

Introduction

- Significant gaps in substance use education have been identified in Canadian students [1-4].
- Youth and young adults aged 15 to 24 face the highest rates of substance use disorders in Canada [5]. Prevention and harm reduction is essential to best support youth.
- Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment (DECYDE) is a drug education strategy that supports teachers, guardians, and youth.
- DECYDE's goal is to empower youth to make safe and informed choices regarding their substance use health.

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Method

- **Purpose:** This mixed-methods study explored teacher's comfort with delivering harm reduction, trauma-informed, and skills-based substance use education and assess their perspectives on student receptiveness and effectiveness in meeting curriculum outcomes.
- **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:** Teachers teaching health in an elementary or junior high school in Newfoundland and Labrador. All teachers received DECYDE professional learning before participating.
- **Data Collection:** Feedback on classroom materials and resources through a survey, a detailed feedback form, and qualitative interviews.
- **Data Analysis:** Survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics; qualitative interviews and open-ended survey responses were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis using NVivo.

Results

Table 1. Demographics (n=10)

Demographics	n (%)
Sex	
Female	9 (90%)
Age	
18-34	4 (40%)
35+	6 (60%)
Community size*	
Rural	4 (40%)
Small	3 (30%)
Large	3 (30%)
Grades taught	
Elementary (4-6)	7 (70%)
Junior high (7-9)	3 (30%)

*Rural: Less than 1,000 people, Small population centre: 1,000 to 30,000 people, Large urban population centre: 100,000 people or greater

- 10 teachers participated (Table 1):
 - 4 reviewed the materials on the website. All agreed or strongly agreed that the materials were relevant, they planned to use it in the classroom, and that the website was easy to navigate. Some minor suggestions were provided to improve some of the infographics.
 - 6 teachers pilot tested the lesson plans in the classroom and completed a feedback form and participated in a 1-hour interview.
 - Four main themes with subthemes were identified, including skills-based health education, decision making, substance use, and student experiences (Figure 1)

