

Linking Health & Learning Newsletter

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

March 2019

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Vermont Physical Education Assessment Update

The 2019 Vermont Physical Education Assessment (VTPEA) test window is April 1 to May 31 and this year data will be used as an accountability measure in federal reporting. Educators administering the test should be finalizing VTPEA instruction and preparation with all students, calibrating testing protocols for reliability, and completing the VTPEA certification process. Additionally, administrators, school staff, and parents should be informed of testing and the benefits of learning about the health-related fitness status of students in your school. Please review the VTPEA Test Administration Manual for clarification about:

- developing Alternate-VTPEA test events for students that cannot access FitnessGram protocols;
- labelling VTPEA test events in FitnessGram; and
- data-reporting procedures for the Alternate-VTPEA.

To support VTPEA test administrators, the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) will be offering office hours the second and fourth weeks of the month. For the schedule of office hours and registration links go to the [Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Portal](#) and VTPEA resources.

Vermont Council of Health and Physical Educators (VCHPE) Spring Meeting

VCHPE members will be meeting on March 28, 2019 at the Sally Fox Conference Center in the Waterbury State Office Complex, from 8:30 to 3:30. This will be the final meeting for the school year. Meeting topics include creating good 'hooks' to engage students, sharing specific skills-based units and performance assessments, and establishing systemic proficiency-based grading consistency. [Registration](#) closes on March 22, 2019.

Full Spectrum: Educators' Guide to Implementing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Sex Ed

The Vermont Agency of Education, Outright Vermont, and Planned Parenthood of Northern New England collaborated to develop [Full Spectrum: Educators' Guide to Implementing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Sex Ed](#). This document provides a clear and concise list of practices commonly found in health classes that promote the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students and to identify practices that LGBTQ+ students often find exclusionary. The guide includes sections that identify best practices for LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education, a self-assessment for educators inclusionary or exclusionary teaching practices, and a list of crucial resources that educators can use to advance their understanding of inclusive teaching practices.

In the Spotlight: Woodstock Union High School and Middle School Wellness Program

On February 26, 2019, Susan Yesalonia had the opportunity to observe and learn about the new interdisciplinary approach Woodstock Union High School and Middle School (WUHSMS) is using to teach wellness education (a.k.a. Health and Physical Education). In the past, the school provided health and physical education (PE) as separate classes using school quarters. There were gaps in students' learning, little cohesion between content areas, and teachers felt isolated. Last spring, the WUHSMS staff Alyssa Smith, Jeff Thomas, and Jason Tarleton, had the opportunity to learn about a different way to offer health and physical education from Kathy Pinkham of Needham High School, in Needham, MA. They came back to Vermont excited about what they learned, worked with school administrators, and this year piloted Wellness for 7th and 8th grade classes and Wellness I for 9th grade classes, combining health and physical education.

A key factor for implementing the new program was changing how health and PE were scheduled. Instead of fitting quarters of health and PE into the student's schedule, students are scheduled for a year-long course, Wellness I. WUHSMS uses a modified block schedule. Wellness classes, taught by dual certified teachers, meet three times a week (204 minutes) for the school year, like all other content areas. Students receive health education in a regular classroom and transition to the gym for physical education or vice-versa. Classroom displays have visual reminders that often are referred to in teaching including the Wellness Wheel, the seven health skills, and a common symbol of life balance. Physical education focuses on 100% participation in a safe environment that demands respect, self-management, and student engagement. Teachers facilitate and connect learning and the interdisciplinary curriculum is anchored by health and physical education standards.

The new teaching structure is proving to benefit WUHSMS Wellness teachers and students. Teachers have more time to work with students and are able to assess students multiple times in the same skill throughout the year to track proficiency, they have more time to work with each other, and there is now continuity in the grade 7-12 program. Additionally, each Wellness teacher is part of a grade level team; they enjoy the opportunity to collaborate with other discipline teacher in the same grade to work together on a common unit of study. Wellness teachers no longer feel isolated and have a better understanding of their school and its programs. It is a win-win!

