

Rethinking Drug Ed and Promoting Mental Wellness in BC Schools

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Welcome!

Jennifer Gibson BA, BEd & MEd is currently a grade 8 French immersion teacher in School District 62 (Sooke) on Vancouver Island. She has been an educator for 20 years in three different districts in B.C. She has taught a bit of every subject from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in the public school system. Jennifer is passionate about helping teens have a healthy relationship with and candid conversations about drugs.



Cindy Andrew, BPE, BEd is a former teacher who has worked in the Healthy Schools and health promotion field for over 25 years. She is a program consultant with the Centre for Addictions Research of BC at the University of Victoria and works with school professionals and their partners in supporting the uptake of promising approaches to addressing substance use in schools.



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Time to reflect



* How was your drug ed experience when you were in school?



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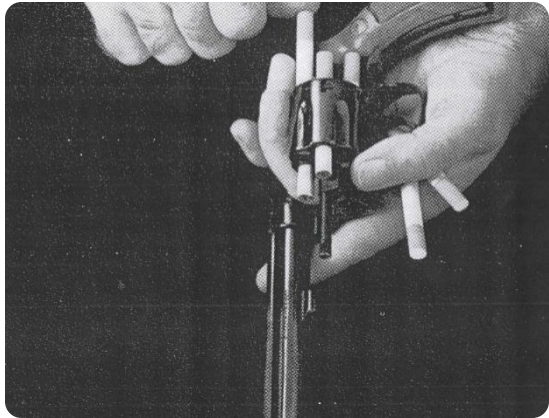
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"There is always an easy solution to every human problem – neat, plausible, and wrong."

(H. L. Mencken, "The Divine Afflatus")



Easy solutions



- * if only our kids know how bad dangerous and risky drugs are surely they will avoid them and be safe

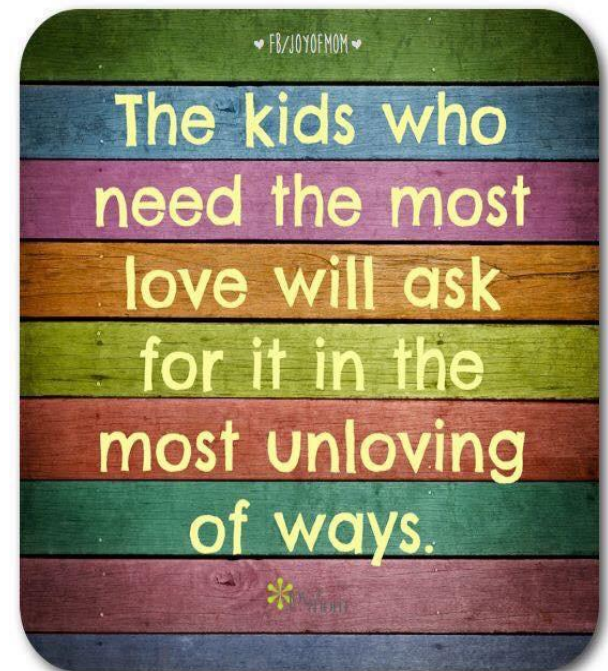


- * if we can teach them how to resist pressure from peers surely our kids will be safe



Fear-based just-say-no approaches to drug education do not work, and they never have. To date, traditional drug education programs have failed to have any significant influence on student behaviours.

Similarly, **zero-tolerance drug policies have failed to solve student drug issues**



An honest approach to drug ed ...

Spectrum of Psychoactive Substance Use

Beneficial

Use that has positive health, spiritual and/or social impacts
e.g. medicinal use as prescribed, moderate consumption of alcohol

Problematic

Use at an early age, or use that begins to have negative health impacts for individuals, family/friends or society
e.g. use by minors, impaired driving, binge consumption

Non-problematic

Recreational, casual or other use that has negligible health or social effects

Chronic Dependent

Use that has become habitual and compulsive despite negative health and social effects



A Resilience based approach

- * focuses on **capabilities** rather than deficits
- * **engages** students and **respects** the unique development of each student
- * recognizes the importance of the **community of youth** rather than just the individual
- * **Drug education should follow the lead of Martin Luther King Jr. who did not proclaim, “I have a nightmare.”**



