experience how the other early childhood and primary years programs are run, which offers ideas for her own practice.

Results from 2018-2019

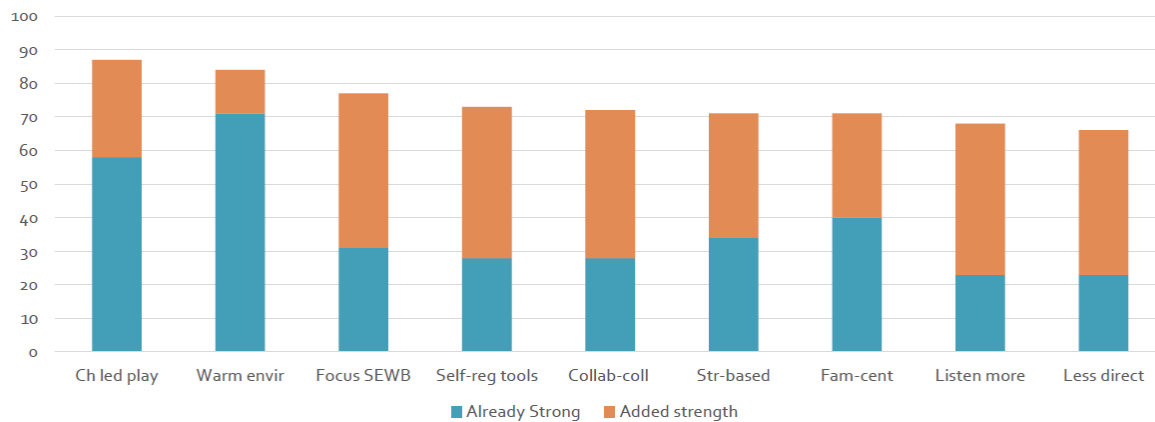
In 2018-2019, 262 educators in 36 school districts and communities participated in CR4YC, touching the lives of approximately 7,000 children. In addition to sharing data and observations during the year, the educators completed more than 200 case studies documenting their observations of their wonder child at the end of the school year.

They then completed a survey on the shifts they’d noted in their own professional practice as a result of participating in CR4YC; over 40 per cent said they experienced changes in the following areas:

- focusing on social and emotional well-being
- giving children more self-regulation tools
- listening more and talking less
- collaborating with other educators
- offering less direction



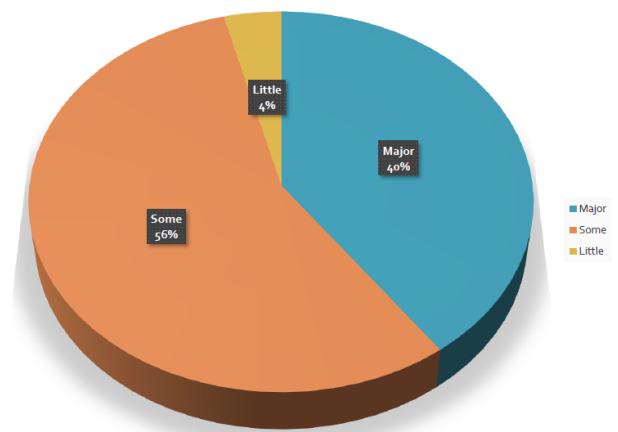
Strengths in Strategies and Approaches: % of Educators (n=192)

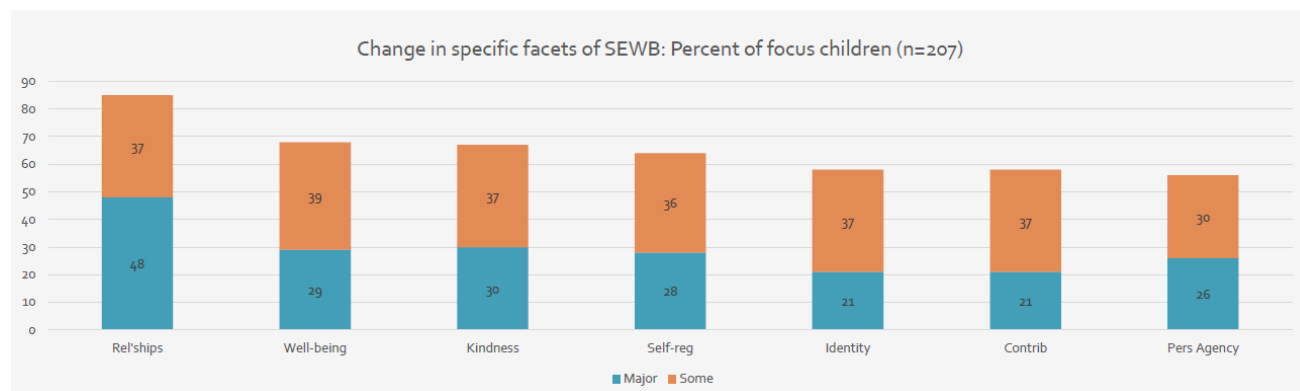


They also said that they saw significant changes in the children who took part in CR4YC. Some of the highlights of the survey include:

- Almost all children (96 per cent) showed positive overall change in their social and emotional well-being, with approximately 40 per cent of the children described as having a major change
- The greatest area of change was in relationships, with over 80% of children showing positive development
- Well-being, kindness/empathy and self-regulation were areas of change for close to 65 per cent of children
- Sense of identity, contribution to the classroom and a sense of personal agency were areas of change for nearly 60 per cent of the children

Overall Change in SEWB (n=207)





Final thoughts

The connections between social and emotional well-being and learning outcomes are well-established. Helping young children develop the tools to self-regulate is absolutely essential for their ability to develop a healthy self-identity, form meaningful relationships and deepen their personal awareness and responsibility.

“We have seen beyond a doubt that this program is changing outcomes for kids,” says Dockendorf. “But its impacts go beyond these young students. The program’s emphasis on collaboration and relationship-building has also improved the well-being of educators. And with the continuity of pedagogy between early childhood education and the primary years program, we are also seeing significantly reduced tension and anxiety in children and families as students enter kindergarten.”

Learn More

- › Visit the [Changing Results for Young Children website](#), which showcases the latest research findings, documentation and observations from educators, and updates on the program.
- › Read the [CR4YC 2018-19 research findings](#).
- › Want to be part of CR4YC? Talk to your district’s early learning lead for more information.
- › Read the [British Columbia Early Learning Framework](#).
- › The new Early Learning Framework aligns with [Child Care B.C. Caring for Kids, Lifting Up Families: The Path to Universal Child Care](#) in which the Province committed to doing more to integrate child care and education.