



Making the Case for Quality Comprehensive Health Education in NY State

Introduction of the Problem

Students in NYS public schools are not receiving the quality Comprehensive Health Education they need to be safe, healthy, fit and successful. We all want New York State (NYS) students to be healthy and feel supported, challenged, engaged and safe, but there is a great void in their education. The subject of health education is as important as other school subjects (and some might say *more*). Health education needs to be supported, updated and re-written to match the research. Specifically, NYS students need:

- More required health education. The current time requirement for health education in NYS in no way equals what the research tells us is needed. There is NO time requirement for elementary health education. Additionally, most health content is disease-focused and neither comprehensive nor research-based.
- Health Education Certified and well-prepared health education teachers in grades Pre-K to 12 who receive ongoing annual professional development to keep them current and competent in their field.
- Comprehensive health education laws and mandates aligned and focused on the most important health knowledge and skills for students to be healthy and safe, yet flexible enough to address local health and education issues.
- Required, Coordinated School Health Policies that address the Whole Child in all school districts and that make school health education part of district and school improvement plans and a “well rounded education”. Today, there is **no** NYS law or regulation requiring school districts to have a Coordinated School Health Policy.
- Support from the NYS Education Department. The position of Associate in Health Education has been vacant for over eight years.

The Solution

The New York State Council on Adolescent Pregnancy calls on New York State to honor the vision and mission of the NYS Education Department to educate *all* the people of NYS and to support youth health and development.

1. Adopt the **Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model for Coordinated School Health** to improve educational outcomes and promote the healthy development of NYS children as a critical component of a quality educational program.
2. Ensure that schools employ **professionally prepared, highly qualified and certified health educators** who receive annual, ongoing professional development. Currently, physical education and other teachers, often with no health education training or classroom health education experience, teach health classes through incidental teaching regulations. Also, some schools are teaching health virtually through online learning with no in-person health teacher. Healthy skills and attitudes are not shaped by software programs or poorly trained health educators.
3. Change current health education regulations to allow for adequate instructional time so that students can master the standards, concepts, skills and healthy habits. The National Health Education Standards state that **adequate instructional time** is essential for students to master health education concepts, skills and habits. **The National Health Education Standards recommend that students Pre-K to grade 2 receive a minimum of 40 hours of health education per academic year; and students in grades 3 to 12 receive 80 hours of instruction in health education each academic year.**
4. Completely align and update NYS school health education to include a Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child school district policy requirement with required inclusion and connections to the School Improvement Plan.
5. Update laws, mandates, standards and requirements for School Health Education that align with best practices and research, including the National Health Education Standards, National Sexuality Education Standards, and Guidance Document for Achieving the NYS Standards in Health Education. Fill the void at NYS Education Department.

For more information about Making the Case for Comprehensive Health Education in NYS schools, please go to www.nyscap.org