

Vancouver Heart-Mind Early Years Initiative



COMMUNITY PHOTO JOURNAL

VANCOUVER HEART-MIND

Early Years Initiative



**Windows of
Opportunity**

Vancouver Coalition
for Children and Youth



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Vancouver Windows of Opportunity would like to acknowledge all of the individuals and organizations who embraced the **Vancouver Heart-Mind Early Years Initiative**. This initiative was a success because of their passion and commitment to improving the lives of children and families in their communities.

A special thank you to the **Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education**, our partner in this collaboration. This initiative would not have been possible without their tremendous support and access to their research, resources and wisdom.

Thank you to the members of the **Vancouver Heart-Mind Advisory Committee** for their guidance, dedication and support:

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Learning Resources for Communities

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“I have learned that it is very important to teach my children kindness through my actions and through talking with them about kindness in our day-to-day lives.”

- Parent, Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House

Vancouver Heart-Mind

Early Years Initiative

Early years professionals in Vancouver know that “the early years are considered to be one of the most important developmental phases in a person’s life... children’s early environments have a vital impact on the way their brains develop” (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2013). They also know that consciously creating conditions where children grow to be compassionate, kind, engaged and happy in their earliest years has a profoundly positive effect on their social, emotional and spiritual well-being throughout life.

In 2014, Vancouver Windows of Opportunity applied to Success By 6 (United Way of the Lower Mainland) for funding for an initiative focused on educating the hearts of children. The purpose of the initiative was to invite Vancouver organizations who deliver services to young children and families to come together to learn about Heart-Mind well-being; engage staff, parents, caregivers and volunteers; and together, develop and implement short-term projects that captured this information and began to make positive change for young children.

This initiative was eagerly embraced by Vancouver early years professionals. Over 60 people, representing 18 organizations attended a Vancouver Heart-Mind Symposium to learn more about Heart-Mind well-being and how to put these learnings into practice. Dr. Kimberley Schonert-Reichl (University of British Columbia) and Maria LeRose (Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education) captivated the audience with research and practical information on how projects could promote Heart-Mind well-being.

The result? Eighteen organizations took up the challenge and, supported by small grants, hosted amazing projects to educate the hearts of children across the city in 2015.

This photo journal provides an overview of the Vancouver Heart-Mind Early Years Initiative and takes you on a photographic journey of the projects.

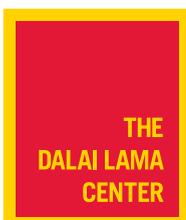
Heart-Mind Well-being

The Science of Kindness

Heart-Mind well-being refers to creating a balance between educating the mind and educating the heart. The focus of most formal education systems is on teaching cognitive skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic. While there is a great focus in our society on academic achievement, a growing body of research demonstrates the positive impacts of social and emotional learning. In fact, research shows that heart and mind learning are highly interconnected, and that improving children's social and emotional skills directly benefits their ability to learn and apply cognitive skills.

Significance of Heart-Mind Well-being

- Students who receive Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) instruction improve an average 11 percentile points on standardized achievement tests compared to students who do not receive such instruction.
- Children who develop social and emotional skills have better attitudes about themselves and others, and positive social interactions.
- Children with strong social and emotional skills are less aggressive, can handle difficult emotions, and have lower levels of distress.
- We can successfully create conditions in schools, communities and families that build the capacity of children to recognize their emotions, to empathize with others, and to make constructive choices.
- We can foster positive human qualities such as compassion, empathy and confidence, and we can help children manage difficult emotions such as fear, hatred, anger, and anxiety.



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HUMAN
EARLY LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP

The Five Domains of Heart-Mind Well-being

The Heart-Mind Index (HMI) was developed by the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education in partnership with UBC's Human Early Learning Partnership. The HMI measures Heart-Mind well-being in populations of children according to five positive human qualities, which are based on early childhood developmental research.



GETS ALONG WITH OTHERS – the ability to form positive and healthy relationships with peers and adults.

COMPASSIONATE AND KIND – the ability to be aware of other people's emotions and a desire to help when a person is in need.

SOLVES PROBLEMS PEACEFULLY – the ability to behave in a peaceful and respectful way in a variety of situations and relationships.

SECURE AND CALM – the ability to take part in daily activities and approach new situations without being overwhelmed with worries, sadness or anxiety.

ALERT AND ENGAGED – the ability to stay calm, focused and alert; to demonstrate self-control and to slow down and think before acting.

To find out more, visit: dalailamacenter.org and heartmindonline.org

Heart-Mind Symposium

Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education and UBC Human Early Learning Partnership

The Heart-Mind Symposium gathered approximately 60 parents and service providers from 18 different community agencies in Vancouver. During the event, participants were introduced to the Heart-Mind learning framework to build the capacity of parents and child care professionals in supporting and developing Heart-Mind well-being in young children.

