

Teacher of the Month: Introducing Ian Grbavec

“Start small, stay focused, and ask for help”

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 Ian Grbavec. Ian is a teacher with [Frances Kelsey Secondary](#) in Mill Bay and a community soccer coach. Ian brings years of rural, urban and international teaching experience and is also an active member of the [Board of Directors](#) of DASH. We had the opportunity to ask Ian a few questions about his involvement with comprehensive school health and about his work in healthy schools.

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

I look at my own children for inspiration. What is the best possible learning environment that could be created for students? The notion that our community trusts educators to create a healthy school environment in order to learn. What sort of school would I want my kids to attend? Without a doubt, a healthy school. I believe most parents want this as well. The comprehensive school health framework assists schools to create this healthy environment. I also receive inspiration from a colleague of mine, Patricia MacKay, who lives and breathes the idea of creating a healthy school environment.

2) What healthy schools accomplishment are you most proud of?

I think that two things come to mind....1. Being part of a group of educators, students and parents that helped create an annual Balance Day at Frances Kelsey. It is a full day focused on health and wellness. 2. A number of years ago, I was part of a group under the direction of Dr. Linda Kaser that helped transform a concrete courtyard into a beautiful outdoor garden. The project showed that, when a group of dedicated individuals and their families work together, anything is possible.

3) At DASH, we commonly hear that time constraints are a barrier for participation in healthy school initiatives. How do you approach this issue?

Time constraints, we hear, are always an issue. Looking at how to create a healthy classroom or school is not a second thought or something on the side of our desks. Partnerships work! Share or, more importantly, co-create your healthy school goals with parents, community groups and colleagues at other schools. We always hear that healthy kids learn better, so why wouldn't we start with health in our classrooms? I believe that creating a healthy school is not a time issue; it is the most important issue.

4) What role do you believe students can play in supporting teachers with their work in healthy school programs and initiatives?

We kid ourselves if we think we have all the answers. Students, as equal partners, have a voice. When we truly believe that students are equal in helping support a healthy school environment, we should not be surprised if expectations are exceeded!

5) What advice can you give to teachers who want to get involved?

Creating a healthy school environment requires a small network of dedicated individuals with a simple goal. Start small and stay focused. Ask for help and resources. It is amazing how much you learn when you say, “I need help understanding....”

Are you a teacher and want to share your story with our readers? We want to hear from you! Please contact us [here](#) for more information on partnering with DASH.