WUHSMS Habits of Work in Learning (HOWL's) are 3Ps: preparation, participation, and perseverance; skills that support student learning. The 3Ps focus on preparing students for life after high school. Wellness I, a seven-unit course that focuses on character education, fitness and nutrition, coping with emotions, drug education, sexual health, finances, and life balance, helps students develop their 3P skills. This summer, the WUHSMS Wellness staff will be working on developing Wellness II, a high-level continuation of Wellness I that juniors or seniors will take to extend their learning, develop higher levels of proficiency, and be better prepared for life after WUHSMS. Great work WUHSMS Wellness staff!

2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey: New Data Briefs

The Vermont Department of Health has released new data briefs for the 2017 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey considering Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Academic Grades. These data briefs are a useful resource for educators and administrators, specifically health and physical educators. Students need to understand the connections between healthy behaviors and academic success.

- [Physical Activity and Nutrition and Academic Grades Among Vermont Middle School Students](#)
- [Nutrition and Academic Grades Among Vermont High School Students](#)
- [Physical Activity and Academic Grades Among Vermont High School Students](#)

Social-emotional Learning: What's the Big Deal?

According to the [Collaborative for Academic and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#), social emotional learning (SEL) is “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotion, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” In the report [Respected: Perspectives of Youth on High School and Social Emotional Learning](#), developed by Civic with Hart Associates, the results of a national survey of current and recent high school students resulted in three major findings:

1. Students in strong SEL schools report a more positive social climate and learning environment, doing better academically and feeling better prepared for life than those in weak SEL schools;
2. Schools that emphasize social and emotional skill development are broadly appealing to students across background, race, ethnicity, income, geography, and type of school attended. Students see the benefits of SEL schools, but fewer than half believe their high schools are doing a good job of helping them develop SEL skills; and
3. Students – particularly some of the most vulnerable – cite social and emotional problems as significant barrier to learning, doing their best, and fulfilling their potential.

CASEL has developed a [model](#) that identifies five SEL competencies that can be developed in classrooms, in schools, in families and in communities.

1. **Self-awareness:** Know your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”
2. **Self-management:** Effectively manage stress, control impulses, and motivate yourself to set and achieve goals.
3. **Social awareness:** Understand the perspectives of others and empathize with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
4. **Relationship skills:** Communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
5. **Responsible decision-making:** Make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms.

As a subject areas, health and physical education naturally connect to SEL. Those teaching skill-based health education aligned with the National Health Education Standards are essentially already teaching SEL in their classrooms. Physical education's personal and social behavior proficiencies also support SEL. Health and physical educators should familiarize themselves with CASEL resources, blend SEL competencies into curriculum and instruction, and advocate to be a SEL school. For more information how use SEL competencies to build better learning environments read the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development whitepaper, [*Building Equitable, Safe and Supportive Schools*](#).

Resources:

- [AOE Physical Education webpage](#) and [Health Education webpage](#) that includes pertinent information and resources for educators.
- [Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Portal](#) that includes pertinent VTPEA information and resources.
- [AOE Research Brief: Proficiency-based Grading Practices](#), a documents that provides pertinent information about proficiency-based grading.
- [Healthy Lessons](#): This website contains dozens of FREE elementary health-related lesson plans as well as fun, online games. It is intended to help both health educators and busy classroom teachers present excellent health lessons to their students. *All lessons correlate to the National Health Education Standards.* Parents will also find a section of relevant health information.
- [HealthSmart](#): A free K-12 health curriculum aligned with National Health Standards as well as the National Sexuality Standards, HECAT, and others. Resources are provided along with instructional guidelines.
- [OPENPhysEd](#): A free resource that includes tools for K-12 Physical Education curriculum, early childhood movement exploration, and after-school physical activity programs.
- [BOKS](#): A free research-based physical activity program that empowers school communities to improve their children physically, mentally, and socially through the power of movement.
- [Weekly Field Memo \(WFM\)](#): The field memo is the weekly communication from the Vermont AOE to the education community. You may subscribe, unsubscribe, and update your email address for the [WFM online](#).

Announcements and Professional Learning Opportunities:

- SHAPE America [Health Education Curriculum Builder](#): Online five-part 20 hour course series
- [Vermont Higher Education Collaborative](#)
- [2019 SHAPE America Convention](#): April 9-13, 2019, Tampa, FL.

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