

Linking Health & Learning Newsletter

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

November 2020

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Welcome Back; It Has Been Awhile!

Hello and I hope this message finds you well! The last Linking Health and Learning newsletter was published in February 2020 before the pandemic hit. I am happy to bring you the November 2020 edition, which includes pertinent information, professional learning opportunities, and an updated set of resources to support teaching and learning.

Physical Education Today in Vermont Schools

On October 23, 2020, the [Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) was updated by the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). This document provides current health guidance to school administrators and school personnel as they move through the 2020-21 school year. The document identifies three possible scenarios or steps for reopening schools:

- Step I: Schools are closed for in-person instruction. Remote learning opportunities should be provided for all students.
- Step II: Schools are open for in-person instruction with enhanced physical distancing measures and for children who live in the local geographic area only.
- Step III: Schools are open for in-person instruction with distancing measures.

Schools are currently operating in Step III and gymnasiums may be used with facial coverings and physical distancing requirements in place. Schools should consider using these spaces for smaller groups of students. Schools should ensure that groups of students do not come into contact with each other upon entry and exit of communal spaces. *Please note: schools do not need to wait one hour between use by different groups, as indicated in earlier versions of this guidance.*

The use of shared equipment is allowable, and equipment should be cleaned regularly. Students must practice appropriate hand hygiene, especially in between using shared equipment and before and after PE class. If there is not equitable access to equipment for all students or if equipment cannot be properly cleaned and disinfected between classes, avoid the use of equipment altogether. For additional information please review the aforementioned health guidance and [FAQ 7: Physical Education](#).

2021 Vermont Physical Education Assessment (VTPEA)

At this time AOE leadership is considering the viability of pursuing a waiver for statewide assessments. For now, the AOE is **stopping preparations for the Vermont Physical Education Assessment (VTPEA) and Alternate VTPEA** specific to SY21, as this assessment poses significant safety concerns. Fitnessgram can continue to be used in person in a formative way at district/school discretion. In fact, Cooper Institute recently released [Measuring Fitness at Home](#) online learning modules that can support remote learning. Physical education instruction focused on maintaining health-related physical fitness to support the social-emotional well-being of students and their academic success should remain a priority!

Professional Learning Communities

For the remaining months of the school year, I am facilitating three professional learning communities (PLCs) for health and physical educators. One health PLC and the PE PLC will focus on developing shareable content-specific performance-based assessments as well as the use of project-based learning. A third PLC will be offered to health educators focused on embedding sexual health education into skills-based health curricula.

PLCs will meet virtually three or four times between December 2020 and June 2021, after school on Wednesdays, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.; dates to be announced.

- If you are interested in participating in one or both health PLCs, please complete [this form](#).
- If you are interested in participating in the physical education performance-based assessment PLC, please complete [this form](#).

Participation in these PLCs will provide you with an opportunity to network with peers and earn professional learning credits.

Using Project-Based Learning to Engage Students: Part I

Kyle Anderson, the AOE's new Arts Specialist, is passionate about interdisciplinary project-based learning! Recently, Emily Leute, the AOE ELA specialist interviewed Kyle and asked him to define this type of learning. Here is what she learned from Kyle:

“Project-based learning is an instructional approach that provides ample opportunity to construct and apply knowledge to a student-developed solution to a standards-based challenge,” Anderson explained when I asked him to sum up PBL in one sentence, but he didn't stop there. He wanted to clarify that PBL units are not the same thing as “passion projects” in which students are doing “whatever they want,” but rather “determining *how* and *why* they are learning key knowledge and skills

from school disciplines and beyond.” He also explained that the “most powerful units are the ones that aim to reach an audience outside the classroom with the student-developed public product. This requires students to take part in authentic processes (e.g., action research).”

Among many other benefits, Anderson cited PBL as his “primary engagement and behavior management tool” because “the more ownership students had in their learning, the more invested they were in it.” Having students invested in their learning may be more important now than ever, so any strategy to boost that is worth exploring.

Jay McTighe, co-author of *Designing Authentic Performance Tasks and Projects: Tools for Meaningful Learning and Assessment*, states “when performance tasks and projects are authentic in nature, learners are more likely to see the relevance and purpose of learning the requisite concepts and skills.” In the next issues of Linking Health and Learning, we will continue to explore the use of project-based learning to engage students in their learning. PLC participants will also have the opportunity to learn about the use of project-based learning to engage students in personalized and authentic learning.

Mental Health First Aid

COVID-19 has impacted people of all ages across the country, including children and youth. School has changed and students engage in varied learning environments with new rules, participation in extracurricular activities has diminished, and students are not seeing their friends or extended family in the same way they once did — and it’s taking a toll on their emotional and mental well-being.

[Mental Health First Aid](#) is a training program that teaches members of the public how to help a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing worsening of an existing mental health problem, or undergoing a mental health crisis. Like traditional first aid, Mental Health First Aid does not teach people to treat or diagnose mental health or substance use conditions. Instead, the training teaches people how to offer initial support until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis resolves. Educators at all levels can benefit from Mental Health First Aid certification. To learn more, read cases studies, press releases, and blogs from Mental Health First Aid’s latest impacts.

First Aid and CPR Requirements

In a recent discussion with health and physical education state leaders, CPR was one topic of discussion. In Vermont, Title 16 VSA § 131 requires that students learn first aid, disaster and accident prevention, and information

regarding and practice of compression-only CPR and the use of automated external defibrillators. This made me think, can this requirement be met using online resources that could support in-person hybrid, or remote instruction?

There are no stipulations considering how Vermont students (or health or PE teachers for that matter) receive first aid or CPR/AED instruction. Online first aid and CPR courses like eCPRcertification.com, which follow the standards of Red Cross and OSHA, can be used. Of course, learning and practicing first aid and CPR is more authentic when done in person, but in these times, schools can use free online courses to meet first aid and CPR requirements while navigating different learning environments. If Vermont educators can use online first aid and CPR courses to meet certification requirements for their jobs, why not use these programs to support student learning!

Professional Learning Opportunities

[ASCD Webinars – Free Professional Learning](#)

OPEN's Free - [Teacher Learning School](#)

PE BLOG – [10 Professional Development Websites](#) (Free)

Planned Parenthood of Vermont: [2020 Virtual Vermont Youth Sex Education Summit](#)

Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VT-HEC): [Free webinars](#) and [current course offerings](#).

SHAPE America – [Conferences and Events](#)

Resources for Health and Physical Education

[American Academy of Pediatrics Supports Kids Returning to School in the Fall](#)

ETR – [National Partner Resources \(Reentry to schools – Health and PE\)](#)

OPEN – [Back to School 2020 Planning Tools](#)

[FitnessGram Learning at Home Modules](#)

[PBS Learning Media](#), ([filtered by Health and P.E.](#))

[SHAPE America Resources and Publications](#)

[SHAPE America School Reentry Resources](#)

[SHAPE Vermont Resources](#)

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