



## Ministry of Education Early Learning Programs and Data Collection

In June 2005, the Ministry of Education expanded its mandate to include early learning. In July 2007, the *School Act* was revised to enable the Minister of Education to issue Personal Education Numbers (PENs) to children who are not yet school age.

In the 2007 Speech from the Throne, a commitment was made to increase the number of StrongStart BC early learning programs across the province. StrongStart BC early learning programs are free early learning programs for families to attend with their young children. The programs are operated by school districts and located in elementary schools in many communities across the province.

Each child attending a StrongStart BC early learning program registers for the program. The information that is provided during registration is sent to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education then assigns a Personal Education Number (PEN) to the child. The PEN information is sent back to the school where the StrongStart BC early learning program is located. The child will have the same PEN throughout their schooling years. All children are assigned a PEN when they register for kindergarten or when they start school for the first time in BC.

StrongStart BC early learning programs are also required to record the attendance of each child. This information and the child's PEN number are sent to the Ministry of Education two times a year. This information is sent without identifying any personal information.

There are many benefits to children, districts, parents, and government regarding the collection of this data, including:

- ❖ Registration information provides important family, medical, allergy and emergency contact information
- ❖ Family contact information can be used to send out important notices about the program
- ❖ Child will already have a PEN number when they enter Kindergarten
- ❖ The data will support the evaluation of the program
- ❖ The data will support the sustainability of the program by tracking how often the program is used