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HEALTHY SCHOOLS GROW HEALTHY KIDS

Any gardener will tell you that watching plants flourish through the summer is a rewarding experience and gives a great sense of accomplishment. Healthy plants require a good foundation, strong roots, and regular tending. Children are very similar - for them to flourish they need healthy environments, strong connections to family, and adults in their lives who show they care!

Classrooms and school grounds, where students spend at least 25 hours a week, are a great environment for nourishing our children. Along with learning the basics like reading and mathematics, schools provide lessons about respecting the differences in others, acting in a responsible and caring fashion, and they teach strategies to help children thrive in our ever-changing world. Schools that promote a sense of belonging see both positive academic and health-related outcomes. The good news is presently the majority of B.C. students are happy to be at school and feel safe there.

According to the BC Adolescent Health Survey, students who reported feeling connected at school were more likely to describe their mental health as good or excellent and were more likely to see themselves continuing their education beyond high school. Students who had an adult in their family they trusted if faced with a serious problem were also more likely to describe their mental health as good or excellent and were more likely to have post-secondary education plans. Approachable adults contribute to a healthy environment!

Healthy Schools BC encourages schools to use a multi-pronged approach to create a healthy school environment. These include: creating school environments that are safe and caring, teaching and learning that encourages information seeking and problem solving, creating and enforcing school policies that encourage appropriate behavior, and connecting with community. Supportive school environments encourage youth to stay in school, graduate from high school, and they give them a better chance at post-secondary education.

Healthy schools are like a nutrient rich garden for growing healthy children. With a good foundation, strong roots and regular tending kids can flourish.

To learn more about Healthy Schools BC visit <http://healthyschoolsbc.ca> or more information on the BC Adolescent Health Survey visit http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/From_Hastings_Street_To_Haida_Gwaii.pdf.

AUTHOR: VALERIE PITMAN IS A HEALTHY SCHOOLS REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE COORDINATOR WITH INTERIOR HEALTH