

Health Education TEKS Review Consensus Recommendations

Health Education Content Advisors:

Flip Flippen

Mike Love, M.D.

Dawn Riley

Jack Lesch, M.D.

Feyi Obamehinti, Ed.D.

Myiesha Taylor, M.D.

Hazem Kanaan, M.D.

The goal of health curriculum standards should be to provide classroom instruction and support to allow youth to develop and sustain health-promoting behaviors throughout their lives. The standards should address the foundation of healthy behaviors in K-8 so that all students have the opportunity to be exposed since not all students will take Health as an elective in high school. The standards should promote safety and healthy behavior for all students. Content advisors affirm the six strands in the current Commissioner’s Health TEKS Study Recommendations with some additional comments, clarifications, and recommendations, which are included below.

| Strand | Recommendations | Rationale |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Physical health and hygiene | <p>In the body systems substrand, to maintain accuracy, all 11 body organ systems should be addressed.</p> <p>The growth and development substrand should begin in kindergarten and not be delayed until second grade.</p> <p>For the personal health and hygiene substrand,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affirm the importance of including habits to stay healthy such as hand-washing and practicing good sleep hygiene • recommend the inclusion of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ environmental/community factors that influence personal health, including access to health care system and health care providers and their role ○ common illnesses and virus, e.g. Lyme disease and West Nile | Health services and resources vary by geographic location. Students should know that their environment and community impact their health. Students need to know the different levels of medical services available to them and how to access them. |

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|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Mental health and wellness | <p>In the self-regulation substrand, recommend including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goal setting and decision-making skills and • emerging neuroscience research related to behavior and decision-making. <p>The developing a healthy self-concept substrand should begin in kindergarten.</p> <p>The healthy relationships substrand should be presented in the broad context of what is a healthy and unhealthy relationship, as described by the healthy relationship skills identified under the essential components of health education in the Commissioner’s Health TEKS Study Recommendations (page 3).</p> <p>In the coping with stress and trauma substrand, address loss and grief.</p> | <p>Goal setting and decision-making skills are essential skills for self-regulation.</p> <p>A healthy self-concept is a critical part of identify and sense of self as well as promoting the ability to accept others and establish boundaries.</p> <p>There is a need to establish a foundation and the characteristics of healthy relationships. These recommendations align with House Bill 1026, 86th Texas Legislature, 2019, which requires the inclusion of instruction in positive character traits.</p> <p>Children experience loss and grief at an early age and need coping skills to develop resilience.</p> |
| Healthy eating and physical activity | <p>Recommend combining the foods to limit and foods to eat substrands and including the instruction at kindergarten.</p> <p>Across the substrands, address the benefits of a healthy lifestyle to promote wellness and prevent diseases, including obesity, diabetes, and CV disease. The recommendation also includes providing this instruction in kindergarten.</p> | <p>There is a child obesity crisis in Texas. The rate of diabetes in children is ~50%, which impacts the health of the state and our economy.</p> |

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| Injury violence and prevention and safety | <p>Recommend introducing the bullying substrand at kindergarten. At the early grade levels, this can be a conversation about respect and developing empathy for others.</p> <p>Ensure that the concept of safe havens within home, school, and community and the individual responsibility for reporting any form of violence is introduced in the healthy home, school and community climate substrand.</p> <p>The healthy relationships substrand in the injury violence and prevention and safety strand would focus on family violence.</p> <p>Ensure that self-harm and suicidality are addressed in the intrapersonal violence substrand.</p> <p>Recommend including a digital citizenship/media substrand that would address topics such as cyberbullying, digital pornography, and sexting.</p> <p>In the safety skills unintentional injuries substrand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recommend including head injuries (e.g. concussion awareness and prevention). • affirm the inclusion of texting and driving and drinking and driving and recommend including risks for the rider and driver | <p>In the lower grade, reinforcing the development of respect and healthy relationships is foundational to addressing bullying. Bullying is symptomatic of unhealthy relationships and school culture.</p> <p>Students need to be empowered to report if they hear something or see something that is unsafe and informed about who they can go to in times of need.</p> <p>Number one cause of death of children and adolescents is unintentional trauma.</p> <p>Suicidality is one of the leading causes of death and incidences of self-harm are increasing among youth.</p> <p>We are in an age of technology that is highly uncontrolled that can create high-risk behaviors and escalate impulsivity in youth.</p> |

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| Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs | <p>In the risk and protective factors substrand, recommend reinforcing the concept of safe havens specific to substance abuse.</p> <p>Recommend introducing the treatment substrand in the middle school grades.</p> <p>Affirm the inclusion of the use and misuse substrand to address substance abuse. In addition to over-the-counter, illegal, and prescription drugs, recommend expanding the scope of substance abuse to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vaping with e-cigarettes • opioids • inhalants <p>In this substrand, recommend addressing the signs of alcohol poisoning (use and misuse substrand).</p> <p>Recommend revising the “effects” substrand” to read “cause and effects.”</p> | <p>Students need to know the dangers associated with substance use and abuse and how and where to get help or treatment.</p> <p>There is a high rate of use of these substances (e.g. vaping) which are often inaccurately thought to be safe or not identified as a “drug.”</p> <p>Students need to know the causes as well as the effects of the substance use.</p> |

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| Reproductive and sexual health | <p>Recommend using up-to-date medical referencing (e.g., remove HIV vaccine from current TEKS).</p> <p>Support the inclusion of the sexual risk avoidance and sexual risk reduction substrand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align directly with the language in statute 28.004(e)(1)-(4), including abstinence as the preferred choice. Modifying 28.004(e)(5) to read that the risk and failure of contraceptives must be taught • Support the substrands inclusion of risks associated with sexual behavior such as STDs • Recommend also including economic impact of risk behaviors (e.g. teen pregnancy) <p>The focus on healthy relationships in the Reproductive and Sexual Health strand should focus on dating relationships. Include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent/refusal skills • Communication <p>Agree with the statement that emphasis should be placed on teaching decision-making, communication, and refusal skills, but the recommended word <i>negotiation</i> is problematic and doesn't send the right message and should not be included in the revised TEKS.</p> | <p>Teen pregnancy and STDs are health, economic, and social concerns. Teaching sexual risk avoidance and up to date medical references are essential to the health of students. The statute is comprehensive and addresses topics that must be taught.</p> <p>Even if abstinence only is taught, risk and failure of contraceptives must be taught. Lack of information can mislead students that they are safe.</p> |

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| Concept/Areas | Recommendations | Rationale |
|---------------------|--|--|
| High school courses | Create a high-school course that helps students understand how and when to access the healthcare system - that range from prevention and wellness, to urgent and emergency care. Introduce the comprehensive and collaborative nature of the myriad of healthcare team-members and practitioners and explain their roles and scopes of practice. | Early exposure to the various healthcare career options is beneficial in helping to create a robust and diverse work-force. It is common for students to have awareness of doctors and nurses, but under-appreciate the myriad of other members of a comprehensive healthcare team. Further, it is important for students to be aware of the various access points into our healthcare system so it is utilized appropriately. |