

Partnering with Take a Hike

The Program

Take a Hike is a full-time mental health and emotional well-being program that can offer an alternative for vulnerable students who are struggling to succeed in the mainstream school system. The program is offered in partnership between Take a Hike Youth Mental Health Foundation and school districts - it can support partners in their efforts to ensure all learners have opportunities to thrive. Take a Hike provides an alternative path for small cohorts of students, fully supporting their academic, social, emotional and spiritual development.

TAKE A HIKE BEST SERVES STUDENTS WHO:

- Can fully participate in all parts of the program, including attending to their mental health and well-being, engaging in land-based activities and contributing to a positive group culture.
- Have struggled with mental health challenges, past trauma, or family issues that have impacted their academic success, but who are not in active crisis with no other support.
- Are not purely interested in an outdoor education experience, since the program has a major focus on well-being and personal growth.

Take a Hike is designed in a cohort format: youth spend all year with the same small group – usually of between 12-22 students, depending on each partner’s requirements.

Resource Requirements

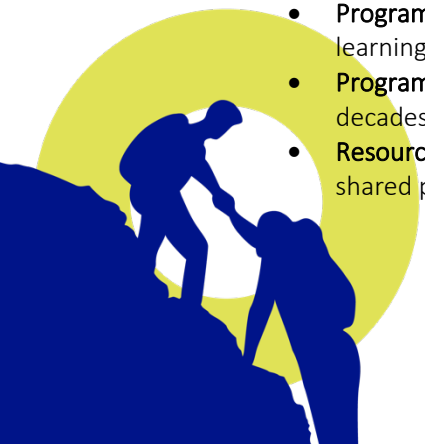
Together, we provide a well-resourced program that enables youth to fully engage and thrive.

School districts provide everything they would normally offer for youth with similar needs, including:

- **Staff:** a teacher and a youth worker
- **Facilities:** a classroom, counselling office, kitchen, gear and equipment storage, and parking
- **Educational expertise:** curriculum support and outdoor instruction
- **Program support:** Hands-on principal support for staff and youth

Take a Hike Foundation layers in program elements that are above and beyond the mandate of the public school system, including:

- **Mental health supports:** A full-time embedded mental health clinician who spends the entire year with the same group of students.
- **Land-based activities:** Activity costs, transportation, gear and equipment and food.
- **Program support:** 0.2FTE Program Manager for each classroom, plus additional land-based learning, community engagement, and administrative supports.
- **Program model:** An evidence-based program model grounded in academic research and two decades of practice-based evidence.
- **Resources:** Enhanced resources and training opportunities in Take a Hike’s program model, shared practices, land-based learning, and youth mental health and well-being.



Collaborative Partnerships

A shared model of program leadership ensures a well-run program that supports both staff and youth.

The program’s effectiveness relies on deeply collaborative partnerships between Take a Hike Foundation and school districts. While each partner has its distinct areas of expertise and responsibility, the strength of the program lies in working collaboratively in areas like staffing decisions, student intake, program practices, staff well-being, and more. Day-to-day program leadership is shared among school staff and Take a Hike Foundation staff – both within and beyond the classroom.

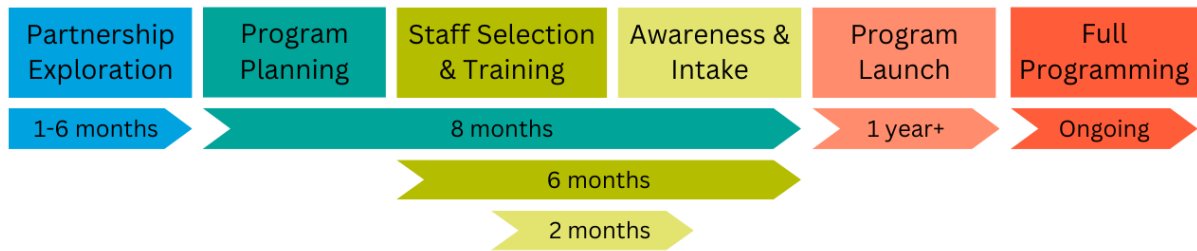
New Partnership Development Process

An intentional and supportive process guides the opening of new programs.

Since 2019, the number of BC school districts that we partner with has more than tripled. Grounded in this experience, we developed a thorough process for building new partnerships and opening programs. This process cultivates the strong foundation of collaboration and shared understanding that is essential to the program’s ongoing success.

Dedicated Take a Hike staff provide support throughout the process and ensure every partnership attends to the uniqueness of each school district partner.

The process often takes between 10-24 months:



Request the [New Program Development Process](#) document for more details on the process and timeline.

What’s Next?

If you’re interested in partnering, the school district Superintendent or Director of Education should submit a 1–2-page Expression of Interest on school district letterhead that covers:

- Why your community is interested in Take a Hike
- The students you intend to serve (qualitative and quantitative information)
- Individuals in the school district, as well as community members, who are in support
- Names, titles, and contact info for those who will be involved in the planning process

The Expression of Interest forms part of the Partnership Exploration stage and facilitates conversations about whether Take a Hike would be a good fit in your community. Please send the Expression of Interest, or reach out with any questions, to:

Sevan LaMarche, Director of Program Operations at sevan@takeahikefoundation.org