

## Health Education: Spotlight on Equity Resources

Vermont rules and statutes require all schools to provide K-12 students with comprehensive health education. The goal of health education is for all students to develop health literacy. Being health literate means having the knowledge, motivation, and competencies to access, understand, appraise, and apply health information to make judgments and decisions to maintain and live a healthy life. This definition is operationalized in the [National Health Education Standards](#) (NHES), adopted by Vermont in 2014.

This Spotlight on Equity includes a list of considerations for the purpose of providing an equity literate and socially conscious lens to the teaching and learning of health education, as well as recognizing the historic economic exclusion and marginalization of minority groups and communities. When grade-level appropriate, educators may use spotlight resources to critically engage students in socially relevant Health Education opportunities. Neither the enumerated considerations, nor the resources below, are a complete list, but rather a starting point on which to begin historically and socially relevant conversations on health literacy.

Feedback on the draft versions of the Spotlights on Equity was solicited from the field between October 11th and November 22nd of 2021. A link to a Cognito form with focus questions created by content specialists at the Vermont Agency of Education was sent out through their networks. Additionally, feedback was requested from members of the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA), the Equity Literacy and Equitable Education Systems grant awardees, the Vermont Foreign Language Association, the Vermont Principals Association, and the chairperson of the Act 1 Advisory Working Group. Thirty-two educators submitted feedback that was used to improve and refine the draft documents.

### Core Health Concepts Graduation Proficiency

**Comprehend concepts** related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health (in accordance to [Title 16 V.S.A. § 131](#): Definition of Comprehensive Health Education).

#### Spotlight on Equity:

- Health Equity
- Cultural Competency
- Cognitive Bias
- Personal Factors
- Socioeconomic Status

#### Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:  
Susan Yesalonia, Student Pathways Division, at [susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov](mailto:susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov).

| Resources  | Why it Matters  |
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| <p><a href="#">The Health Equity Framework: A Science and Justice-Based Model for Public Health Researchers and Practitioners</a>: This article describes a science- and justice-based framework for promoting health equity; it is designed for researchers and practitioners working across public health and social science fields. The Health Equity Framework is a practical tool for leaders that can be used to reflect on and support a shift toward addressing health inequities resulting from the interplay of structural, relational, individual, and physiological factors.</p> | <p>Understanding health equity, personal agency, and fair access to resources and opportunities needed to achieve the best possible physical, emotional, and social well-being is part of being health literate. Health educators need to include this concept in their teaching.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Cultural Competency Resources</a>: This document identifies tools and resources for individual teachers, and for school and district leaders responsible for providing professional development in culturally competent and responsive practices. It also includes examples from other state education agencies with tools and resources that have been created to address cultural competency/responsiveness and equity.</p>   | <p>Teachers that employ principles of inclusiveness and equity in their daily practice and make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness, provide a greater possibility for students to receive an equitable education, irrespective of race, gender, language, socioeconomic status, etc.</p> |
| <p><a href="#">Cognitive Biases can Hold Learning Back – Here's how to Beat Them</a>: This article discusses cognitive biases people have and how to beat them. These are thought processes that can alter how you perceive things and get in the way of making good logical decisions.</p>  | <p>Health teachers should be aware of their own biases and teach students about cognitive bias and how it can influence decisions and how we communicate and interact with others.</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">Personal, Social and Cultural Factors Influencing Learners</a>: This article talks about personal, social, and cultural factors that impact a student's ability to learn.</p>   | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to engage them in the learning process.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Ethnic and Racial Minorities &amp; Socioeconomic Status</a>: In this article, the American Psychological Association discusses the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES), race, and ethnicity and considers how "SES encompasses not just income but also educational attainment, financial security, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class."</p>  | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to engage them in the learning process.</p>   |

## Analyze Influences Graduation Proficiency

Analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.

