

SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION, EDUCATION AND INTERVENTION IN BC SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

A Webinar on a Multi-Tiered, Developmental Approach for K-12 Schools in Canada

October 20, 2026

Welcome! We will begin the presentation shortly.
Please note that your microphones have been muted
and your cameras are turned off.



We acknowledge with gratitude, that we are joining from the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of First Nations who have nurtured and cared for the lands and waters around us for all time. We give thanks for the opportunity to live, work and support care here.



BC Children's Thriving School Communities Team

The BC Children's Thriving School Communities team works collaboratively to enhance capacity for system-wide changes in school communities that improve student mental health and well-being by *providing coaching, resources and professional learning.*

For resources and information,
visit [keltymentalhealth.ca/
school-professionals](https://keltymentalhealth.ca/school-professionals)

Housekeeping

- Attendees are automatically muted and cameras are turned off.
- Please submit questions for the speakers through the “Q&A” function.
- Please submit technical questions or comments through the “Chat” function
- At the end of the webinar, a survey will pop up that we invite you to complete
- The webinar will be recorded. The slides and the webinar recording will be emailed to everyone who registered.
- This webinar was developed for the context of British Columbia. If you are in another jurisdiction please consult local health and school authorities for further information.

Speakers



Dr. Emily Jenkins



Dr. Tonje Molyneux



BC CHILDREN'S THRIVING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES · OCTOBER 20, 2026

Introducing the Standard

School-Based Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Intervention: A Multi-Tiered and Developmental Approach for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Schools in Canada

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WHY THIS MATTERS

Schools shape health, and health shapes learning



Drug-related deaths are a leading cause of mortality for Canadians aged 10 to 18.



Vaping and polysubstance use among students continue to rise.



School responses vary widely, and some still rely on approaches shown to be ineffective or harmful.

WHY SCHOOLS

Schools are social and structural **determinants of health**, uniquely positioned for upstream prevention that builds belonging, engagement, and resilience.

ANCHORING CHANGE

A national initiative, now in Phase 2



WE ARE HERE

PHASE 1 · COMPLETE

Characterizing the landscape:
what schools need

PHASE 2 · NOW

Making the change:
implementation supports &
evaluation

PHASE 3 · NEXT

Optimizing outcomes &
sustaining impact

Phase 1 finding: school leaders asked for clear, evidence-informed guidance: frameworks, not just more programs.

WHY A STANDARD?

Why a standard, not another program?



Consensus-built

Developed under the management of CSA Group with a multidisciplinary committee, youth and Indigenous interest holders, and national public review



Consistent

A shared, pan-Canadian reference point that reduces variation across schools, districts, and jurisdictions



Clear about roles

Each clause names who is responsible and how strongly a practice is recommended



Built to be used & improved

Voluntary, meets schools where they are, trackable over time, and governed for continuous improvement

HOW IT'S BUILT

Three tiers, three developmental stages

	K–Grade 5 Early/middle childhood	Grades 6–9 Early/middle adolescence	Grades 10–12 Late adolescence
Tier 1 Universal	Belonging; routines for emotion management; avoid fear-based and abstinence-only approaches	Belonging; healthy norms and accurate information; support through school transitions	Belonging; examine risk and protective factors; strategies to minimize harms
Tier 2 Targeted	Trauma-informed supports for early risk; supportive adult connections	Trauma-informed supports; supportive adults; strengths-based policies	Supportive adults; healthy coping strategies; strengths-based policies
Tier 3 Intensive	Student-centred supports; coordinated wraparound supports	School-based mentorship; embedded supports; referrals to care	Individualized support plans; education continuity; referrals to care

Within a Health Promoting Schools approach:

Environments & relationships

Teaching & learning

Partnerships & services

Policy

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Five principles shape how every clause is read



Equity, diversity, inclusion & decolonization

Remove barriers; co-develop with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners



Trauma-informed practice

Safety, predictability, choice; avoid shame and re-traumatization



Culturally responsive practice

Build on students' identities, languages, and community strengths



Harm minimization

Prevent or delay use; reduce harms; non-punitive responses



Student voice

Young people as contributors, not just recipients

READING THE STANDARD

Shall, should, may: signalling potential for impact

Shall

Greatest potential for impact

“School administrators shall lead efforts to nurture a strong sense of school belonging...”

TIER 1 · ALL STAGES

Should

Well-supported and recommended

“School staff should connect students experiencing substance use and related harms with supportive adults within the school...”

TIER 3 · GRADES 6–12

May

Promising, or depends on local context and capacity

Used where evidence is emerging, or where a practice is appropriate depending on the setting.

