



Free programming for families with children birth–4 years of age.

Starting Strong offers free program for families with children 1–4 years of age featuring fun and engaging activities that support the importance of play in promoting healthy child development. All Starting Strong programs provide opportunities for parents/caregivers and child to participate together to ensure all children reach their full potential.

Our staff love seeing your children grow and change from week to week, moving through the various stages of play, and celebrating each discovery and milestone with you. Play'N Learn programs and activities are designed with multiple stages of development in mind and families are encouraged to drop in, visit and get to know others in the community as we play and grow together.

***“Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.” – Fred Rogers***



## Six Stages of Play Development

### 0–3 months – Unoccupied Play

Babies don't move around too much on their own, so they spend their time exploring themselves and their immediate surroundings. Babies play by doing things like waving their hands, splashing in water, kicking their legs, grabbing their toes, learning how their body moves and watching the people around them.



### 3 months – 2 years – Solitary Play

At this stage a child plays primarily on their own. Children spend time exploring their surroundings while building key motor skills and learning how to think, learn and understand the world. Play involves things like playing with blocks, toy animals/people and vehicles on their own, flipping through pages in a book, and colouring. They are generally not interested in playing with others.

### 2 years – Spectator

Children at this stage will spend a lot of time watching others but won't show interest in playing with them. This is often when parents start to worry, but watching and listening is important in helping a child to learn the skills they will need to join in the play when they are ready. Your child may clap and encourage, ask questions and give suggestions but not yet be ready to join in the play.

### 2+ years – Parallel Play

Moving from onlooker to sitting side-by-side a child isn't yet ready to directly interact, they're busy preparing for the next stage. In this stage, children may dance in a group or sit on the floor or at a table next to others. They will do the same activity as others, but they will do it on their own beside them.

### 3–4 years – Associative Play

Moving into this next stage can seem to happen suddenly. Children may

play with blocks together but build different structures. They may play in a kitchen area together but serve food to different stuffed animals. Children are interacting with others, and perhaps sharing some items, but minimal cooperation is required.



### 4+ years – Cooperative Play

In this final stage children begin playing with others more fully. Not only do they interact with others, but they work together in their play. While exciting, this stage also brings about more conflict as children learn about sharing and rules. Group games and pretend play become more elaborate and common as children enter each others play, building forts, choreographing dances, playing hide and seek and more! At this stage children are interested in both the activity and in the other children.

*“Playtime is precious. Play builds brain pathways for thinking, creativity, flexibility, empathy and many other lifelong skills.”*

– Heather Shumaker



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[www.startingstrongfamilies.ca](http://www.startingstrongfamilies.ca)

# Winter Program Schedule: January-March 2026

Mondays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Thursdays	Fridays
<b>Play'n Learn</b> Resumes Jan. 5 9:30-11:00 a.m. Sansome School 181 Sansome Ave  No program Jan. 26, Feb. 16 or Mar. 30	<b>Family Gym</b> Resumes Jan. 6 9:30-11:00 a.m. Westwood Church 401 Westwood Dr.  No program Mar. 31	<b>Play'n Learn</b> Resumes Jan. 7 9:30-11:00 a.m. Sansome School 181 Sansome Ave  <b>Book &amp; Cook</b> Registration opens Jan. 5 <b>Winter session 1:</b> <b>begins Jan. 14</b> <b>Winter session 2:</b> <b>begins Feb. 18</b> 9:30-11:00 a.m. Messiah Church 400 Rouge Rd *REGISTRATION REQUIRED*	<b>Play'n Learn</b> Resumes Jan. 8 9:30-11:00 a.m. Crestview School 333 Morgan Cres.  <b>Move &amp; Groove</b> Jan. 9 - Mar. 27 9:30-10:30 a.m. Westwood Church 401 Westwood Dr.	<b>Play'n Learn</b> Resumes Jan. 9 9:30-11:00 a.m. MFRC 102 Comet St.