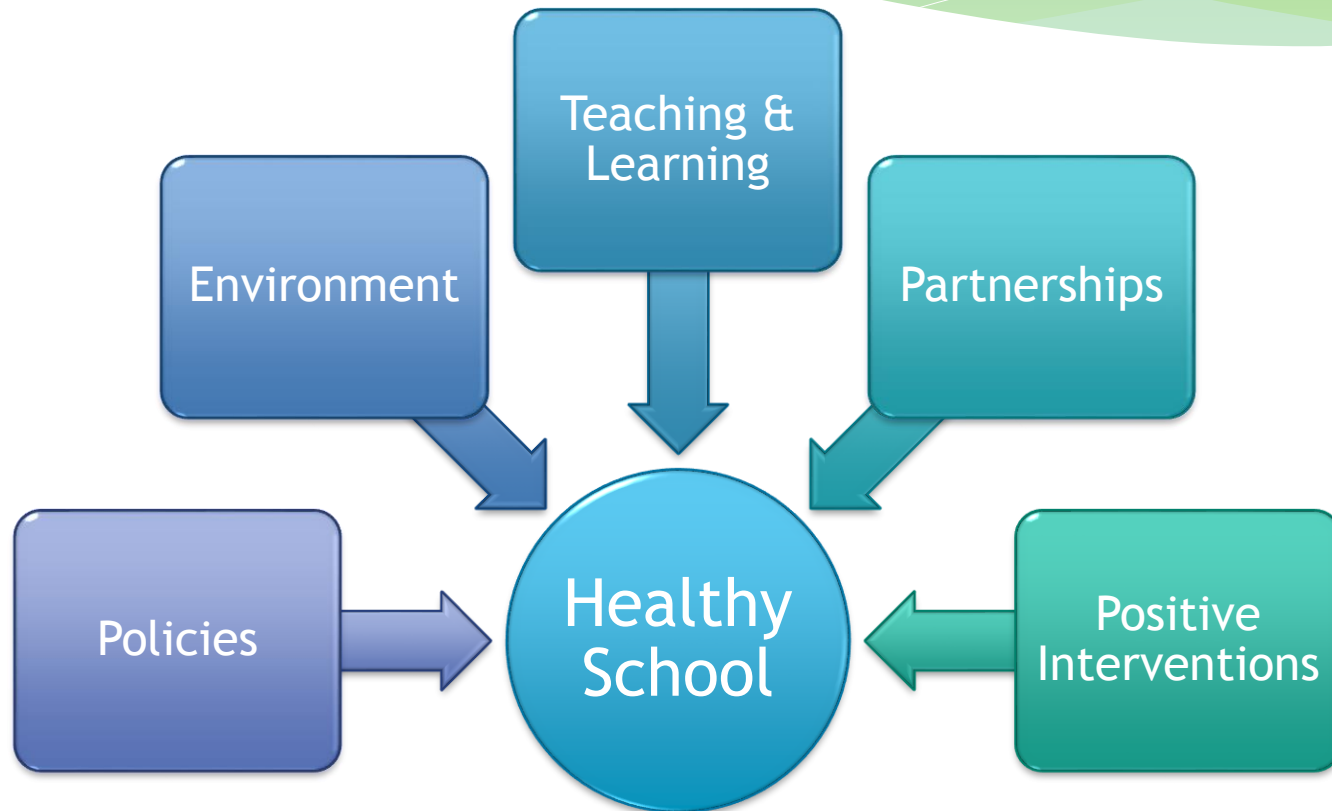
So What Works at a school level?

Creating health
promoting
environments
that build
connections

Developing health
literacy, including
literacy about
alcohol and other
psychoactive
drugs



A comprehensive health-promoting approach ...



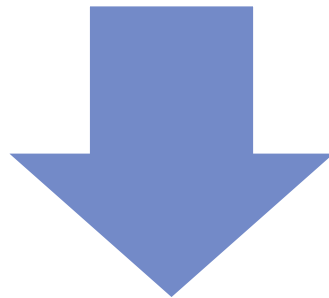


Consider the implications ...

**... there are some important shifts
to make!**



It's not all about the kids ...



More about
paying
attention to
the pond



Less about
fixing the
frogs



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From punishment to discipline ...



paying back

helping a “disciple”
(student) move
forward



Young people **NOT** engaged and connected with others are more likely to experience both academic and mental health problems & be involved in various health risk behaviours.

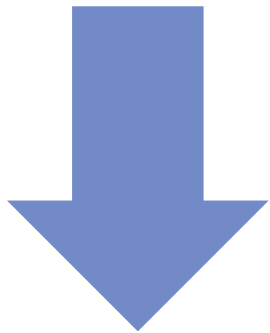
www.healthyschoolsbc.ca/schoolconnectedness



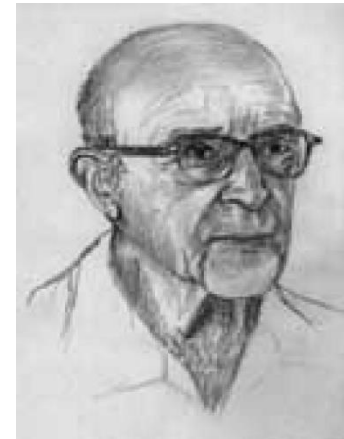
From content to process ...



helping
students
explore ...



