

Health Education in Maryland

Health Education plays a critical role in social emotional learning and educating the whole child. In order to provide a well-rounded education, all public schools in Maryland must provide an instructional program in comprehensive health education *each year* with sufficient frequency and duration to meet the requirements of the State Framework for all students in grades prekindergarten-8. High school students must earn a half credit.¹ The goal of health education is to develop health literate citizens. Health literacy is the ability to access, understand, appraise, apply and advocate for health information and services in order to maintain or enhance one's own health and the health of others². Maryland Health Education Standards emphasize the development of the skills below.³



The Highly Effective Health Education Teacher:⁴

- Uses social norms to develop students' positive attitudes and values towards health and provides opportunities to reinforce skills and positive behaviors.
- Designs and/or uses curriculum that supports development of health literacy and health-enhancing behaviors.
- Emphasizes individual and group norms that support health-enhancing behaviors.
- Demonstrates effective instructional and behavior management strategies that support social and emotional learning.
- Uses quantitative data from instruments such as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to customize lessons to meet the needs of the student population.
- Models and enforces behaviors that create an environment in which students feel valued, welcome and safe.
- Displays behaviors in and out of the classroom that clearly demonstrate a passion for health education and for teaching.

Hiring qualified teachers to provide health education is a critical responsibility for school administrators and central office staff. COMAR requires teachers to be health education certified and identifies three topic areas within health education that require additional teacher training; Family Life and Human Sexuality, Safety and Violence Prevention, and Substance Abuse Prevention.¹

Highly Effective Health Education Programs Include:⁵

- A scope and sequence with an emphasis on skills, including but not limited to the seven skills listed in the Maryland Health Education Standards (analyzing influences, accessing information, interpersonal communication, decision-making, goal-setting, self-management, and advocacy).
- An organized curriculum focused on the progression of skills that utilizes functional information outlined in the State Framework leading students to skill mastery.
- Performance-based assessments that are relevant and meaningful to students.
- Up-to-date information that is medically and scientifically accurate.

The National Health Education Standards recommend the following hours of instruction in health education per year: 40 hours Pre-K to grade 2, 80 hours grades 3 to 12.⁴

¹ Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.18.01 www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comarhtml/13a/13a.04.18.01.htm

²SHAPE America, The Essential Components of Health Education (2019) bit.ly/2J7T0jB

³RMC Health Images <https://www.rmc.org/health-education-skills-models/>

⁴Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. (2007). *National Health Education Standards, Second Edition: Achieving Excellence*. Washington, D.C.: The American Cancer Society.

⁵Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool cdc.gov/healthyyouth/hecat

Additional Resources - SHAPE America [Appropriate Practices in School-Based Health Education](#), Center for Disease Control and Prevention [Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curriculum](#).