



CONSEIL SCOLAIRE FRANCOPHONE
DE LA COLOMBIE-BRITANNIQUE

(School District No. 93)

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NEWS RELEASE

First Francophone *StrongStart BC*

A new service for Francophone families in Port Coquitlam

Richmond, BC, (March 14, 2007) - The Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF) (BC's Francophone School District - SD No 93) is proud to announce the opening of the very first Francophone *StrongStart BC* (*Franc départ*) centre in British Columbia. *Franc départ* is housed in École des Pionniers de Maillardville, at 3550 Wellington St., Port Coquitlam. Funded by the Ministry of Education, the *Franc départ* (*StrongStart BC*) Pionniers program in Port Coquitlam was implemented in order to assist the province's children in getting the best possible start in life. Eighty-four programs are presently offered within primary schools in British Columbia with the support of their local school districts in their respective communities.

"The francophone community is an important part of our province's linguistic and cultural heritage," said Shirley Bond, Minister of Education. "The programme *Franc départ* Pionniers is the first francophone *StrongStart BC* centre and will be a great place for children to come with their parents or caregivers to develop social and literacy skills."

Implemented by the CSF, the *Franc départ* Pionniers centre will be open to the Francophone families of Port Coquitlam who wish to benefit of this free service. The program focuses on literacy and numeracy, fostering optimum development in the preschool years (0-5 years of age). The program will also facilitate the children's acquisition of the French-language. The new centre was developed in partnership with BC's Francophone Parents' Federation (*Fédération des parents francophones de C.-B.*) and will provide families with networking opportunities as well as access to a wide selection of tools designed to foster the child's well-being and development.

"We are delighted that our very first *Franc départ* program is housed in a school since this type of early childhood Francophone program will have a direct impact on academic success and feeling of identity of our learners," stated Mr. Marie Bourgeois, Chair of the CSF. "The program will greatly benefit our children's language development, while their parents will have access to new Francophone resources and will be able to establish strong links with their community school."

"In our Francophone communities, the implementation of *Franc départ* programs within CSF schools marks a step forward in the dissemination of quality programs and services to early childhood and families. The *Fédération des parents francophones de C.-B.* considers that favouring early childhood development is taking immediate action to eradicate the assimilation of our Francophone children, and further to contribute to the enrichment, vitality and development of the Francophone community as a whole," declared Ms. Pauline Gobeil, FPFCB President.

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At the *Franc départ* Pionniers centre, children and parents will find a welcoming environment and support from an early childhood education specialist. Children who come accompanied by an adult will have access to a wide range of games favouring experimentation in order to enhance social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. The accompanying adult will come away with practical ideas for home activities.

Since its creation in 1995, the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique offers educational programs and services geared towards the growth and cultural promotion of the province's Francophone learners. An active partner in the development of British Columbia's francophone community, the Conseil has presently in its system, and distributed across 78 communities in the province, over 4,000 students and 39 schools, which includes 21 homogeneous schools.

Source:

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