



# A health literacy resource for BC schools

*iMinds* is a drug-related health literacy program designed for students in **Grades 4 through 10**. Each module of the program features easy-to-implement lessons that meet numerous *Prescribed Learning Outcomes* and help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to survive and thrive in our drug-using world.

**i**

= individual,  
interdependent, identity

**Minds**

= used to understand  
and navigate our world,  
influenced by social  
and environmental  
factors largely beyond  
our individual control

## our drug-using world?

People around the world have been using caffeine, alcohol and other drugs for various reasons for thousands of years. While often used for medicinal reasons, most drugs have also been used for social, recreational and spiritual reasons.

In Canada, many people think the word “drug” refers only to psychoactive (aka “mind-altering”) substances that are currently illegal, such as cannabis and cocaine. But all substances that change the way we think, feel and behave—including alcohol, caffeine and many prescription medications—are, in fact, drugs.

## What are iMinds’ objectives?

*iMinds* aims to give young people an opportunity to

- understand the long relationship between humans and drugs such as caffeine, tobacco and alcohol
- analyze social and environmental influences related to drug use and other lifestyle choices
- extend their thinking by personalizing and explaining relationships among ideas and information related to drug use
- use a variety of communication skills to gather, evaluate and explain information and ideas related to successfully navigating a drug-using world
- describe strategies for attaining and maintaining physical, emotional and social health during childhood, adolescence and young adulthood

## What makes iMinds stand out?

*iMinds* promotes mental health literacy by engaging students in honest, thoughtful discussions and projects that involve issues relevant to their daily lives and futures. Rather than overloading them with health information—or trying to scare them away from using drugs—the lessons encourage students to both express and think critically about their current beliefs, attitudes and behaviours related to drugs they know about from their home, culture and society.

Children need knowledge and skills to navigate their world of pressures, promises and panaceas. For this reason, the Centre for Addictions Research of BC at the University of Victoria has been working with schools and other partners to develop learning resources—including *iMinds*—that help teachers help their students survive and thrive in today’s world.



## *iMinds*: A health literacy resource for BC schools (Cont'd)

Students examine the factors that influence the way they think, feel and behave. They also learn about and discuss ways to address problems related to health and drug use that may arise in themselves, their families or their communities.

Drawing on a social ecological model, *iMinds* is based on the idea that awareness, actions, decisions and behaviours are influenced by multiple factors: personal factors requiring self-management skills, relationships requiring social skills, and the physical and cultural environment requiring navigational skills. By addressing all three areas, students develop healthy connectedness—a sense of both autonomy and social belonging.

### What do teachers like about *iMinds*?

*iMinds* does NOT require teachers to be “experts” on drugs or mental health. Instead, teachers serve as facilitators (versus drug prevention experts) who explore ideas and issues along with their students. *iMinds* is based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. This involves the belief that

learning occurs when students are actively involved in the process of carving out their own meaning of things they both experience and come to “know” from various sources.

Rather than passively receiving information, learners are motivated to think critically and become actively involved in the pursuit of knowledge. Together, the class identifies their current knowledge, explores other ideas and opinions, and acquires and demonstrates new knowledge related to drugs and mental health. (Note: Teachers who would like to learn more about mental health and drug-related issues can visit [heretohelp.bc.ca](http://heretohelp.bc.ca) or [carbc.ca](http://carbc.ca).)

Implementing *iMinds* requires only basic preparation and materials. Each module consists of easy-to-follow lesson plans that involve student interaction and activities for demonstrating knowledge and skills. Each individual lesson plan features

- a list of the supplies needed or suggested
- step-by-step instructions
- master copies of all the handouts and transparencies
- rubrics for evaluation purposes



*iMinds* students are taught to critically assess the various influences and choices that shape their personal and social lives, now and in the future.



### *iMinds* at-a-glance

**Grade 4** students become explorers who both seek and examine ideas about the benefits, risks and harms of using medications, caffeine and other drugs.

**Grade 5** students compare the role of sugar in our society with the role of medications and other drugs. By the end of the module, students know more about self-management techniques and how to find help with problems if needed.

**Grade 6** students become detectives and examine “clues”—influences and behaviours—to solve a case involving three fictional students who keep falling asleep in class. Students then learn how to apply new knowledge to their own lives.

**Grade 7** students learn about the role of substance use in ancient societies in order to gain a broader perspective. They also learn ways to navigate today’s world where drug use is also common.

**Grade 8** students become behavioural scientists who study media and its influence on teen behaviour. They learn how to gather, analyze and interpret data as they work in teams on a research project related to mental health or substance use.

**Grade 9** students strengthen their understanding of the literary forms of short story and parallel poem while exploring issues surrounding the use of alcohol and other drugs.

**Grade 10** students develop their critical thinking skills while learning about and performing formal debates related to using alcohol and other drugs.

Developed by:



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