

EASE 8-12 OVERVIEW *for* EDUCATORS

EASE - Everyday Anxiety Strategies for Educators

EASE 8-12 was developed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development in 2021 in response to requests from British Columbia educators following the creation of EASE K-7 in 2019. Combining constructive feedback and insight from educators, school counsellors and experts in the field of childhood anxiety from all over the province, EASE 8-12 was developed as a tangible and practical approach to supporting students' mental health and building the capacity of grade 8-12 educators.

Anxiety in Schools


Typical adolescent development includes feeling anxious from time to time, and youth generally learn how to cope with these feelings through their daily life experiences. However, not all forms of anxiety are part of healthy development. It is estimated that 5.2% (39,000) of children and youth in BC will be affected by an anxiety disorder.¹ The McCreary Centre Society's 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey stated that 15% of BC youth reported that they suffer from a mental health condition, the most common being anxiety disorders and panic attacks.²

Early signs of anxiety can be missed when youth struggle silently with internal worries and physical distress, or when anxiety presents as defiance, aggression, disruptive behaviours or a lack of focus and attention. Left unaddressed, anxiety can negatively impact a student's relationships, academic success, and day-to-day functioning, potentially developing into something more serious as they grow older. Therefore, it is important to help all students learn coping strategies to manage anxiety early on, and EASE, a classroom-based, universal prevention approach, was developed for this very purpose.

EASE 8-12 is:

- ✓ Universal - Can benefit all students
- ✓ Flexible - Designed for all B.C. secondary teachers, educators and support staff and can be incorporated into all subject areas.
- ✓ Adaptable - Content can be adapted for small or large groups and for specific learning and cultural needs
- ✓ Evidence-informed - Grounded in evidence-based research
- ✓ Aligned with BC curriculum - Supports Core Competencies and other learning standards

BC Curriculum

 EASE aligns directly with the BC Ministry of Education curriculum, specifically the Physical Health and Education learning standards, as well as other courses, while also addressing the Core Competencies. EASE was designed to provide educators with flexibility and choice and can be adapted to fit all subjects and any classroom context. These resources may also help enhance and support students' social and emotional learning skills, while also building their own skills in recognizing and responding to the mental health needs of a wide range of learners.

Indigenous Perspectives

EASE’s holistic approach to understanding anxiety in self and in context (including the heart, the mind, the body, and within a safe classroom climate and community) complements the [First Peoples Principles of Learning](#) and supports the integration of locally adapted and applied Indigenous perspectives.

EASE strategies are not prescriptive. Educators are encouraged to adapt them according to specific traditional teachings from the community in which they are located. Authentic adaptations reflect a community’s cultural uniqueness, practices and traditional beliefs, using language, land, ceremony, stories and traditional teachings (Fiedeldey-Van Dijk et al., 2016 Yellow Bird, 2015).

For more information on how to connect EASE strategies with Indigenous perspectives, consult with your local First Nations support staff, Elders, language teachers and storytellers; or explore [Authentic First Peoples Resources](#).

An Evidence-Based Approach

EASE resources are grounded in the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), an evidence-based approach underlying anxiety prevention and intervention strategies. In CBT, students learn about anxiety and specific coping skills to help them manage anxiety and situations that cause distress. One of the core principles of CBT is that thoughts, feelings and behaviours are connected and that changing one can therefore influence the others.

Using the EASE 8-12 Classroom Resources

- Classroom resources have been created for both educators and students, providing concise and tangible tips and activities that can be incorporated into daily practice. They are available throughout the course and as downloadable PDFs at the end of the course.
- Educators can use the educator resources by embedding them in daily classroom routines with the entire class, or they can use them with students individually. There are also student resources that educators can give to students for their personal use.
- Curricular connections to the Core Competencies, Physical Health and Education, and other subject areas are provided.
- All recommended resources (e.g., apps, videos, websites) are provided as a courtesy rather than an endorsement, and educators are encouraged to substitute similar resources of their choosing to align with their teaching style and/or the learning context.

Acknowledgements

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¹ J. Barican, D. Yung, C. Schwartz et al., “Prevalence of Childhood Mental Disorders in High-Income Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis to Inform Policymaking,” *Evidence-Based Mental Health* (July 2021), <https://ebmh.bmj.com/content/ebmental/early/2021/07/09/ebmental-2021-300277.full.pdf>

² McCreary Centre Society (2019), *Balance and Connection in BC: The Health and Well-Being of Our Youth—Results of the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey*, https://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/balance_and_connection.pdf