

Staying After School? Yes, Please!

Reflection on DASH's 3rd Annual After School Sport and Arts Initiative Community Forum

For two days at the end of February, DASH hosted the third annual [After School Sport and Arts Initiative](#) Community Forum in Richmond, BC. Representatives from eleven school districts across BC came together to share their knowledge and learn about resources and strategies for their after school programs.

The mission of the BC After School Sport and Arts Initiative (ASSAI) is “to invest in enriched after school programming that enhances each participant’s overall health, learning and wellbeing.”

It supports 14 school districts across BC to provide fun, safe, accessible and high-quality programming to students who face barriers to participation in after school activities. DASH has been a key partner in ASSAI since 2011, supporting the development of a model for after school programming that engages hard-to-reach students and connects them to their school communities. DASH also facilitates connections among participating school districts by providing centralized support and organizing activities like the Community Forum.

The annual Community Forum brings together ASSAI program coordinators and delivery staff to participate in workshops and presentations on student engagement, physical activity, arts, and recreation resources.

The event particularly highlighted the value and opportunities that come from being part of a network of after school programs linked through DASH. For example:

- Forum attendees came with experience and skills that they shared with others from around the province. Some shared challenges they are facing and received input from others who had worked on similar projects (e.g., ways to structure drop-in programs, and inclusion of students with disabilities).
- DASH linked attendees with resources from partner organizations and related initiatives including [BC Recreation and Parks Association](#), [ArtStarts](#), and [Action Schools! BC](#).
- The Forum was a reminder to those doing the front-line work that they are part of a larger community of support, which was particularly important for those working in rural or remote school districts.

During the Forum, DASH introduced external resources and strategies that participating school districts can use to enhance their after school programs, while learning about the innovative ways school districts are engaging students in sport and arts. In the unique position of connector, DASH facilitated learning and sharing, taking advantage of the collective knowledge and experience of those attending the Forum. By the time the Forum ended, attendees were far more aware of their connectedness with colleagues from across the province, all working together to support students.

To learn more about the After School Sports and Arts Initiative, click [here](#).