

# Supporting Child Development After the Bell

## The B.C. After School Sport and Arts Initiative (ASSAI)



Vision: All children in B.C. live a healthy expressive life through physical and creative activity

### What is ASSAI?

ASSAI, the After School Sport and Arts Initiative, provides fun, safe, accessible and high-quality after school programming to BC children in Kindergarten to Grade 8.

ASSAI programs are designed specifically to reduce barriers to participation that children may face (e.g., due to financial, social, cultural, behavioural, geographical, and other factors). ASSAI also provides resources to support meaningful engagement of children with disabilities.

In 2015/2016, ASSAI programs reached:

17 School districts	32 Communities
>165 Schools	>6,200 Individual children

### Who is involved?

ASSAI is delivered using a collaborative approach. Leadership at multiple levels contributes to the health and learning of children in the program:

<p><b>Province</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Province of B.C. through the Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development provides funding and vision</li> <li>DASH BC coordinates support and resources for community programs (e.g., connections to partners and training, development of resources)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School districts seek out community partners, identify their target population, hire and train program leaders, and design programs unique to their local context</li> </ul>
<p><b>School</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School staff refer students to programs and share equipment and facilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/caregivers register children for programs and communicate with school and program staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>Child</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children go to the program and provide input into what activities they like best</li> </ul>

### What impact is ASSAI having on children and school communities?

Preliminary findings from phase 1 evaluation:

#### Builds a positive school culture

ASSAI promotes positive connections within the school community, building upon what is going on during the school day. Children connect to caring adults who create a safe and fun environment for them to overcome anxieties and try new experiences. At the same time, children make friends in different grades and learn new skills. All of this develops their confidence and helps them enjoy school more, from the classroom to the playground.

#### Improves equity and accessibility

ASSAI has a leveling effect. While programs are designed to be welcoming to all, leaders use specific strategies to engage children who would not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in out-of-school activities. To reduce barriers, programs take place right in the school, immediately after school, and are offered at little or no cost. Activities are tailored to the diverse interests and skill levels of children. To further support meaningful engagement, ASSAI programs have a "person of rapport," a designated staff who connects with individual participants and provides behaviour support.

#### Strengthens key life skills



- Development of **social skills**
- Increased **connectedness** to school, peers, and caring adults
- New skills to be **active** and **creative** for life
- Improved **resilience** and **self regulation**



*"It makes me feel wanted, like people want to hang out with me. It makes me feel happy, and know there's a place to hang out after school"*

- ASSAI participant

#### Because of ASSAI...

- "I get along better with my classmates"
- "I get along better with my teachers"
- "I am better at making friends"
- "I have learned that I can do things I didn't think I could do before"
- "I am better at handling whatever comes my way"
- "I am better at sport/physical activities than before"
- "I am better in art, music, dance, and/or theatre"



### What does inter-sectoral collaboration in ASSAI look like?

In ASSAI, school districts work with supportive partners who want to contribute to the goal of fostering health, physical literacy, and creativity among children. The focus of collaboration looks different in every ASSAI community. From the community groups that visit after school programs to teach a specific topic, to the organizations that provide funding, equipment, staff, and consultation, to the ongoing co-planning that occurs through community working groups, ASSAI has seen several examples of inter-sectoral collaboration. They demonstrate the value of good working relationships and a common vision among partners. Here are some examples:

#### Health Promotion Education

ASSAI programs provide opportunities for education on health and safety. Participants eat and learn about nutritious snacks. They learn the safety principles of activities like cycling and skateboarding from community coaches.

#### Collaborative Program Design & Delivery

Partners contribute skills and resources to programs. In one ASSAI site, an anti-violence art project for girls was a collaborative effort. It involved elementary school students, secondary school mentors, school support staff, a First Nations artist, and community organizations such as the sexual assault centre.

#### Inter-sectoral Planning

In many ASSAI communities, the school district, health authority, health promoting schools coordinators, and social service agencies are all part of community coordinating tables. They work together to identify priority issues and actions to support child health.

After school programs offer a wide variety of opportunities to support child health, learning, and well-being. Health, education, and community partners can contribute in many ways. Think about what you have to offer or what support you need to make a positive impact on children in your community.

