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For IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Pandemic Rebound: School sport participation sets a 10-year high

Burnaby, BC – BC School Sports (BCSS) is thrilled to share news of the remarkable increase in student-athlete participation during the 2022-2023 academic year. After the pandemic shut down school sport from March 2020 through to September 2021, there were concerns about its resiliency and sustainability. The over 450 BCSS member schools with a renewed emphasis on physical activity, inclusion, and engagement, drove opportunities for over 117,000 student-athlete registrations across 19 BCSS activities last year.

School sports, an extension of the learning environment, play a key role in fostering mental and physical well-being, instilling discipline, and nurturing camaraderie. With the resumption of extracurricular activities during the past 2 years, schools are seizing the opportunity to expand their athletic programs, providing students with greater opportunities.

BC School Sports Executive Director shared his excitement about this positive trend. “The absence of school sport during the pandemic highlighted its significance and importance to our students, teachers and educational communities. Our schools have been incredible in finding ways to create opportunities, and our students have responded resoundingly. A school with a diverse and robust athletics program brings so much energy and shared belonging to a school.” Abney continued “School sport remains the lowest barrier form of organized sport, for kids in that 13-18 age group. It is so essential to our province and communities that school sport is healthy, we are so happy to see our numbers not just bounce back, but accelerate to new levels.”

Key Highlights:

- BCSS had 117,608 registrations last year, reflecting a massive 8.3% increase on 21-22. This number reflects a 13% increase over 2018-19 (pre-covid) and an 18% increase from 10 years ago. This is 18,114 more registrations in school sport than 10 years ago.
- BCSS Member Schools fielded nearly 400 more teams in 22-23 than in 21-22 with 8858 teams. This also represents a 26% increase from the number of teams 10 years ago.
- Many of the team sports rebounded first in 21-22, however, it was the individual sports that drove growth this past year, with an 18% increase in Track and Field, breaking over the 10,000 participants mark, 27% in aquatics, and an incredible 44% in Mountain Biking, now over 1600 student-athletes participating in school mountain biking around the province. Boys Volleyball saw the greatest increase this year in Team Sports, with 79 more teams fielded.



- One trend to watch is that while we saw increases in participation in both genders, gains were lower in most female sports, and significantly higher growth rates were found in boys' sports. BCSS and our member schools will be watching this trend carefully, and remain committed to creating safe and welcoming opportunities for our female student-athletes in interschool sport.
- 25,559 student-athletes participated in more than one school sport in the 22-23 year. This is a 7.3% increase from 21-22. This demonstrates how critical school sport is for many youth as it provides the majority, if not the entirety of their organized sport participation.
- Interest in BCSS Provincial Championships continues to grow, with an increased BCSS investment in streaming and production of nearly every championship. With over 400,000 views last year of our championships, a 35% increase from 21-22 it shows that there is demand and interest that goes just beyond immediate family. This aligns with record in-person crowds at basketball, rugby and track and field championships.

As pre-season football camps are already happening, and we prepare to open the 23-24 Fall season of play in just a few days, we celebrate our student-athletes and their bravery in putting themselves out there in these activities. We also recognize our incredible member schools, coaches, athletic directors, and administrators who work tirelessly to create these opportunities.

At this time of year, nearly every school is looking for volunteer coaches. We encourage anyone who may be interested to reach out to your local school and see where you can help fill a need. With school sports seasons being only 13 weeks long, it is not a long commitment that can shape your community and the lives of many. If interested and need further guidance on where to start, contact the BCSS office.

About BC School Sports

BC School Sports is a voluntary organization of over 450 public and independent schools in British Columbia. It is the governing body for school sport and coordinates and delivers opportunities with our member schools for interschool competitions in over 18 activities to over 117,000 student-athletes each year. BCSS delivers 61 provincial championships each year with 16,000 student-athletes attending and competing at the very pinnacle of interscholastic competition.

Media Contacts:

BC School Sports

Jordan Abney

Executive Director

jabney@bcschoolsports.ca

604-477-1488