Facilitated by the Dalai Lama Center's Tracy Smyth, community agencies had the opportunity to present exciting project ideas to foster the social and emotional well-being of children. Each agency created posters representing their projects and presented them to the group. Maria LeRose, the Dalai Lama Center's Program Director, and Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Applied Developmental Psychologist and Interim Director at UBC HELP, provided feedback, highlighted activities, learning resources and research studies to help guide project development and validate outcomes.

Over the next pages you will see how these symposium learnings were transformed into projects by each of the participating agencies, and how they touched the hearts of the families and children in each community.





Clockwise from top left: Each agency presented their posters and described their projects; the DLC's Maria LeRose (l) and UBC HELP's Kim Schonert-Reichl (r) presented the research behind the Heart-Mind framework; groups working on their project posters; Jenny Cleathero and the DLC's Tracy Smyth, who facilitated the Symposium.

Heart-Mind Bookmarks

Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House

Staff and volunteers worked with children and their families to make heart-shaped bookmarks in preschool classes and in some of the family programs. Together, they discussed what kindness is and documented this on the bookmarks. In the lead-up to the bookmark making we asked staff and volunteers to facilitate a reflective discussion that posed three questions: “When has someone shown you kindness?” “When have you shown someone else kindness?” “How are you kind to yourself?” Families then decorated their bookmarks and hung them on our Kindness Tree. The project created awareness of emotions, similarities and differences, and provided opportunities for sharing and connecting among participants.



“I feel very privileged to have facilitated discussion groups with families in our programs about kindness. I truly enjoyed listening to their personal stories; all of them touched my heart.”
– Kit, Staff



The bookmarks the participants added to the Kindness Tree answered the question: “How do you grow kindness?”

Languages of the Heart

Collingwood Neighbourhood House

Languages of the Heart explored compassion and kindness through a variety of different media. Children learned about compassion and kindness through books and working with others on three projects: Wet Felting, Batik Fabric and a Wall of Compassion. They are spreading the word of compassion and kindness by sending handmade art work on fabric to their compassion school partner in the Philippines. Collingwood Library will also be displaying the art work made by the children and parents for everyone to see and enjoy.



“This simple act of sharing bubbles nourishes everyone’s soul.” – Edmund, Parent



Building Hearts and Minds in Grandview-Woodland

Eastside Family Place

In a series of four workshops, parents and caregivers of young children learned about and explored various aspects of social-emotional development and the five domains of Heart-Mind well-being. The emphasis was on the wide array of ways parents can connect more deeply with their young children in order to strengthen attachment and family bonds. The project drew on the skills of parent-participants in developing and leading the workshops. Staff supported the awareness and development of each of the five qualities through four workshops, using a combination of approaches such as music, art, yoga, and professionally-led sessions. The workshops delivered the messages both implicitly and explicitly, and parents were also directed to Heart-Mind Online and print resources to further their understanding of Heart-Mind development.





Expressions of the Heart

Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House

Our hearts continue to blend into one as we develop and demonstrate our expressions of educating the heart! Staff, volunteers and ambassadors from the different parent-led language groups took a lead in developing activities that resonated with their cultural group. The project consisted of interactive and engaging activities, which were implemented in the family and language drop-ins, with opportunities to practice at home. The activities included: non-competitive family Heart-Mind Game Board, Heart Full; Star Child – helping parents and children recognize the qualities of the five Heart-Mind domains; Felt Board Japanese Story of Compassion with song; the Spanish activity, Compromisos De Corazón (commitment from the heart), introducing each domain with a craft or story activity during circle. All of the activities invited parents to commit to follow up and practice at home and provided an opportunity to share their experiences with the group. Documentation and blogging has been part of the process and we will also offer presentations at future community advisory meetings.



Heart-Mind Well-Being

“This project has helped me understand more about compassion... my heart understands more and feels more powerful.”
– Carrie, Staff



Get Along With Others

Compassionate and Kind

Quilting Our Stories

Gordon Neighbourhood House

We created a quilt of individual families' stories. Volunteers demonstrated techniques to parents on how to create a quilt square through embroidery, cloth markers, or print techniques. Children, staff and parents then worked together to create quilt squares. This fostered people connecting, getting along with each other, showing compassion and kindness. Having different types of medium allowed everyone to feel engaged and let everyone know this is a secure place to express yourself – and it showed parents that as different as we may be, we have many similarities. The quilt will hang in the neighbourhood house and make people eager to tell more stories and promote more projects.