### Spotlight on Equity:

- Social Determinants of Health
- Ethnicity

- Trauma
- Access to Health Care
- Gender Identity

| Resources  | Why it Matters   |
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| <p><a href="#">Vermont State Health Assessment 2018</a>: The Vermont State Health Assessment 2018 is the latest five-year update considering what the state knows about the health status of Vermonters. It provides vital data for examining health inequities by race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, and geography.</p>   | <p>Health teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand the health status of Vermonters to inform their instruction.</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">Five Ways in Which Ethnicity Affects Health</a>: This article includes information on the different impacts that ethnic factors have on health. When talking about well-being and healthiness, people’s origins matter. To understand the health risks a person might face, it’s fundamental to identify the ethnic group they belong to.</p>   | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to inform instruction and engage students in the learning process.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Childhood Adversity Increases Risk for Long-term Health and Behavioral Issues</a>: This website includes information about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), answers to FAQs, perspectives from professionals that work with children, and additional resources.</p>  | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to support their engagement in learning. The earlier children who are experiencing ACEs and toxic stress are identified, the sooner children and families can be connected to the services they need to prevent or heal long-term effects.</p> |
| <p><a href="#">The Effects of Gender- and Sexuality-Based Harassment on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Substance Use Disparities</a>: This article discusses a study that showed gender- and sexuality-based harassment at school independently or interactively produced LGBTQ disparities in substance use.</p>   | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to support their engagement in learning about substance misuse and prevention and self-management.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Social Determinants of Health</a>: This is the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion’s Social Determinants of Health webpage and resources. Our health is determined in part by access to social and economic opportunities; the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships.</p> | <p>Health literacy includes understanding social determinants of health. Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to inform instruction and engage students in the learning process.</p>   |

## Access Information Graduation Proficiency

Access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.

### Spotlight on Equity:

- Internet Access
- Media Literacy
- Access to Health Care

| Resources   | Why it Matters   |
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| <p><a href="#">Internet Access in Vermont</a>: This website includes regional data about Internet access, broadband speeds, and the digital divide in Vermont. Educators need to evaluate how this impacts their students and their ability to access health information.</p> | <p>Access to the internet is an asset to health education. Teachers need to understand each student’s access to internet services at home in order to support and engage students in developing health skills (e.g., Accessing Information, Communication, Analyzing Influences)</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Identifying Barriers to Access and Utilization of Preventive Health-Care Services by Young Adults in Vermont</a>: This study examined barriers to accessing and utilizing routine preventive health-care checkups for Vermont young adults.</p>                | <p>It is important for health teachers to understand the barriers that may impede preventive health screenings for young Vermont adults (e.g., county of residence, health-care coverage, and annual household income). Students need to learn how to navigate these barriers to access health care.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Drawing the Connection of Media Literacy and Health</a>: This paper identifies the impacts of media literacy on several health behaviors.</p>  | <p>Health literacy includes media literacy and knowing how to analyze influences considering many health topics. The media that children use and create are integral to their growing sense of themselves, of the world, and of how they should interact with it. These pervasive, persuasive influences have been linked to both negative and positive health outcomes.</p> |

## Interpersonal Communication & Advocacy Graduation Proficiency

Use interpersonal communication skills to advocate for enhanced personal, family and community health and avoid or reduce health risks.

### Spotlight on Equity:

- Social Emotional Competence
- Cultural Boundaries
- Multi-lingual

- Cognitive Disability

| Resources   | Why it Matters   |
|---|--|
| <p><a href="#">The Effect of Social-Emotional Competence on Children’s Academic Achievement and Behavioral Development</a>: This paper explores the importance of social-emotional competence on children’s growth.</p>   | <p>Teachers have the responsibility to support children’s social emotional development in many aspects, including cognitive, academic, and behavioral skills.</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">Communicating across Cultural Barriers</a>: This article identifies difficulties in cross-cultural communication and provides tips for overcoming miscommunications. Cross-cultural communication occurs when a person from one culture sends a message to a person from another culture. Cross-cultural miscommunication occurs when the person from the second culture does not receive the sender's intended message. The greater the differences between the sender's and the receiver's cultures, the greater the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication.</p> | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness in order to inform instruction and engage students in the learning process and avoid cross cultural miscommunications.</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">Improving Health Education for ELL Students in the Mainstream Classroom</a>: This article gleans ten strategies from research that school health education teachers can utilize in the language and learning-diverse classrooms that should increase the learning, achievement and success of English Language Learners (ELL) and students with limited literacy skills.</p>   | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness and establish good communication strategies with EL students.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Sexual Health Education for Young People with Disabilities – Research and Resources for Educators</a>: This resource discusses how sexual health educators are in a unique position to be cognizant of their students’ various backgrounds and learning styles so that decisions being made about when and how much sexuality information a young person should receive are well informed.</p>   | <p>For young people with disabilities, it is necessary for educators to engage parents/guardians in developing a plan of instruction that is positive, gradual, and considers the individual’s developmental and maturity levels. Additionally, the parents/guardians’ beliefs and values need to be considered.</p> |

## Decision Making Skills and Goal Setting Graduation Proficiency

Use decision-making skills and goal setting to enhance health.

