



WHPE Health Education Position Statement

Kindergarten through 12th grade, health education is an essential component of educating the whole child. Every day we make dozens if not hundreds of health decisions. Do we get up early or sleep late? Do we exercise or not? Do we have breakfast or skip it? Do we have that second helping of pie for dessert? Do we drink alcohol or take illegal drugs? Do we take our medication as prescribed? Do we have annual physicals? Do we know how to address family or personal mental health issues? Health education is as important as teaching students to read, write, and do math. Being health literate will allow youth to be better prepared to make healthy decisions for a lifetime.

Health education is more than teaching students about the high risk behaviors and risks that endanger someone's health. It is also more than an anatomy class or a class on nutritional value of food. There are eight health education standards. Standard One is the health information standard and includes all of the information that students should know about their health. The other seven standards are skills that everyone needs to help make healthy decisions. It is vital students have adequate time and age-appropriate skill practice in each of the 7 standards (list out) in order to increase their likelihood of positive behavior practices.

Wisconsin State Statute 121.02 Standard L requires regular instruction for each week of a the school year for grades K-4. For grade 5-8 students are to get "regular instruction". Regular instruction is defined as weekly or the equivalent for grade 5-6. For grades 7-8 it is of sufficient frequency to meet the plan which could include a required course, an elective course, or health units integrated in other disciplines. When looking at the Centers for Disease Control High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey for Wisconsin we see a great need for health education in both middle and high school. The youth suicide rate in Wisconsin consistently exceeds the national average. Wisconsin YRBS data indicate a downward trend in the percentage of students who report feeling sad or hopeless and those seriously considering suicide. Twenty-five percent of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row in the past 12 months. <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs>. The trend analysis report of the Lead Health Education Survey for Wisconsin School Health Profiles indicates a decrease in the percentage of schools in which teachers tried to increase student knowledge on the topic of emotional and mental health in the required course in any of grades 6 through 12 during the current school year. <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/yrbs/school-health-profiles>

Health Education is one of the 10 components of the The ASCD Whole Community, Whole School, Whole Child model showing the interrelationship between health and learning and the potential for improving educational outcomes by improving health outcomes. <http://www.ascd.org/programs/learning-and-health/wsc-model.aspx>



WHPE recommends health education be taught in K-8 and one or more classes in high school. By the time students are in high school they can then start making more independent health decisions. The high school health class is the last opportunity for students to learn needed health education skills. During the high school years teachers are able to go into greater depth on some health topics such as comprehensive sexuality education sex education than you can in earlier grade levels.

As the result of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act, school health education has been elevated and acknowledged as part of the student's "well-rounded education. The term well-rounded education replaces the term "core subjects"; therefore, health education is equally important as math and English.

According to State Superintendent Tony Evers "imagine a Wisconsin in which all students are fit, healthy, and ready to learn; where all students have the essential skills to live a healthy and productive life. Imagine that young people successfully apply the skills they learn in health education to real-life, challenging situations throughout their teen and adult years. At a time when many forces pressure students to make decisions that can compromise their well-being, health-related skills and knowledge are important parts of ensuring every child graduates prepared for success." The Wisconsin Standards for Health Education provides a framework for aligning health education curriculum, instruction and assessment and can be found on the DPI Health Education. Additionally, the DPI Health Education Home page clearly outlines the state requirements for health education. <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/health-education>.

We have an opportunity to move Wisconsin forward.....