Office of the State Superintendent of Education

LOCAL WELLNESS POLICY

HEALTH EDUCATION

Health education includes curricula and instruction provided to students in alignment with the District of Columbia's Health Education Standards which encompasses several aspects of well-being that can help improve students' quality of life such as mental health, physical fitness, sexual health and safety.

High-quality skills-based health education consists of learning experiences and activities that provide students with the knowledge, attitudes and practices needed to make health-promoting decisions, achieve health literacy, adopt health-enhancing behaviors, reduce risky behaviors and promote the health of others.

REMINDER

Health education is not restricted to information taught and skills practiced in the classroom. Students might also acquire health information and have the opportunity to practice skills by visiting the school's health suite, identifying reliable and valid health information such as found on posters, public service announcements, or social media, or even conversations with family and peers that may influence health practices and behaviors.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SETTING YOUR GOALS

- Evaluate student health needs at your local education agency (LEA) by reviewing existing data, such as your school's Youth Risk Behavior Survey and School Health Profile, and conducting assessments or collecting feedback from students, parents and teachers.
- Assess the LEA's health education curricula to ensure it is aligned with the District's health education standards and determine if it is skills-based and aligned with the characteristics of an effective health education curriculum.
- Consider how to integrate learning experiences and activities that reinforce health messages and skills throughout the school day.
- Include opportunities for teacher supports and professional learning that align with emerging student and community needs and national best practices.

RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS

Grades K-8:

- Skills-based health education instruction aligned with DC Health Education Standards (DC Code § 38–821.01(1F) and DC Code § 38–824.02(b)).
- Provide average of 75 minutes of health education per week (DC Code § 38–824.02(b)(2)).

Grades K-12:

- Instruction on recognizing and reporting sexual misconduct and child abuse, setting and respecting appropriate personal and body boundaries and privacy rules, communicating with adults about concerns regarding body boundaries or privacy violations, the meaning of consent, developing and maintaining healthy relationships, and other appropriate topics to support healthy development of students (DC Code § 38–824.02(b-2)(1)(A)).

Grades 9-12, as required for high school graduation:

- CPR instruction (DC Code § 38–824.02(b-1)(1)).
- 1.5 Carnegie units in health/physical education (5-A DCMR § 2203.3(b)).

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Health and physical education teachers
- School administrators
- Parents
- Students
- Community-based organizations

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RESOURCES

- Characteristics of an Effective Health Education Curriculum

Webpage from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) where health education experts define an effective health education curriculum for students.

- DC Health Education and Physical Education Standards

Provide a clear, skills-based and age-appropriate approach to essential health and physical education topics that impact District students.

- OSSE School Health Profiles Data

Self-reported school-based health questionnaire completed annually by all public schools and public charter schools, as required by the Healthy Schools Act (HSA).

- CDC Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)

The Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool, also known as the "HECAT," is an assessment tool designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to guide the analysis of health education curricula that reflects current research in health education and uses science to improve health education practices.

- SHAPE America Society for Health and Physical Educators

The Society of Health and Physical Educators, or SHAPE America, publishes national health education and physical education standards, providing a comprehensive framework for educators to deliver high-quality instruction and make a positive difference in the health and well-being of every preK-12 student.

- SHAPE America National Health Education Standards

New national health education standards, released in March 2024, define what a student should know and be able to do as result of a highly effective health education program.

- DC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

Webpage from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) with District results for the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a survey of health-risk behaviors conducted in middle and high schools every two years in Washington, DC and around the United States.