## SPECIAL I Love To Read Month PROGRAMMING

**Registration Required, see individual program listings for details**

Bookmates "A Taste of Alphabet Soup" Family Event – Monday, January 26 from 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Bookworms – Tuesday afternoons from 1:00-2:00 p.m. February 3-24

Rock & Read – Thursday afternoons from 1:00-2:30 p.m. February 5-26



**All Starting Strong Programs will be CLOSED Mar. 30 – Apr. 3, 2026, for Spring Break. Programs will resume Monday, April 6, 2026.**



Join us in these warm, friendly and nurturing environments designed for families with children 4 and under. Play'n Learn programming provides open ended activities, opportunities to create and explore, stories, rhymes, music and more! Drop in, visit and get to know other families in the community. *No registration required.*

**Mondays**  
**9:30-11:00 a.m.**  
at Bord-Aire  
Community  
Centre,  
471 Hampton St.

**Wednesdays**  
**9:30-11:00 a.m.**  
at Sansome  
School,  
181 Sansome  
Ave.

**Thursdays**  
**9:30-11:00 a.m.**  
at Crestview  
School,  
333 Morgan  
Ave.

**Fridays 9:30-11:00** at MFRC, 102 Comet St.

*OPEN TO ALL FAMILIES, no military connection required.  
(In response to feedback from families, we will have this  
location open every Friday morning on a trial basis from  
January-March.)*



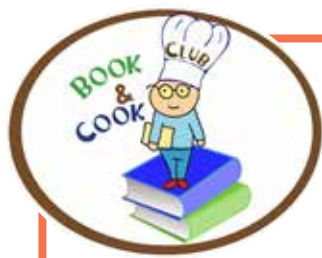
Have fun playing together in this open gym experience designed for families with children aged 1-4. Children gain strength, balance, coordination and confidence through activities that include climbers, tunnels, balls, bikes, bouncers and more. *No registration required.*

**Tuesdays 9:30-11:00 a.m. at Westwood Church,  
401 Westwood Dr.**



Join us for an hour of physical activity and creative expression as we combine music and movement in this fun and engaging program for families with children 2-4 years. *No registration required.*

**Fridays 9:30-10:30 a.m.**  
**Westwood Church, 401 Westwood Dr.**



Due to the popularity of our Book and Cook program registration is required for this program. In 2025-2026 two five-week sessions will be offered in each of Fall, Winter and Spring. Families can register for one five-week session in each season. Registration for each new season will be advertised through our newsletter, website, Facebook and Instagram pages, and announced at our programs.

Book and Cook combines literacy and nutrition to provide families with children 2-4 years of age opportunities to prepare tasty and nutritious recipes, as well as participate in fun, interactive activities, crafts, songs, stories and more. These experiences are designed to set the stage for the development of life-long healthy eating habits and behaviours. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.**



**Winter Session 1: January 14th - February 11th** OR **Winter Session 2: February 18th - March 18th**

Wednesdays 9:30-11:00 a.m. at Messiah Lutheran Church (400 Rouge Road)

**Registration for Winter 2026 Opens January 5 at 9:00 a.m. No early registrations will be accepted.**

Please email: [familyresource@sjasd.ca](mailto:familyresource@sjasd.ca)

Include: Your name, child's name and age, contact phone number and email and indicate which session you would prefer.

## I Love To Read Month Programming



Starting Strong invites you to join us for  
**Bookmates**

**"A Taste of Alphabet Soup" Family Event**



**Monday, January 26, 2026**  
9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**Bord-Aire Community Centre, 471 Hampton St**

**FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 1 - 4 YEARS**

**\*\*REGISTRATION REQUIRED\*\***



Join us to celebrate this year's National Family Literacy Day theme, "Make Mealtime Family Learning Time". A facilitator from Bookmates will join us to share rhymes, stories and activities that explore the value of healthy relationships with food in a family literacy context. All families will receive a free children's book and resources to take home.

**Registration Opens at 9:00 a.m. on January 19, 2026.**

**NO EARLY REGISTRATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

To register, email: [familyresource@sjasd.ca](mailto:familyresource@sjasd.ca)

Include your name, your child's name and age, a contact phone number and your email address.



"Supported by Child and Youth Services, Department of Families"



## Bookworms

Families with children 2-4 years are invited to join us for this interactive family literacy program featuring books, songs, puppets, felt board stories and crafts.

**Tuesdays February 3-24 from 1:00-2:00 p.m.**  
Messiah Lutheran Church (400 Rouge Road)

**Registration opens**  
**January 27 at 9:00 a.m.,**  
**no early registrations will be accepted.**

Email [familyresource@sjasd.ca](mailto:familyresource@sjasd.ca) with your name, your child's name and age and a contact email and phone number.