Who: each clause names policymakers, administrators, or staff. *The Standard is voluntary: “shall” is guidance, not law.*

IN THE BC CONTEXT

Strengthening work already underway in BC



BC PHE curriculum

Substance use learning across K–10, e.g., Grade 10: physical, emotional, and social aspects of psychoactive substance use

THE STANDARD ADDS

Surrounds teaching with Tier 2–3 supports, policy, school environments, and partnerships



Mental Health in Schools Strategy

A whole-school system that promotes positive mental health: compassionate systems leadership, capacity building, mental health in the classroom

THE STANDARD ADDS

Brings a substance use lens to the same whole-school approach: SEL, mental health literacy, trauma-informed practice



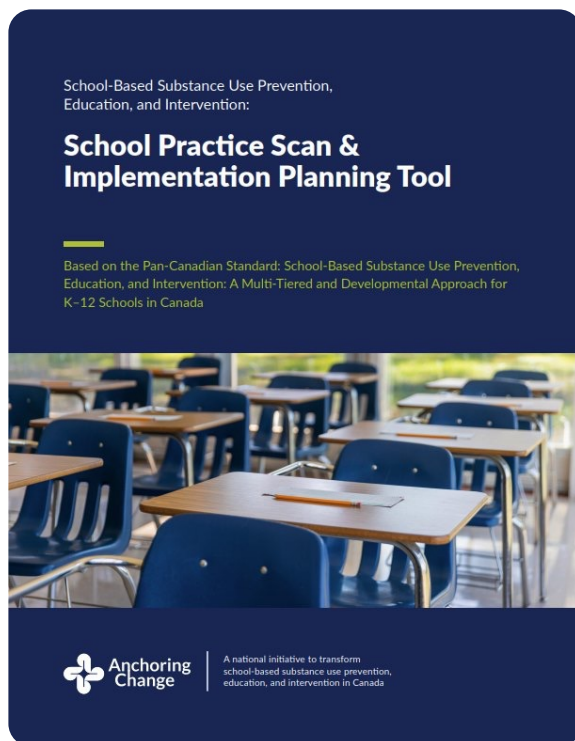
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expect respect & a safe education: safe, caring, and inclusive school communities, with mental health and substance use resources

THE STANDARD ADDS

Complements with belonging and care-based, non-exclusionary responses

“Adopting the Standard does not change what BC teachers teach... it strengthens the system that surrounds and supports that teaching.” BC PHE Alignment Brief



SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

The School Practice Scan & Implementation Planning Tool



Review

Look at current practice against the Standard's clauses



Recognize

Identify where you're already aligned



Prioritize

Choose the gaps that matter most locally



Plan & track

Build an action plan and track progress

Developing

Building

Sustaining

An implementation continuum that recognizes that schools start in different places and are already doing many things that align with the Standard's recommendations.

SUPPORTED BY WELLSTREAM

A supported process for schools



Complete the Practice Scan with support

Learn where your school aligns with the Standard, and where there's room to grow.



Choose 1–2 growth areas

Select priority clauses and develop an action plan.



Identify resources & supports

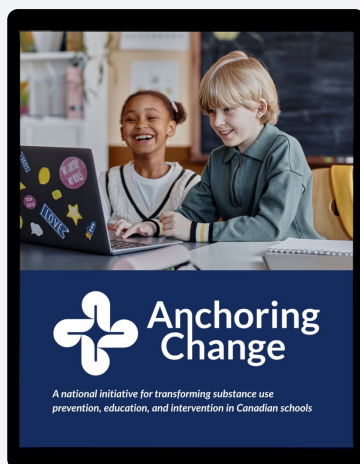
Find what will help strengthen practice in the areas you chose.

Interested? Connect with us at info@anchoringchange.ca or use the QR code at the end.

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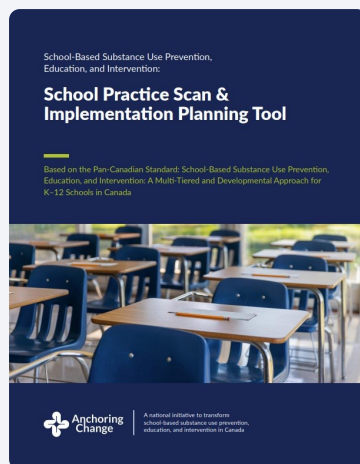
Resources to get started

Resource hub in development: testing this fall



The Standard

Full clause language, K–12



School Practice Scan & Implementation Planning Tool

See where you are and plan next steps



Alignment Briefs

Including the BC PHE curriculum



Executive Briefs

For roles across the system, including school mental health professionals and school boards

UP NEXT: PANEL DISCUSSION

Thank you

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Connie Easton

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Thank you for Joining!



Thriving
School
Communities

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