Government supports families as kids go back to school

VICTORIA – As students throughout B.C. get ready to head back to school on Tuesday, government is providing a number of supports to families, including low-income families, to help them with everything from school supplies to funding for food programs.

This is an investment of nearly $1 billion each year, in addition to funding to school districts that will reach more than $5 billion this year.

Each year, the Province provides $3.4 million for a School Start-up Supplement to help families on income and disability assistance with the costs associated with going back to school, such as school supplies and clothing. This supplement benefits nearly 15,000 families, including 24,000 children.

Through the CommunityLINK program, B.C. also provides more than $51 million annually to give every student in B.C., including vulnerable children and youth, the best chance to achieve their best in school. CommunityLINK helps every district in the province fund programs to support vulnerable students to provide breakfast and lunch programs, inner-city and community school programs, school-based support workers and counselling for vulnerable children and youth.

Early learning programs throughout the province are provided through StrongStart BC. Government provides $10.4 million in annual funding to school districts to operate 326 StrongStart BC programs, which support more than 385 communities throughout the province. StrongStart BC is designed for early learning development, including language, physical, cognitive, social and emotional areas, led by qualified early childhood educators. In addition, there are now 26 BC Early Years Centres throughout the province, offering one-stop, convenient access to information, services and referrals for families with young children.

Students with special needs are also a priority. During the last school year (2014-15), the total funding for all students (public and independent) with special needs was approximately $920 million. As well, the Ministry of Children and Family Development spends more than $200 million a year to support students with special needs.

B.C.’s Child Care Subsidy Program provides funding to eligible low-income families to help cover the cost of care, including before- and after-school care. The program supports about 24,500 children each month in B.C., with subsidies ranging up to $750 per month.

Quotes:

Michelle Stilwell, Minister of Social Development and Social Innovation –
“Going back to school is always an exciting time for students but it can be expensive for families. That’s where the School Start-up Supplement comes in, providing extra funds for families on income and disability assistance, to help them buy the school supplies that they need.”

Mike Bernier, Minister of Education –

“With this kind of support for low-income families this school year, parents and students can focus on achievement in the classroom. All parents want their children to be ready for the back to school season and this funding makes sure finances aren’t a barrier to academic success.”

Stephanie Cadieux, Minister of Children and Family Development –

“With kids going back to school, we know that parents are looking for quality before- and after-school care. That’s why we provide child care subsidies up to $750 per month to help low-income families obtain the best possible care for their children.”

Quick Facts:

- Traditionally, parents have provided the basic school supplies to help their child learn in school.
- However, the School Start-up Supplement is provided to families receiving income assistance to help with things like school supplies. Anything above this is up to individual schools or parent advisory councils.
- In July 2012, government increased the School Start-up Supplement so children between the ages of five and 11 receive $100 per child and children 12 and over receive $175.
- To make child care more affordable for families, government introduced the B.C. Early Childhood Tax Benefit in April 2015. The benefit will provide $146 million annually to approximately 180,000 families with children under the age of six years (up to $660 a year per child). To apply for the benefit, parents must keep their income tax filing up to date, even if they have no income to report.

Learn More:

For more information on the School Start-up Supplement: [www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource/general_supplements/schoolsupp/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/meia/online_resource/general_supplements/schoolsupp/)

2015-16 CommunityLINK funding allocations links:

- Main page: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/community-partnerships/communitylink](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/community-partnerships/communitylink)
- School District allocations: [www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/community-partnerships/communitylink/communitylink_vss_funding_1516.pdf](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/community-partnerships/communitylink/communitylink_vss_funding_1516.pdf)

For more information on StrongStart BC: [www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/learn/strongstart-bc](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/learn/strongstart-bc)

To find the BC Early Years Centre closest to you, please visit: [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_years/centres.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_years/centres.htm)
For more information on the Child Care Subsidy Program eligibility and how to apply, contact the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre toll-free at 1 888 338-6622 or visit: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/subsidy/

Parents who need to find child care or before- and after-school care for their children can find their local Child Care Resource and Referral program by visiting: www.ccrr.bc.ca

For more information on B.C.’s range of programs and services designed to ensure children get the best possible start in life, visit: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood

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