## Rock and Read

This family literacy program featuring songs, rhymes, finger plays and stories is designed for families with children 2-4 years of age. Each week children and caregivers will create their own special homemade book.

**Thursdays February 5-26 from 1:00-2:30 p.m.**  
Messiah Lutheran Church (400 Rouge Road)

**Registration opens January 29 at 9:00 a.m.,**  
**no early registrations will be accepted.**

Email [familyresource@sjasd.ca](mailto:familyresource@sjasd.ca) with your name, your child's name and age and a contact email and phone number.



In an effort to keep everyone healthy please stay home if you or your child are ill.

We'll be happy to see you again when you are well.



# I LOVE TO READ BINGO

Families are invited to print off an I LOVE TO READ BINGO card and complete the reading challenges throughout the month of February. (Print copies of the BINGO cards will also be available at all Starting Strong programs.) **Bring your completed BINGO card to Family Gym on February 24th to receive a special gift as we wrap up I LOVE TO READ month.** \*Limit one gift per child.



## I LOVE TO READ BINGO

4 YEARS AND UNDER



POINT OUT THE FIRST LETTER OF YOUR CHILD'S NAME AS YOU READ	READ A BOOK THAT YOU'VE NEVER READ BEFORE	READ A TOUCH AND FEEL BOOK	READ A BOOK THAT FEATURES FOOD	READ A BOARD BOOK
POINT TO ALL THE PURPLE THINGS IN A BOOK	READ A BOOK WITH A GREEN COVER	POINT TO ALL THE BROWN THINGS IN A BOOK	READ A BOOK THAT YOU CAN SING	POINT TO ALL THE BLUE THINGS IN A BOOK
READ A BOOK WITH NO WORDS	POINT TO ALL THE PINK THINGS IN A BOOK	LOVE BOOKS	READ A BOOK ABOUT ANIMALS AND MAKE ALL THE ANIMAL SOUNDS	READ A BOOK AT BED TIME
POINT TO ALL THE RED THINGS IN A BOOK	READ A BOOK ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S FAVOURITE ANIMAL	READ A BOOK WHILE HAVING A SNACK	READ A BOOK WITH A YELLOW COVER	READ A BOOK CUDDLED UP TOGETHER IN A BLANKET
READ A BOOK DURING BATH TIME	READ WITH A SILLY VOICE	READ A BOOK FROM THE LIBRARY	POINT TO ALL THE ORANGE THINGS IN A BOOK	MAKE UP YOUR OWN STORIES FOR THE CHARACTERS IN A BOOK

Celebrate I LOVE TO READ month with a game of BINGO. Reread your favourite stories or try something new. Visit the library or borrow a book from a friend. Whatever you choose, make reading a part of every day!



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## I LOVE TO READ BINGO

2-4 YEAR OLDS



READ A BOOK THAT STARTS WITH THE FIRST LETTER OF YOUR NAME	READ A BOOK TO AN ANIMAL (REAL OR STUFFED!)	BUILD A FORT AND READ A BOOK IN IT	READ A BOOK WITH SOMEONE THAT YOU LOVE	READ A BOOK WITH NO WORDS IN IT
READ A BOOK WITH A COLOUR IN THE TITLE	READ A BOOK THAT IS ABOUT FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS	READ A BOOK ABOUT AN ELEPHANT	READ A BOOK THAT YOU CAN SING	READ A RECIPE (AND MAKE IT!)
READ YOUR FAVOURITE BOOK	READ A FAIRY TALE	LOVE BOOKS	READ A BOOK ABOUT NATURE	READ A BOOK THAT HAS NUMBERS IN THE TITLE
READ A BOOK THAT HAS A CHARACTER WEARING GLASSES	READ A BOOK ABOUT YOUR FAVOURITE ANIMAL	READ A BOOK ABOUT FOOD	READ A BOOK THAT RHYMES	READ A BOOK BY FLASHLIGHT
READ A BOOK IN YOUR PJAMAS	READ A SILLY STORY	READ A BOOK FROM THE LIBRARY	READ USING A WHISPER VOICE	READ A BOOK WHERE THE PEOPLE IN IT LOOK DIFFERENT THAN YOU

Celebrate I LOVE TO READ month with a game of BINGO. Reread your favourite stories or try something new. Visit the library or borrow a book from a friend. Whatever you choose, make reading a part of every day!