

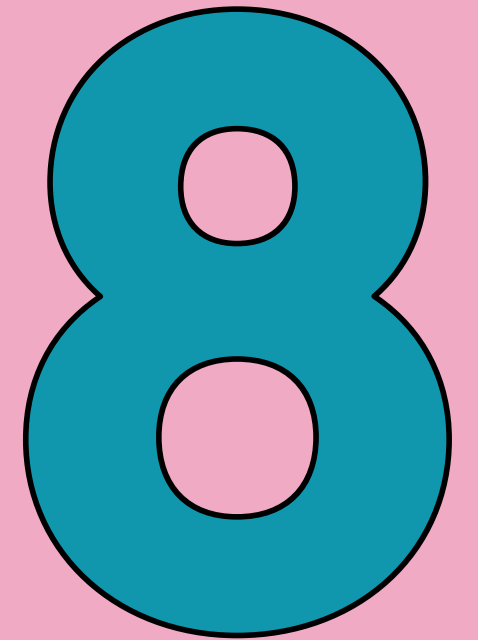


Substance Education in Schools (SEIS) Lunch & Learn Results

June 2023



On April 17, 2023, school staff, youth and community organizations took part in a facilitated discussion at Roots Community Food Centre. While the conversation was wide-ranging, eight main themes emerged as being important for participants when they considered “what’s next” for strengthening substance education in schools. The themes and opportunities are described below.



Navigators / wrap around services

Participants emphasized the need for community-based, flexible, responsive, culturally safe wrap-around services that could be facilitated in connection with and possibly within school settings. Navigators support access to services and help to create safe spaces for students who use substances. Navigators could include trained staff and/or youth navigators.

Schools can increase connection and coordination with community organizations that support youth

Create a visual process map or other tool for school staff and navigators - to map referral pathways, harm reduction and outreach services and other supports

Clarify questions around privacy and reporting

Explore locating services, safe spaces and programs within schools / on site. For example, onsite confidential primary health team, safe space resource room

Training for teachers and guidance counsellors on stigma and trauma-informed approaches

Integrate continuum of substance use and mental health, promote substance use literacy and conversations around stigma into substance education

Normalize and increase awareness of substance use health supports and services in school communities

Integrate awareness weeks/days into schools

Create a process or tool to assess value and risk of one-off presentations

Stigma reduction

Discussion around stigma reduction acknowledged the importance of school connectedness / belonging, trauma-informed approaches, and normalizing conversations around substance use, addictions and mental health.

Start education early and sustain over time

Participants talked about aspects of substance education in schools that deserved special attention, in particular scaffolding substance literacy, starting early, sustaining education over time, building educator capacity around stigma and trauma and using best and promising practices in the way that drug education is delivered to ensure that it is locally relevant, culturally responsive and age/stage appropriate.

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For best and promising practices visit tbdhu.com/SEISproject

Create harm reduction education materials appropriate for teachers, students, parents/families

Explore introducing harm reduction content at earlier ages

Engage peers / PWLE as presenters

Explore offering harm reduction kits and Bundles kits in schools

Harm reduction

Harm reduction was discussed as an important approach to apply the principles of “meeting people where they are at” and stigma reduction, and also as a set of knowledge, skills and services / equipment to reduce substance-related harms. Peers / PWLE were mentioned as impactful messengers of harm reduction messaging.

Teacher training

Participants shared ideas to build educator capacity around stigma and trauma in relation to substance use, and raise awareness of services and supports available to teachers and students.

Seek opportunities for training on stigma, trauma and violence informed approaches and harm reduction

Create discussion tables, take stock of the current understanding of substance use among teachers

Explore team-teaching / mentorship models linking community experts and classroom teachers to build capacity

Provide Indigenous Mental Health training

Increase knowledge of community resources and services

In the longer term: prioritize, support and formalize substance education teacher training, i.e. make it part of overall pre and post professional training, expand ASSIST training to all teachers

Parent / family communication & support

Conversation around parents/caregivers and families revolved around increasing awareness of substance-related information and supports and providing more supports to parents through services and partnerships.

Acknowledging that parents can be hard to reach, consider holding an event that showcases community resources and services and provide incentive for families to participate

Increase parental awareness of youth and substance use – information, resources, services, supports – for example, through school communications or events

Adapt the CCSA Parent Toolkit for our region

Assess what is already happening and explore training programs from established peer-led programs (i.e. Natural Helpers)

Provide education on peer support approaches and best practices.

Explore partnerships with post secondary and community.

Peer support

Participants discussed the possibilities of peer mentorship and education as a powerful way to connect with and empower youth. Peer support approaches should continually ensure inclusivity and include a cultural teachings component.

School credits

The concept of school credits for substance-related interventions was put forward as an innovative approach to supporting students who use substances.

Explore how school credits can be offered to support students building on what is already happening.

For example:

- School credits for treatment in partnership with community agencies
- Collaboration with alternative education
- Offer a cultural healing credit
- Volunteer hours for peer support and sharing circle
- Substance prevention education integrated into a mandatory credit course