

Linking Health & Learning Newsletter

The newsletter for Vermont's Health and Physical Educators and supporters

January 2021

Articles:

- [New Year Message](#)
- [2021 Vermont Physical Education Assessment - Canceled](#)
- [VTPEA Review Modules Now Available](#)
- [Using Project-Based Learning to Engage Students: Part 2](#)
- [Update on Health and PE Professional Learning Communities](#)
- [SHAPE America Notices](#)
- [Other Professional Learning Opportunities](#)
- [Additional Resources for Health and Physical Education](#)



New Year Message

Welcome to 2021 and a new year! This is a time to reflect on what you have learned over the last 10 months: being flexible in your teaching practices, focusing on each student's engagement in the learning process, and the impact personal wellness has on teaching and learning. As you move forward into 2021, recognize and appreciate what you have learned moving through the 2020 challenges and how you have grown as a teacher! In 2021, I encourage you to form professional learning communities with district/supervisory union health and physical education professionals to collaborate, problem-solve, and most importantly, support each other.

2021 Vermont Physical Education Assessment - Canceled

In a memo released by the Agency of Education (AOE) on December 15, 2020, Deputy Secretary Heather Bouchey announced that the 2021 Vermont Physical Education Assessment (VTPEA) has been canceled. The VTPEA assessment tools can continue to be used to support fitness education in accordance with local and state guidance related to the COVID-19 response. Though the PE assessment is canceled for the 2020-2021 school year, standards-based PE instruction is still required and the focus on maintaining health-related physical fitness to support the social-emotional well-being and academic success of students should remain.

VTPEA Review Modules Now Available

Early in 2020, the AOE VTPEA team and Human Kinetics partnered to develop a five-module series that was going to be used to support the VTPEA certification process. The series includes modules that review the construct of the VTPEA suite, strategies for inclusion, use of the Brockport Physical Fitness Test and the Individual Fitness Assessment to extend the VTPEA to all students, data collection and reporting, and a 50-question certification test.

Even though the VTPEA will not be formally administered as a state assessment this year, physical educators can access the *Vermont Physical Education Assessment Administration Certification* tool to support professional learning at no charge. To do so, you will need to create an account with [Human Kinetics](#). Once this is done, [email Susan Yesalonia](#) and request a keycode to access the VTPEA modules and test. Completing the module reviews and passing the test can earn physical educators 3-hours of professional learning credit that can be applied to license renewal.

Using Project-Based Learning to Engage Students: Part 2

This is Part 2 of a four-part series of articles about the use of Project-Based Learning to engage students in personalized and authentic learning. Part I was published in the [November 2020 Linking Health and Learning](#). In the recently published Edutopia article "[Has the Pandemic Ushered in New Norms in Education?](#)", Project-Based Learning has been identified as a method to engage students in their learning, making lessons and units more meaningful. When done correctly, Project-Based Learning is the perfect complement to Proficiency-Based Learning, since both allow students to engage in authentic learning opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to their lives and provide opportunities to present evidence of their learning in creative ways.

Projects alone do not equal Project-Based Learning. Many types of assignments and activities could be labeled as "projects" but not be rigorous enough to fit the definition of Project-Based Learning. Project-Based Learning introduces an open-ended challenge or driving question to which students don't have the answer, setting them on an inquiry path. Students need to synthesize content knowledge in order to find a solution and determine how to communicate the solution to a target audience. For example, in December 2010, Andrew Miller, a writer for the Whole Child Blog, wrote about [the use of Project-Based Learning in physical education](#).

A group of high school students were presented with a letter from the local middle school principal. The letter asked them to create the best exercise program for middle school students. They were asked to create sample PE units for the teachers and students and present their ideas to a panel of teachers, administrators, and other experts. They were also required to create, through their own participation and physical activity, data that provided physical exercise was occurring.