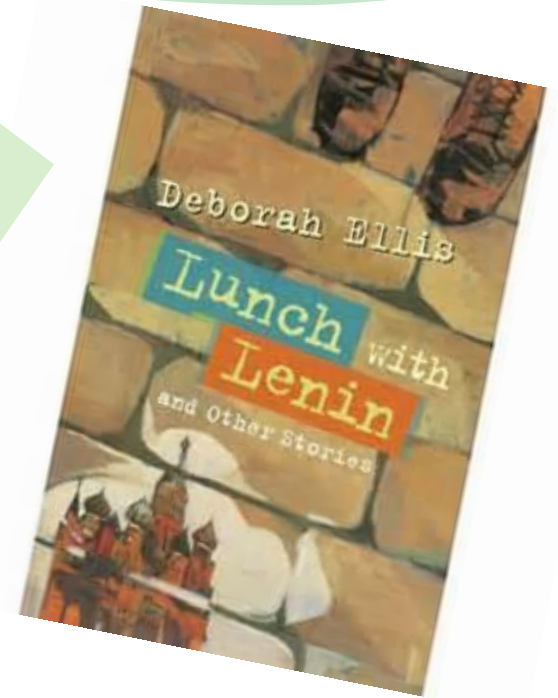
teaching
kids about
...



“The only person who is educated is the one who has learned how to learn and change.” ~Karl Rogers



From didactic to experiential ...



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Students need to learn to ...

- * assess the complex ways in which drugs impact the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities & societies
- * explore and appreciate diversity related to the reasons people use drugs, the impact of drug use and the social attitudes toward various drugs
- * recognize binary constructs (e.g., good vs bad) and assess their limitation in addressing complex social issues like drug use
- * recognize how official responses to drugs may have less to do with the drug than with other factors
- * develop social and communication skills in addressing discourse and behaviour related to drugs
- * develop personal and social strategies to manage the risks and harms related to drugs



Health Literacy = Building Competencies

What is it?

- * “the ability to **access, comprehend, evaluate and communicate** information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings across the life-course.” (Public Health Agency of Canada)

Why use it?

- * It helps build a range of **cognitive, social and emotional skills** in youth and hence is more likely to have real-world impact.



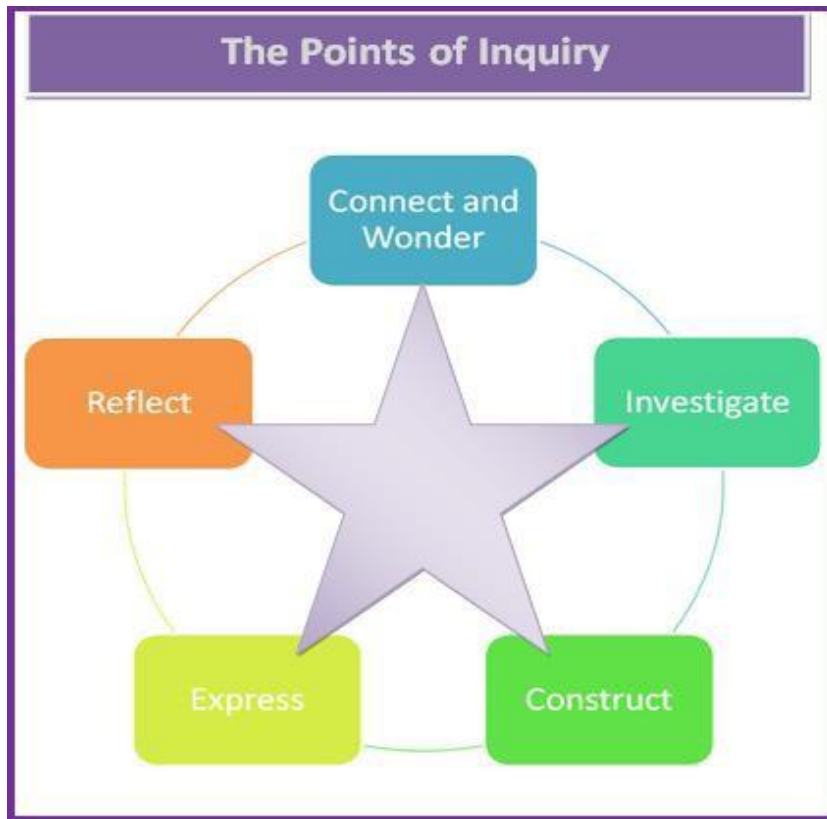
Learning about drug ed should be fun... and engaging.



