

Teacher of the Month: Jacquie Poulin

“Raising awareness about healthy choices has a positive impact”

Each month, DASH shines a spotlight on a member of the healthy schools community making a difference in BC schools. This month, DASH is pleased to introduce Jacquie Poulin. As the principal at Forest Park Elementary School in SD #68, Jacquie is very active in promoting comprehensive school health. Since 2006, she has been participating in the Healthy Schools Network (HSN) as an HSN Leader, using an inquiry approach to improve the well-being of the students at the school. This year, Jacquie is supporting the students at Forest Park Elementary in the HSN Transition Trial, which focuses on putting students at the centre of their learning through student-led inquiry with teachers in a central role. Jacquie is also participating in the After School Sport Initiative in order to help encourage all students who have barriers to participation to engage in after school sport and art activities. Jacquie is a very valuable member of the healthy schools community! We had the opportunity to ask Jacquie a few questions about her involvement with comprehensive school health and her work in healthy schools.

1. What inspired you first to get involved with comprehensive school health?

I have been involved with many aspects of healthy living for many years. About 12 years ago, I was involved in a local committee, *Move More, Eat Well*, which was intended to promote healthy choices and to build partnerships. This committee included members from the school district, the local health authority, health professionals, Parks and Recreation, university personnel, and community organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I worked together with this group for about 4 years, and, during that time, also wrote a newsletter for the school district that promoted healthy choices for families. Following my involvement in this committee, I was a school district representative involved in the first draft stages of the Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in BC Schools, I participated on a committee to create the Healthy Living Performance Standards, and I am currently an Action Schools! BC regional trainer. I have always had a passion for healthy living choices including physical activity, nutrition, and social/emotional health, so working with the comprehensive school health approach has been quite natural.

2. As a result of your participation in healthy schools initiatives, what is the overall impact they've had on students, the school and the broader school community?

I first want to say that there are so many passionate people involved in healthy schools initiatives that have a positive impact on the school community. I do not believe that my participation has had any more direct impact than anybody else who is passionate about providing opportunities for our children to make healthy choices. Raising the awareness for everyone – adults and children – about healthy choices has a positive impact. I believe that, any time children are active, it has a positive impact on their overall health, including physical, emotional and social health, as well as academically on their learning ability. I don't feel I should 'take credit' because I have just been one of the many voices promoting physical activity, having nutritious options for our students, and ensuring students feel secure emotionally. It is a joint effort with many voices and our collective efforts have a positive impact on students' health and learning.

3. What healthy schools accomplishment are you most proud of?

Working with the Healthy Living Performance Standards committee was a great networking opportunity and a real learning experience for me. I grew so much, taking the time to reflect, debate, discuss, and re-debate the language and bigger picture of the Healthy Living Performance Standards. Also, working in the school district to promote healthy schools with individual teachers, administrators, parents, and students has been a meaningful experience.

4. What advice could you give to teachers wanting to get involved with healthy school initiatives?

Take a look at what you are already doing – you will be surprised to see that you are probably already doing many things that you can build upon rather than starting from scratch. Start small, pick one aspect that you are passionate about and go from there. Also, just jump in! We are all friendly and willing to help out anyone who wants to give something a try to support fostering healthy schools.