Students were constantly engaged in the inquiry process. What is a good PE unit? What do middle school students like to do in PE? What are the goals of PE? These were all questions generated by the students. They had to engage in research, both online and in person, in order to accomplish this authentic task and present it to a real audience at the end of the semester. Not only that, but students also came to their own understanding of the PE content standards as well as the importance and need for physical education. You are encouraged to read Andrew Miller's [blog post](#) about this project in its entirety and consider the possibilities of using Project-Based Learning to engage your students and empower them in their physical education. This series will continue in the March 2021 Linking Health and Learning. In the meantime, you can learn more about Project-Based Learning by visiting [PBL works](#), which is supported by the [Buck Institute of Education](#).

Update on Health and PE Professional Learning Communities

Currently, the AOE is supporting three professional learning communities (PLCs) for health and physical educators. Two PLCs are focused on designing performance assessments that can be used as a grade-level benchmark assessment or summative unit assessment and provide evidence of student proficiency; one PLC focuses on Health Education, the other Physical Education. The third PLC is focused on Sexual Health Education.

According to the [Glossary of Education Reform](#) created by Great School Partnerships, professional learning communities tend to serve two broad purposes:

- 1) Improving the skills and knowledge of educators through collaborative study, expertise exchange, and professional dialogue, and
- 2) Improving the education aspirations, achievement, and attainment of students through stronger leadership and teaching.

Participants in the performance assessment PLCs have the opportunity to learn about the latest trends in student assessment. For example, this year [experts](#) have emphasized the use of performance assessments that are equitable, assess critical proficiencies, are relevant and engaging, and reflect learning over time. Health and physical educators are currently designing performance assessments using a common process. In the next PLC meeting, participants will share their assessment with their PLC members, get feedback, and make adjustments, before piloting the assessment with their students.

The Sexual Health Education PLC has a different focus. This PLC formed so participants could talk about the challenges of delivering quality sexual health education within a comprehensive health education program that needs to address several health content topics as well as develop proficiency of health skills. Participants identify priority sexual health topics they would like to learn more about, receive professional learning, and problem-solve issues related to teaching sexual health education with experts from the field.

Health and physical education teachers often work in isolation. These PLCs are an opportunity for participants to belong to a professional community to network and collaborate with peers for support and to share resources and ideas. The AOE is piloting the remaining PE PLC sessions using the [Edmodo platform](#), “an ecosystem for peer learning and networking communities to share information and best practices both within closed district networks and statewide.” This new virtual space removes time, geographic, and financial barriers that often impede educators from participating in professional learning opportunities. Let’s hope this pilot works well!

SHAPE America Notices

- [Best of SHAPE America 2020](#) – 2020 articles, blog posts, and resources.
- [Roadmap to Adapted PE](#). This FREE interactive course will guide you through the core components of adapted physical education services and how to apply these components to your program. The self-paced course allows participants to reflect on their own physical education program through critical thinking tasks and engagement activities.
- [2021 SHAPE America National Convention and Expo](#) (Virtual). April 13 – 17, 2021.
- [COVID-19 Resources](#) for Health and Physical Education.

Other Professional Learning Opportunities

- [ASCD Webinars – Free Professional Learning](#)
- OPEN's Free - [Teacher Learning School](#)
- PE BLOG – [10 Professional Development Websites](#) (Free)
- [Prevent Child Abuse Vermont](#) – Free professional learning events
- Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VT-HEC): [Free webinars](#) and [new 2021 course and workshop offerings](#).

Additional Resources for Health and Physical Education

- [American Academy of Pediatrics Supports Kids Returning to School in the Fall](#)
- ETR – [National Partner Resources \(Reentry to schools – Health and PE\)](#)
- [FitnessGram Learning at Home Modules](#)
- OPEN – [Back to School 2020 Planning Tools](#)
- [PBS Learning Media](#), ([filtered by Health and P.E.](#))
- [RMC Health Education Resources and Tools](#)

Author: Susan Yesalonia
Health and Physical Education Specialist
Proficiency-Based Learning Team
Vermont Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive,
Davis 5, Montpelier, VT 05620.
susan.yesalonia@vermont.gov
802-828-6553
[Health Education webpage](#)
[Physical Education webpage](#)