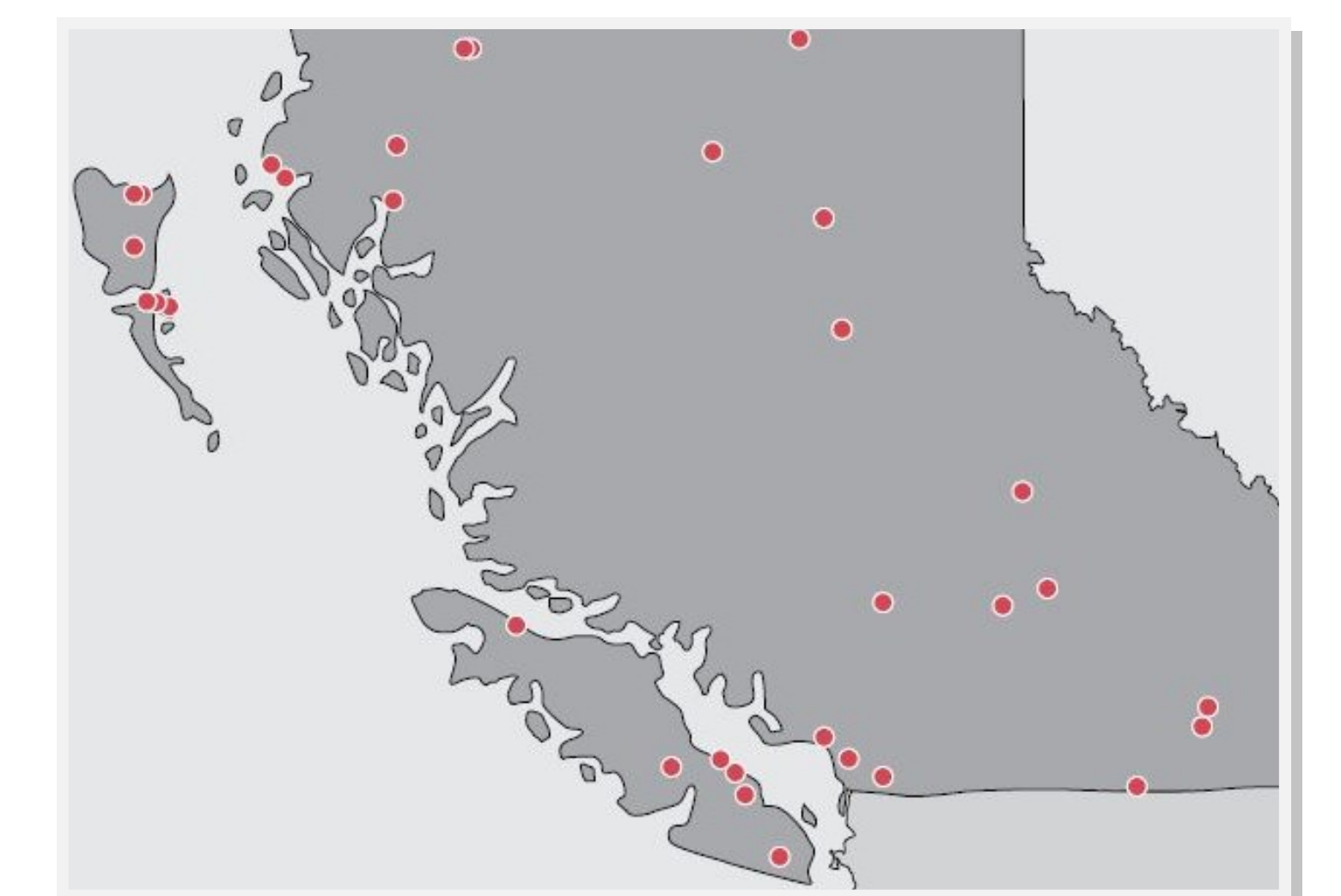
### What makes ASSAI successful?

ASSAI programs focus on 4 key features:

- School-based** → School is where kids are and can be a community hub for after school programs
- High quality** → Quality programs ensure that children and youth are safe, engaged, and having fun
- Accessible** → Accessible programs are intentional about how they reduce barriers to participation
- Capacity building** → Building capacity means being committed to continuous learning and improvement

ASSAI programs use a **strength-based approach**—a positive perspective that emphasizes children's strengths and assets rather than their needs. Programs and program leaders:

- Show respect and kindness to all students
- Promote opportunities for belonging
- Provide opportunities for caring relationships
- Emphasize cooperation rather than competition
- Support participants to discover their strengths and capacities
- Provide strong modelling and healthy attitudes



ASSAI participating communities

Interested to learn more about ASSAI?  
Email us at [info@dashbc.ca](mailto:info@dashbc.ca)

