

# HEALTHY SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

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## Healthy Schools News

### Authentic Youth Engagement



What do you picture when you think of engaged youth? The evolving definition of “youth engagement” reaches past basic participation and delves into the facilitation of programming designed, implemented, and evaluated *by youth, for youth*. This approach recognizes that youth are the experts on their experiences, needs and interactions with their local environments.

DASH is one of many organizations in BC excited to provide avenues for youth to guide the conversation about their health and education. Research supports the idea that meaningful youth engagement is associated with a number of positive health outcomes including a reduction in self-harm, a decrease in anti-social and risky behaviours, and an increase in physical activity levels, graduation rates, and self-esteem.

Transitioning to a youth-led approach for health and education is a common sense idea; however, it can present some challenges. The McCreary Centre Society in BC has been studying youth engagement for over a decade and has identified the following challenges associated with youth participation:

- Age definition (who is considered a youth?);
- Lack of support (finances, resources, etc.);
- Turnover of youth;
- Poor representation (lack of diversity of age, sex, abilities);
- Shortage of meaningful opportunities; and
- Tokenism (youth do not have ownership).

So how can organizations build trusting relationships with youth and ensure that youth initiatives are positive and sustainable? The principles behind successful youth engagement are clear, and have been outlined in many studies. The findings suggest it is necessary to provide youth with:

- 1. Respect** – The youth voice needs to be equal to other voices. Provide a non-judgmental, inclusive environment.
- 2. Support** – Youth are busy, and appreciate the mentorship role that adults can play to support their ideas and initiatives through motivation and encouragement.
- 3. Flexibility** – Provide flexibility in meeting times and ways to communicate to ensure the broadest range of participation.
- 4. Opportunity** – Youth are hungry for tangible outcomes. Provide learning, credit, references, and skill building opportunities.
- 5. Relationships** – Give youth the opportunity to network with other youth, and provide team building and social activities to build relationships.

DASH is excited about the opportunity to engage youth about their health. If you would like to share what you or your organization is doing to engage youth around healthy living, please contact us at [communications@dashbc.ca](mailto:communications@dashbc.ca) or through our website at [www.dashbc.ca](http://www.dashbc.ca).

## DASH BC Update

### Comprehensive School Health in a Nutshell

Want to know more about Comprehensive School Health (CSH) but don't know where to start? DASH BC has created a short and simple video to explain CSH and how this holistic approach can be implemented in the school setting.



Endorsed by the World Health Organization, CSH is an internationally recognized framework that can help you and your school become healthier in a way that doesn't require more work, but instead introduces a new way of working that will become a part of everyday practice.

[Click here](#) to view the CSH video and learn how to get started on making your school healthier! Please share the video with others who may be interested in learning about CSH.

### Being Me: Promoting Positive Body Image

The new "Being Me: Promoting Positive Body Image" resource has been developed to support existing physical activity and healthy eating frameworks and to complement Action Schools! BC's Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource (CHEAR), while supporting the Ministry of Education's prescribed learning outcomes across the elementary and middle school curricula. Each of the Being Me lessons has been designed to be implemented in approximately 20 minutes, and comes with accompanying learning outcomes, implementation ideas and resources. Please contact the Action Schools! BC Support Team at 604-738-2468, 1-800-565-7727, or [info@actionschoolsbc.ca](mailto:info@actionschoolsbc.ca) to order a copy for your school.



### Got Health? Student-Led Health Inquiry

School District (SD) #23 in Kelowna, BC has been very active in their region in trying to create healthier school environments. In doing so, SD #23 has created the initiative, "Got Health?" to promote adolescent health through student-led inquiry projects. The intent of this initiative is to engage students' creative ideas and the passion to lead a health-related inquiry to make healthy changes within their school.

There are five schools involved in the Got Health? initiative this year, and each is uniquely working towards creating a healthier school environment. George Elliot Secondary School is focusing its attention on increasing physical activity engagement through the creation of after school programs and education about the weight room. The student and staff team at Mount Boucherie Secondary School is working on a tobacco cessation program, "Kick the Nic", where the goal is to take the 'cool' out of smoking. Constable Neil Bruce Middle School has planned a healthy lunch program with the help of the BC School Food and Beverage Guidelines. The students of the Spring Valley Middle School Healthy Schools Team want to learn real-life practical nutrition skills that incorporate healthy and sustainable nutrition practices. The Grade 6 student Healthy Schools Team at A.S. Matheson Elementary School is creating a breakfast program with the aim of impacting overall health and academic performance.

The Got Health? initiative is a great opportunity for students to practise leadership and practical life skills, as well as work towards improving their health and the health of the school. Keep up the great work, SD #23!

To learn more about how SD #23 is promoting school health, visit their website by [clicking here](#). Be sure to check out their excellent [video](#) that shows how students and teachers from schools across the district are working together to make their school communities healthier places to work, learn and play.

## Other Resources

### Get Your Nutrition Month Posters!



March is Nutrition Month and that means that the 2012 Nutrition Month posters are now available to order! For \$10.00 (to help defray the cost of shipping and handling), you can receive a poster tube containing up to twenty copies of the colourful poster (shown here).

The poster is available in French and English. Accompanying the posters are 2 educational photocopy masters—one for

teens and one for adults.