Results

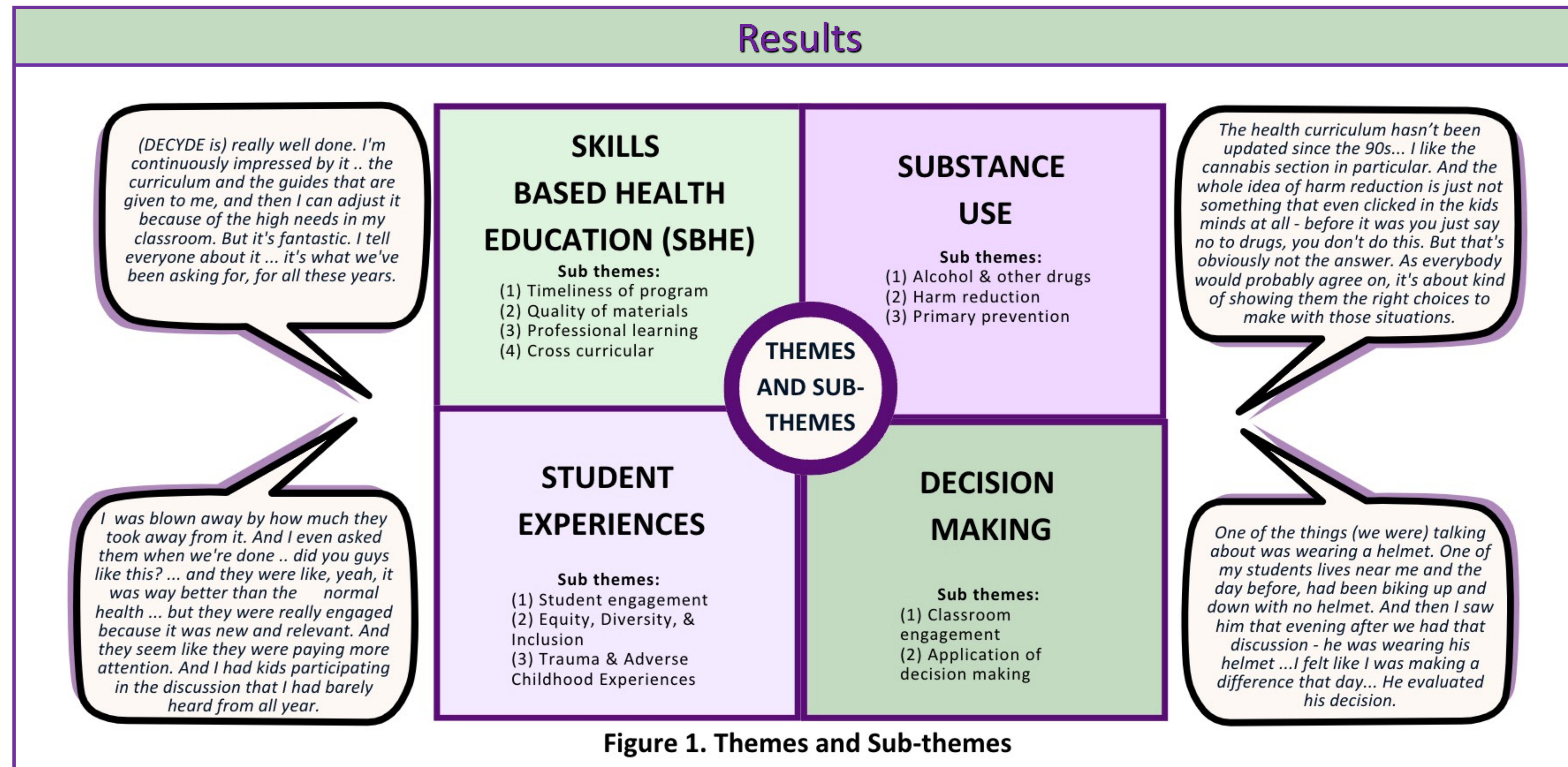


Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes

Discussion

General

- Teachers delivering Skills Based Health Education (SBHE) had tremendous support for the DECYDE program and plan to use it in the future.
- All teachers felt that students of all backgrounds (diverse needs, languages, etc.) were engaged and enjoyed the program.
- Teachers emphasized the timeliness and necessity of DECYDE as they report ongoing substance use among students.
- A harm reduction approach to teaching SBHE was supported by all.
- Teachers observed decision-making skills in the students after the lesson plans with one incident of direct evidence of a student applying their decision-making knowledge outside the classroom.

Strengths: Professional learning was provided to all teachers before field testing; the sample included a diverse range of ages, community sizes, and grade levels.

Limitations: Conducted with a small group of teachers who predominantly identified as women. Additionally, there is a potential recruitment bias as participants may have been more interested in SU education and harm reduction.

Next steps: Implement feedback and prepare for full implementation and evaluation of DECYDE across the province.

Implications

Findings provide further support that DECYDE can help fill the gap that is lacking in SU education. These findings will be used to revise and strengthen the DECYDE materials. The teacher perspectives of using this approach to substance use health education will be shared with other stakeholders within NL, Canada, and beyond.

Citations

1. Watson, T. M., Valleriani, J., Hyshka, E., & Rueda, S. (2019). Cannabis legalization in the provinces and territories: Missing opportunities to effectively educate youth?. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 110, 472-475.
2. Downey MK, Bishop LD, Donnan JR, Rowe EC, Harris N. A survey of educator perspectives toward teaching harm reduction cannabis education. PLOS ONE. 2024 May;19(5)
3. Howe EJ, Bishop LD, Torriville BS, Rowe EC, Kinzel E, Donnan JR. Canadian cannabis education resources to support youth health literacy: A scoping review and environmental scan. Health Education Journal. 2023;0(0).
4. Bishop LD, Drakes DH, Donnan JR, Rowe EC, Najafizada M. Exploring youths' cannabis health literacy post legalization: A qualitative study. Journal of Adolescent Research. 2022;0(0).
5. Aderibigbe OO, Stewart SL, Hirdes JP, Perlmán C. Substance Use among Youth in Community and Residential Mental Health Care Facilities in Ontario, Canada. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022 Feb 2;19(3):1731.