### Spotlight on Equity:

- Social Emotional Competence
- Religious Influences
- Cultural Influences
- Food Deserts

| Resources   | Why it Matters   |
|---|--|
| <p><a href="#">Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Student Benefits: Implications for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Core Elements</a>: This brief shares the latest research on the effects of social and emotional learning (SEL) on students and includes strategies for implementing SEL. It explains how SEL works, elaborates on how SEL can be an integrative prevention framework that addresses core elements of Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS), including decision-making and goal setting.</p> | <p>Comprehensive, skills-based health education programs support the development of students' health literacy as well as social and emotional learning (SEL) competence.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">The Influence of Religion on Health</a>: This article discusses the influence a religion has on health and personal decision making.</p>   | <p>Religion is now prominent in scientific studies that investigate its influence on health. Teachers need to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness when teaching about the influence of spiritual health on personal health.</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">Food deserts not to blame for growing gap between rich and poor, study finds</a>: For decades, the conventional wisdom has been that people living in food deserts have little choice but to buy unhealthy food. This article discusses studies conducted by the University of Chicago where authors found that nutrition education and knowledge are strongly associated with differences in preferences across income groups.</p>  | <p>Nutrition education may be more effective at closing the nutrition gap than building more supermarkets and farmers markets in food deserts.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Five Ways in Which Ethnicity Affects Health</a>: This article includes information on the different impacts that ethnic factors have on health.</p>  | <p>When teaching about well-being and healthiness, a person's origins matter. Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness. To understand the health risks a person might face, it's fundamental to identify the ethnic group they belong to.</p> |

## Self-Management Graduation Proficiency

Practice health enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

### Spotlight on Equity:

- Gender Disparities
- Social Emotional Competence
- Health Disparities
- Anti-bias Learning Environment

| Resources  | Why it Matters  |
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| <p><a href="#">How Gender Disparities Affect Classroom Learning (ascd.org)</a>: This article discusses how gender disparities affect classroom learning and strategies to overcome these disparities.</p>  | <p>Schools are influential agents of socialization. They play vital roles in how we make meaning of the world around us, significantly affecting how we perceive ourselves and others, as well as differences across race, languages, disabilities, and gender. Because of this, schools have the responsibility to model, teach, and create conditions in which each child's gender diversity is accepted and nourished.</p> |
| <p><a href="#">SEL: What Are the Core Competence Areas and Where are they Promoted? (casel.org)</a>: This website shows the interactive CASEL Wheel to support learning about Social Emotional Learning (SEL). CASEL's framework takes a systemic approach that emphasizes the importance of establishing equitable learning environments and coordinating practices across key settings including classrooms, schools, families, and communities to enhance all students' social, emotional, and academic learning.</p> | <p>Comprehensive, skills-based health education programs support the development of students' health literacy as well as social and emotional learning (SEL) competence.</p>  |
| <p><a href="#">CDC Adolescent and School Health: Health Disparities</a>: This webpage addresses health disparities that result from multiple factors, including poverty, environmental threats, inadequate access to health care, individual and behavioral factors, and educational inequalities and their influences on being successful.</p>  | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness including the health disparities they may live with.</p>   |
| <p><a href="#">Action Steps to Address Health and Educational Disparities, Disparities, Adolescent and School Health, CDC</a>: The Division of Adolescent and School Health advances health equity and adolescent health issues across the nation through CDC's science and programs. Action steps proposed by CDC are provided for consideration by education and health agencies to address health and educational disparities among students.</p>   | <p>Teachers need to make a concerted effort to understand and respect every child and their uniqueness including the health disparities they may live with.</p>   |

| Resources   | Why it Matters   |
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| <p><a href="#">The Role of Self-Efficacy in Achieving Health Behavior Change</a>: The concept of self-efficacy is receiving increasing recognition as a predictor of health behavior change and maintenance. The purpose of this article is to facilitate a clearer understanding of both the concept and its relevance for health education research and practice.</p> | <p>Teachers can link teaching health skills to the development of self-efficacy. Students need to understand the link between a person’s beliefs about their capabilities related to using health skills to manage behaviors and outcomes.</p> |

**Additional Vermont Agency of Education Resources**

[Cultural Diversity and Equity Resources \(June 2020\)](#)

[Educational Equity Webpage](#)

[Equity Literacy Resources – Fall 2019](#)

[Equity Literacy Resources – Spring 2019](#)