To order yours today, visit the BC Dairy Association by [clicking here](#), or you can stop by their office at 3236 Beta Ave., Burnaby, BC to pick up your posters for FREE!

### 2012 - 2013 BC Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program: **Apply Now!**

Taking part in the **BC Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program**, which aims to increase consumption and awareness of available BC grown fruits and vegetables, is a great way to address healthy eating at your school. Not yet a member? The application form for the next intake (September 2012) is now available [here](#). Applications are due by April 1, 2012, so apply today!

### Community Gardening Partnerships

Growing your own food can feel very satisfying. Not only do you get to experience food when it is most fresh, but you can also take great pride in knowing that it was your hard work and effort that brought it to fruition.

That's why the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation (BCAITC) has partnered with the Abbotsford Community Garden Society and the City of Abbotsford to encourage people of all ages to participate in the growing of food. Through this partnership, a large section of Abbotsford's



Community Garden was set aside for BCAITC to work with local schools, so students have a chance to experience the wonders of a growing garden.

This year, the BCAITC is working with 3 teachers from the Abbotsford School District to include their students in the planning, planting and growing of gardens. Students and teachers visit the garden three times over the school year. On the first visit, which happens in April, they will plant lettuce, green onions, snap peas, marigolds, and a few additional items. On the second visit, they weed and record progress. On the third visit, in June, they will harvest their crops to share with their families and friends.

To learn more about this partnership, including comments from students about their experiences, [click here](#).

### Sip Smart! BC Update

The Canadian Best Practices Portal is a collection of evaluated community interventions that focus on chronic disease prevention and health promotion. Sip Smart! BC is now one of their recommended health interventions. Check it out [here!](#)



Have you already used the Sip Smart! BC program? If so, please take a minute to share your feedback (e.g. student and parent perceptions of the program, what your favourite activity is, etc.) on the Canadian Best Practices Portal website. [Click here](#) to write a comment and to let others know about your experiences implementing the Sip Smart! BC program.

### Quit Now's Smart Steps for Youth

The BC Lung Association, in partnership with Healthy Families BC, has released their latest version of Smart Steps directed at young people, aged 13 - 17, who want to quit smoking. Half is targeted at males, while half is for females. This latest resource includes current research and interviews with youth. Youth also had the opportunity to provide feedback into the design and content of the resource.

The BC Lung Association will be printing these resources and making them available to Health Authorities and schools. [Click here](#) to order the resource.

## Kathy's Corner

### Comprehensive School Health in Action

Happy Nutrition Month! Healthy eating plays an important role in promoting overall health, and healthier students are better learners. Results from the 2009/2010 BC Student [Satisfaction Survey](#) found that students who reported a healthier diet also reported significantly higher levels of academic achievement.



BC schools are fortunate to have many wonderful resources and programs available to help facilitate healthy eating and nutrition education at school, such as Action Schools! BC's Classroom Healthy Eating Action Resource ([CHEAR](#)), BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation's [BC Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program](#) and [Spuds in Tubs](#) programs, the BC Dairy Association's [resources](#), and [Canada's Food Guide](#). Over the years, I have witnessed [Healthy Schools Network](#) school teams incorporating these resources into the classroom to improve nutrition education in fun and creative ways.

This month, I am featuring a story from Blackwater Creek Elementary School to highlight their amazing efforts to improve nutrition at school through the use of Assessment for Learning practices.

Located just north of Pemberton, Blackwater Creek Elementary School is a small, one classroom school for Kindergarten to Grade 3 students. The school enrolls both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and has strong community support. Focusing on healthy eating, the Healthy Schools Team at Blackwater Creek Elementary decided to work on the following inquiry question: "To what extent will the use of Assessment for Learning practices applied during a food group unit improve students' snack choices?"

Guided by the [Comprehensive School Health](#) framework,

they implemented several strategies and actions to address their healthy inquiry. Some examples of their efforts include educational posters around the school, food group games and activities, individual graphs of snack items to chart each food group for one month, skits emphasizing the connection between healthy eating and healthy living, promoting healthy food choices at all school functions, a "No Candy" policy, a healthy snack cupboard, and partnerships with the community through a community health nurse presentation on diabetes, hand washing, and dental care.

Building on these efforts, the school then used specific Assessment for Learning strategies and practices in their attempt to promote and reinforce student learning around healthy snack choices. For example, learning intentions were stated before each healthy living lesson; success was based on goal-setting, monitoring and evaluations; thoughtful feedback was provided to students to help each student meet their individual healthy snack goal; and teachers probed students with engaging questions to encourage deeper understanding of the link between healthy snacks and healthy living. Students really enjoyed tracking their snack choices and setting goals to meet the daily food group requirements.

The Healthy Schools Team at Blackwater Creek explained that using descriptive feedback in conjunction with goal setting was an extremely powerful strategy for the students. It allowed students to see their "learning in action." This, in turn, encouraged a greater sense of accomplishment for their success when they moved toward meeting their goal.

Excellent efforts, Blackwater Creek Elementary! [Click here](#) to view this school's full year-end report.

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The Healthy Schools Newsletter is distributed monthly throughout the school year, keeping readers apprised of developments in school health in BC. Please visit [www.healthyschoolsnetwork.ca](http://www.healthyschoolsnetwork.ca) for publication dates and submission deadlines for 2011/2012.