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Teaching Methods Matter ...



- * **Identify** – express their current thinking
- * **Investigate** – observe, analyze and evaluate knowledge on which to base their thinking
- * **Interpret** – understand evidence & use deductive reasoning to reach conclusions
- * **Imagine** – opening their minds to ‘what if’ scenarios and solutions
- * **Integrate** – make connections between their learning experiences and the real world.





**Teachers need the right
resources to help students
develop the knowledge
and skills they need to be
healthy.**



Learning about drugs should NOT be scary



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Teachers can collaborate and teach across curriculum.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



iMinds - A real-world approach to drug education for Gr. 4-10

- * Focus on building competencies
- * Students explore social and environmental factors that influence their personal attitudes and behaviours related to alcohol and other drugs
- * Based on a constructivist approach, *iMinds engages students*
- * Includes all required materials and rubric
- * Cross-curricular



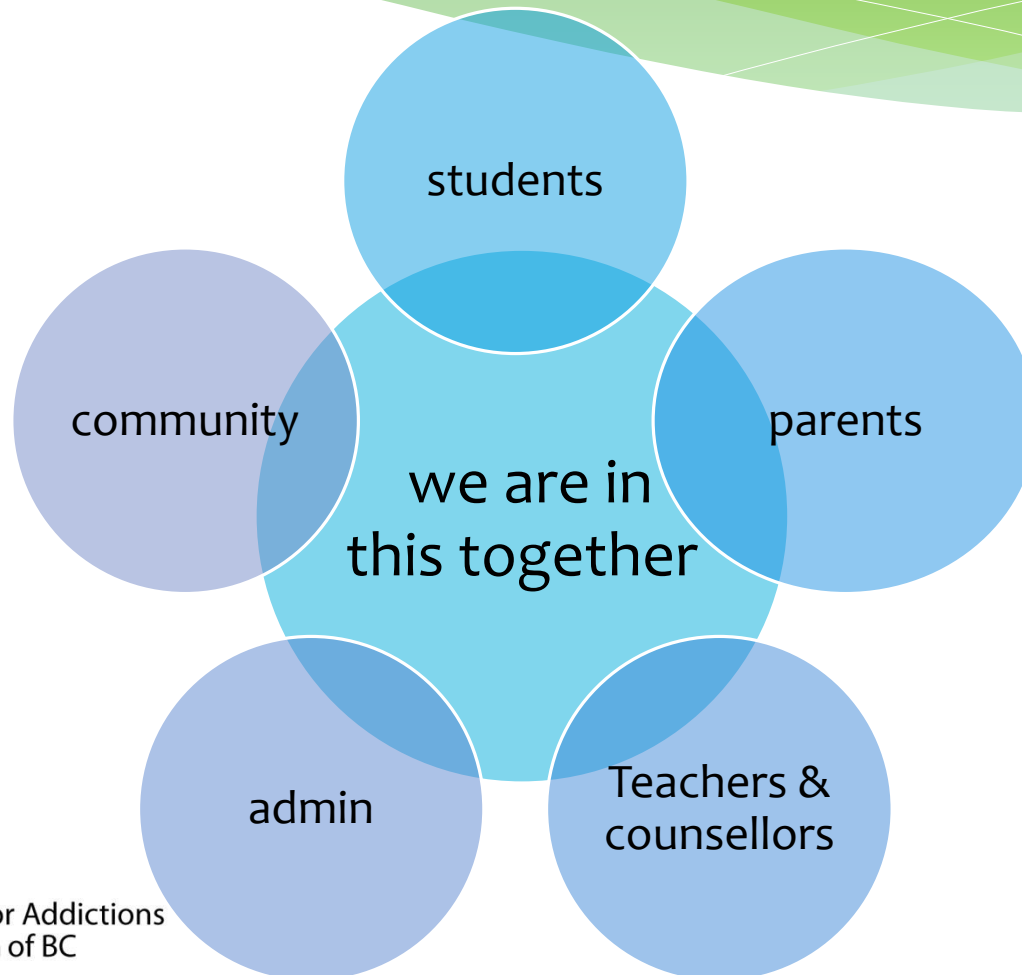
How else can CARBC help ...

www.helpingschools.ca

- * **Cycles** - a film-based learning resource
- * **www.drugsanddriving.ca** – an online cross-curricular resource
- * **Additional instructional support materials**
- * **The Art of Motivation** – online support for using a motivational interviewing approach
- * **Alcohol Reality Check** – self-assessment tool for youth and adults
- * **www.alcoholsense.bc.ca** – for parents
- * **Promising practices summaries**
- * **Consultation, workshops and support**



Power in democratic citizenship ...



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Questions, comments, insights?



Thank you and keep in touch!

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