Heart-Mind Connections

Little Mountain Neighbourhood House

For five weeks, parents and staff provided an open space for children and parents of the drop-in program to learn about each Heart-Mind domain. Each week, a different domain was explored in depth using books. Creative and imaginary play using costumes and dressing-up was encouraged, emphasizing the theme or domain chosen for that week. Parents created activities with arts and crafts or imaginative play, and we hope to eventually provide a train-the-trainer workshop to other parents so this can be continued.





“The Peace Lodge, a space with clear boundaries to respect and love each other, allows children to work out their feelings.” – Anita, Parent

Multicultural Community Circle Time

Marpole Oakridge Family Place

Multicultural circle time was offered at the Family Place and at the food bank outreach program. Staff introduced the Heart-Mind Initiative to parent volunteers and together they planned circle time, chose appropriate songs and stories, and made posters and props as a way to introduce the five domains of Heart-Mind well-being to other parents and their children through Multicultural Community Circle Time.



Work together with the support of two trained facilitators at a Nobody's Perfect parenting group.

Learn about child development at a Nobody's Perfect parenting group.

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“Multicultural Circle Time adds to the spiritual growth and development of children.”
– Anita, Grandparent

Heart Moves Family Dance

Mount Pleasant Family Centre

The main event for this project was a Heart Moves Family Dance, attended by over 100 children and family. Leading up to the event, families participated in weekly activities and crafts that promoted Heart-Mind well-being during the drop-in. Together they created a paper chain of words of gratitude. Adults and children were invited to reflect on and express what they are thankful for, and then added the words to the chain. The chain was part of the dance decorations and everyone continued to add to it at the event. Children enjoyed crafts that helped them recognize and name feelings. Faces reflecting feelings were put on wearable buttons and were a great take away from the dance. The Heart Moves Family Dance was held on a weekend so working parents and extended family could attend. A local choir director/singer taught and led the parents and children in singing beautiful, simple songs about love, belonging and gratitude. Everyone enjoyed the dancing, food and crafts, as well as the strong community connections that were made.





Children making wearable buttons that express their feelings.

Compassion Soup

Multilingual Organization Service Association for Immigrant Communities (MOSAIC)

Inspired by the story and the message in the book **Stone Soup** written by John J. Muth, this project invited parents and children to participate in a Circle Time featuring an interactive reading of this book using a felt board, followed by an art project. Families and children aged 3-5 were given toy ingredients made out of felt to make Compassion Soup. A brief follow-up discussion then identified examples of compassion and kindness in the story. Additional questions were asked of parents such as: What does compassion and kindness mean to you as it was taught to you growing up (cultural stories, etc.)? How do you want to see compassion and kindness demonstrated through your children in the larger community (at school, in preschool, as they grow)? Ideas that emerged were turned into a mosaic of art that was pieced together and placed in an image of a soup cauldron.





“I am glad to be part of the
Compassion Soup Project - I hope
we have more of these group works.”

– Lena, Parent

MPA
SO

Infant Sing and Grow

Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House

This project used songs, nursery rhymes and stories to present messages that support kindness, sharing, belonging, friendship and love. Participants were encouraged to share their uplifting stories from their childhood to help bond the group and create a shared experience. Parents and children together strengthened connections, which supported Heart-Mind qualities like getting along with others and peaceful problem solving.



“Hearts fill as parents sing and lock eyes with their babies. The connection is magical.”
– Carmen, Staff



Celebration of the Heart

South Vancouver Family Place

This project, facilitated at four locations, was an art project to explore the domains of Heart-Mind well-being. Staff and parents created two distinct projects. One was a tree wall mural hung with personalized hearts that the parents created – a photo on one side and a caption of how they practice one aspect of the Heart-Mind well-being. The other project, a living tree hung with more permanent hearts that will be placed in their play yard – a legacy of the project. Preschool staff introduced an intergenerational project that the preschool children took home for their families to work on – a silhouette of a child and the grandparents, parents and other loved ones written in their home language describing how they practice one aspect of Heart-Mind well-being. The silhouettes were returned to the classroom and mounted on the wall for all to see.



28 *A tree of hearts with captions of how parents practice Heart-Mind well-being was created.*



“What I enjoyed most about the project was giving our families an opportunity to share with us what they are already doing to educate both the hearts & minds of their children.” – SVFP Staff

Heart-Mind Well-being of Young Children

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House

This project introduces the Heart-Mind qualities to families attending the Saturday morning drop-in program. Neighbourhood staff engaged them in learning the value of the five qualities of Heart-Mind well-being and encouraged them to practice what they learned at home with their children.



