

Drug Education Supports in the Classroom

Start a conversation about drug education with iMinds

“Drug education isn’t what it used to be!” ...and that’s a good thing! ¹

Starting two years ago, Jen Gibson, a teacher at John Stubbs Memorial School (Sooke School District #62), opted to take a more honest, engaging and evidence-based approach in addressing drug education with her students. The approach uses inquiry or project-based learning as its core and helps to foster the resiliency of the young people in her class. Here’s a look at key elements of her approach:

Resilience-based education focuses on capabilities rather than deficits

The goal for Gibson and her students is to focus on promoting health and wellbeing, which includes understanding the various factors and influences that affect people’s behaviours (including but not limited to drug use).

Students learn better when emotionally engaged in the topic and the learning community

Resilience-based drug education needs to engage students in the exploration of human experiences with drugs and trust them to discover meaning. Gibson uses the *iMinds* learning resources, developed for BC schools by the Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC)/University of Victoria, to help with this. “The material helped address so much more than drugs: choices that people make about substance use in general, bullying, how to deal with tough situations, empathy, the importance of healthy relationships, stress management and more. *Lunch with Lenin*, the text for the Grade 9 unit, opened doors to conversations about other key aspects of kids’ lives,” says Gibson.

The factors that impact resilience do not reside only within individuals

Many of the most influential factors relate to relationships and community norms. Drug education needs to strengthen relationships and develop citizens. This requires a far more sophisticated discussion of topics like social influence and social responsibility than has been the norm in the drug education of the past.

Honesty prevails

Let’s face it, sometime drugs can be helpful and even pleasant (think for example of that caffeinated beverage you may start your day with or the glass of wine that is often enjoyed at dinner). But they can also be harmful. The approach Jen uses helps prepare her students to make effective decisions in the complex real world in which they live, learn, work and play. Her colleague, Grade 7 teacher Duncan McIndoe, has also put *iMinds* to use with his classes, and shares, “The conversations we had surfaced a multitude of issues and challenges kids face, and catered to meaningful dialogue that really resonated with them. I was also very pleased to see how the students ran with the project at the end of the unit – they loved it!”

¹ This article draws on a 2012 blog posting about resiliency-based drug education authored by Dan Reist, Centre for Addictions Research of BC. To read it in full click [here](#).

For more on evidence-based approaches to promoting health and addressing substance use visit the [CARBC website](#). The cross-curricular [iMinds units](#) for Grades 4-10 are downloadable free of charge and include everything teachers need, including rubrics.