

Dear parents and caregivers,

As our children mature, they are faced with important life decisions in a number of areas. Health education and critical thinking skills become increasingly important in navigating the school aged years. The Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Coastal Health offers students an opportunity to enhance these skills. **The SACY Teen Engagement Program (STEP)** is a structured, three-day program that incorporates education, information, visioning and skill building focused on health promotion and prevention. Our approach is interactive and facilitates engaged participation and self-reflection.

**STEP facilitates activities and discussions in areas such as:**

- Adolescent development
- Critical thinking skills/decision making
- Exploring interests and goals
- Health education and risk assessment related to alcohol and drugs
- Personal boundaries and values
- Healthy relationships; friendships, peer groups, adult allies
- Roles and responsibilities in family during teen years

The program is tailored to provide opportunities for youth to make connections with adults who will be supportive as they reflect on the issues that are relevant to them. After STEP, students can participate in discussions at school with the SACY Youth Engagement Worker to continue working on goals and to join in with community learning activities.

**Who attends STEP?**

Many students chose to come to STEP to learn and to develop strategies for positive growth. Some attend to gain leadership training by broadening their knowledge and perspective, promoting awareness for themselves and their school community. Additionally, STEP is an excellent resource that can serve as an education-based alternative to traditional suspension.

**For families**

We are happy to partner with families in support of students. At any time you can attend a SACY parent workshop. Topics include communication skills for parents, guiding teens, strengthening parent-teen relationships, and understanding teen development and drug or alcohol use. Some ways to work together are:

- Meet or talk with SACY staff to answer your questions and explore how STEP can benefit your child.
- You are invited to the STEP portable Tuesday mornings (9:00–9:30) to drop in and visit the program.
- Meet together to explore community resources and opportunities to support your family.

STEP runs every week from Tuesday through Thursday, 9:30am–2:00pm. We work with the school to help students choose the best week to attend, with permission to miss classes. Students may attend with a friend. For more information, please visit our website ([www.vsb.bc.ca/SACY/STEP](http://www.vsb.bc.ca/SACY/STEP)), or contact me directly.

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