“Cultivating your heart
and mind can make
your life blossom.”
– SVNH Parent



Pillow Full of Feelings

Vancouver Public Library

Pillow Full of Feelings is a toolkit designed to give children and their parents the opportunity to learn and discuss feelings in order to build the child's social-emotional competencies. The toolkit is comprised of a small green felt pillow, six emotion faces that reflect a range of common emotions and states of being – happy, sad, scared, surprised, angry, and sleepy, and an informational brochure. Using the Pillow Full of Feelings, children and parents create “emotion stories” based upon the feelings experienced in everyday occurrences, books, songs, and games. It is with these stories that children explore their own and others' emotions with parents guiding their children so that they can become “emotion heroes”. This project was implemented at Maple Grove Elementary and West Point Grey VPL Branch.





“Teaching about emotions is as valuable as math and spelling.”

– Raymond, Parent

Heart in the Community

VSB StrongStart Early Learning Programs
Tillicum Annex and Queen Alexandra

This project incorporated Heart-Mind elements into daily practice through circle time. A wooden heart puzzle modeled on the Heart-Mind graphic was used as a physical and visual cue for parents, caregivers and children to engage in discussion about the Heart-Mind elements. Parents and children reflected on the Heart-Mind element puzzle piece that they chose. They took responsibility of one piece and reflected on an act that involved kindness, compassion and other values that promote a healthy view of each other, happiness and getting along with others.





Families are engaged and listening to stories, songs and positive messages of the different parts of the heart.

Educating the Hearts of Children

Vancouver Society of Children's Centres

This project introduced and raised awareness of the concept of Heart-Mind well-being to families and early childhood educators involved with VSOCC's licensed child care programs. Through a large group presentation and facilitated small group discussions the qualities of Heart-Mind well-being were introduced, defined and explored. Strategies and opportunities to incorporate these concepts into day-to-day interactions with children were discussed. The presentation and discussion provided a common framework and description of these qualities that can then serve as a basis for ongoing dialogue between families, educators and children in VSOCC's licensed child care programs.





“I learned about creating conditions of positives.” – Child Care Educator

Heart-Mind Well-being for Family Child Care Providers

West Coast Child Care Resource Centre

The five qualities of Heart-Mind well-being were introduced at a Networking Evening hosted at West Coast for Licensed and Registered Family Child Care Providers. Staff introduced Heart-Mind well-being and the Heart-Mind Online website, explored the five qualities, took part in related activities (large and small group activities), and discussed how to incorporate the five Heart-Mind qualities into their programs. The evening included a visit to the Westcoast Early Learning Library (WELL) to explore books and resources available for borrowing. Family child care providers went home with books that support the five Heart-Mind qualities to share with children, and a packet of Heart-Mind well-being activities.



Exploring picture books that support the five domains of Heart-Mind well-being.



Connecting to Calm and Heart-Mind Wellness

West Side Family Place

This project explored designing a daily practice of reconnecting the body to the heart and mind through movement, relaxation and breathing. These activities were offered bi-weekly in the drop-in program with a goal of having parents introducing a practice at home to do with their children. Parents were guided to lead their children through a series of movements and relaxation and breathing exercises. These exercises were used as healing and calming tools for the parents, as well as a way for parents to connect with their children. Music and rhythm were included to inspire and engage non-verbal communication.



“The activity where we copy our child’s actions – I like how it encourages you to really watch and pay attention to your child.” – Parent



Heart-Mind Online

Community Learning Resource

The Vancouver Heart-Mind Early Years Initiative was supported by the new web resource for social and emotional learning, Heart-Mind Online. Developed by the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education with support from the Province of British Columbia, Heart-Mind Online is for families, educators and early years caregivers who are searching for evidence-informed resources to help educate the hearts of children.

The growing collection of freely-accessible learning resources at Heart-Mind Online builds capacity in individuals and communities to support the Heart-Mind well-being of children, and promotes the development of the five key qualities related to their social and emotional development. The website provides articles, ideas, activities, book lists, lesson plans, videos and more to assist those who teach and care for children.

Heart-Mind Online has resources about anxiety, making friends, peaceful problem solving, sharing and other core Heart-Mind qualities. In addition, there are links to the research that informs the resources, providing clear evidence of the benefits of using the resource, and best practices for incorporating the Heart-Mind framework into daily lessons and activities.

The audiences for Heart-Mind Online want children to feel safe, to be happy, and to flourish. We encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about social and emotional development in early learning to visit Heart-Mind Online's rich archive of resources and information.



heartmindonline.org



The **Vancouver  Heart-Mind Early Years Initiative** was a project of Windows of Opportunity in collaboration with the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education.



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