

Health Education

This fact sheet summarizes findings of the *2010 School Health Profiles*, a survey of middle school and high school principals and lead health teachers in over 300 schools in Washington State. The survey assesses health-related policies, procedures, instruction, and environments every two years.

To compare student perceptions or behaviors, selected data from the *2010 Healthy Youth Survey* are included.

The Healthy Youth Survey measured self-reported health risk behaviors of about 34,000 students in 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in over 200 Washington schools.

Laws and Policies

Basic Education

Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history, including different cultures and participation in representative government; geography; arts; and health and fitness.

RCW 28A.150.210

Basic Education Act – Goal of school districts:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.210>

High School Graduation Requirements

Minimum high school graduation requirements include satisfactory completion of two credits of health and fitness education.

WAC 180-51-066

Minimum requirements for high school graduation:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=180-51-066>

Washington State has embraced the challenge to ensure that all students become educated and engaged in a lifetime of health and fitness.

An understanding of good health and fitness concepts and practices is essential for all students. Businesses have already started to realize the extent to which poor health practices can undermine an employee's effectiveness and ability to succeed. The same is true of students. Teaching our students good health and safety principles can lead to a lifetime of healthy practices, resulting in more productive, active, and successful lives.

Solid laws and policies lay the foundation for a safe and healthy learning environment.

According to the School Health Profiles survey, nearly 90% of secondary schools required health education.

- 97% of middle schools required at least one class
- 82% of high schools required at least one class

Instruction on Health Education

The health and fitness standards establish the concepts and skills necessary for safe and healthy living and, in turn, for successful learning. These guidelines represent the effort to improve the clarity, coherence, inclusiveness, and manageability for health and fitness education.

In required health education courses, according to the survey, teachers tried to increase student knowledge:

- 98% in nutrition and dietary behavior
- 98% in physical activity and fitness
- 95% in tobacco-use prevention, alcohol- or other drug-use prevention
- 89% in emotional or mental health

Schools with a health education curriculum addressed specific skills:

- 94% included comprehending concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health
- 94% included practicing health enhancing behaviors to avoid or reduce risks
- 93% included using goal setting skills to enhance health
- 92% included using decision-making skills to enhance health

Nearly all (98%) health teachers reported trying to increase student knowledge of nutrition and dietary behaviors. Health teachers incorporated a variety of specific nutrition topics including:

- 94% taught the benefits of healthy eating
- 93% taught balancing food intake and physical activity
- 93% taught eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- 91% taught how to use food labels

What are the Current Behaviors?

According to the Healthy Youth Survey, almost 70% of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders said they drank sweetened drinks (soda, sports drinks, Snapple®, SoBe®, etc.) at school in the past week.

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Currently 7% of 8th graders, 13% of 10th graders, and 20% of 12th graders smoke cigarettes.

Current alcohol use in the past 30 days for students in secondary schools:

- 4% of 6th graders
- 14% of 8th graders
- 28% of 10th graders
- 40% of 12th graders

Alcohol is implicated in nearly a third of youth traffic fatalities. It is also associated with violence, suicide, educational failure, and sexual activity.

Most kids find it easy to get alcohol from friends, at parties, or from home. Below are sources for 12th graders for who got alcohol:

- 61% from friends or at a party
- 25% gave money to someone
- 20% at home with/ without permission
- 9% from an older sibling

Youth perceptions about alcohol prevalence include:

- 69% adults frown on drinking
- 68% regular drinking is risky
- 58% drinking is wrong for kids
- 56% regular drinking isn't cool

Staff Development on Health Education

The School Health Profiles survey showed that 74% of schools required all staff who taught health education topics to be certified, licensed, or endorsed by the state to teach health.

Schools reported these materials for teaching health education:

- 79% had goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for health education
- 65% had plans for how to assess student performance in health education
- 63% had a written health education curriculum
- 62% had a chart describing the annual scope and sequence of instruction for health education

47% of lead health teachers had 10 or more years of experience teaching health education courses or topics.

In 38% of schools, the lead health education teacher had professional preparation in health education or in health and physical education combined.

What Schools Can Do

- Provide planned, sequential K-12 curricula emphasizing cognitive content and learning experiences in health education
- Develop clearly articulated goals and objectives that describe the nature and character of the curriculum
- Provide activities designed to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills related to health behavior
- Provide instruction led by certified, trained health teachers

Resources

American Association for Health Education

www.aahperd.org/aahe

National professional association for health educators

Healthy Schools, Successful Students

<http://healthyschools.ospi.k12.wa.us/waschool/>

Provides information and resources to ensure that Washington's students are healthy and ready to learn

OSPI Health and Fitness Education

www.k12.wa.us/HealthFitness/

Washington State's education agency which provides leadership, service, and support to schools

Washington Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (WAHPERD)

www.wahperd.com/

A professional organization for physical education and health education

Washington State Department of Health (DOH)

<http://here.doh.wa.gov/>

Health Education Resource Exchange – features new resources and other items of interest in public health promotion and education

Resources are provided as a public service and do not imply endorsement by the State of Washington.

For more information:

Lisa Rakoz, OSPI: 360-725-4977 Lisa.Rakoz@k12.wa.us

Margaret Hansen, DOH:

360-236-3757 Margaret.Hansen@doh.wa.gov

