



# INTRODUCTION

---





# INTRODUCTION

---

Excellence in Teaching: A Healthy Choice was developed through a collaborative initiative among eight institutions of higher education in New York State to promote excellence in the professional preparation of future school health educators. As a key component of New York State's Goals 2000 Health Education Project, this initiative addressed the critical importance of preparing school health educators in post-secondary institutions with the knowledge and the skills they will need to help today's elementary and secondary school students achieve a healthy lifestyle.

There is increasing concern among educators and members of the school community that underachievement of many students can be traced to poor health and psychological and social problems that can be ameliorated through effective health education and prevention programs. Schools that encourage students to engage in healthy behaviors create an atmosphere for academic success and individual growth. Health educators will play an important role in promoting healthy behaviors and lifestyles that will help all students reach higher standards.

## Background

The Goals 2000 Health Education Project is part of a comprehensive statewide effort to strengthen and improve education for all students in New York State. The intensity and pace of change in an expanding global economy demand that people gain greater knowledge and higher-level skills than ever before. Today's students will need high skills to be successful in an ever-changing and more complex society. They will need to use information and apply problem-solving skills to new and unique situations to participate effectively in our society. Students who are able to reason and think creatively will be successful in achieving productive and fulfilling lives.

Educational institutions throughout the nation are responding to the challenge of raising standards for all students. To meet the needs of a more complex and demanding society, national and State education experts have developed clear standards for all students. The New York State Learning Standards include expectations for what students should know, understand, and be able to do. They also include performance standards to assess student achievement and measure progress towards attainment of standards. National Health Education Standards have been developed to guide schools in helping them achieve world-class standards in health education as part of the national education reform movement. In New York State, the Board of Regents has established standards in seven disciplines (including health, physical education, and family and consumer sciences) to provide a blueprint for action for the State's schools.



## Higher Standards and Teacher Preparation

The education reform of elementary and secondary schools places higher expectations and requirements on the State's students. Most high school students will be required to pass Regents examinations that reflect high standards in academic subject areas. Elementary and middle school students will take tests that will show whether they are getting the preparation they need to succeed in later grades. Extensive information about the State's learning standards and opportunities for staff development and training are being made available to elementary and secondary school faculty and staff throughout the State. These efforts are intended to ensure that classroom teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable their students to achieve success in school.

Education reform in elementary and secondary schools is requiring a review and re-examination of teacher preparation programs. Today's teachers must help foster a learning environment in which all children have the opportunity to achieve to their full potential. They must help a diverse population of children learn and develop. Additionally, skills for using a variety of instructional strategies and techniques, including instructional technology, are needed. Teachers need to use various types of assessment to analyze teaching and student learning, and they must maintain current knowledge and skills in the subject taught and in methods of instruction and assessment. Effective teachers promote parental involvement and collaboration with others for the benefit of students. With increasing demands being placed on schools through more rigorous State tests and assessments, teacher candidates will need to demonstrate a firm knowledge of the standards within their field, and exhibit those skills necessary to enable students to achieve the standards.

Within health education, emphasis has shifted from acquisition of facts and information to a better understanding of health concepts and development of health skills. New assessments will focus on a student's ability to reason and apply health concepts and skills to real life.

## The Goals 2000 Health Education Project

The Goals 2000 Health Education Project is a response to the demand for schools to offer improved academic programs and to change the way they function. To ensure success in reaching higher standards, teachers need the knowledge, training, and skills to enable them to organize and implement instruction that meets the needs of today's students. The Goals 2000 Project was designed to strengthen and improve skills for both existing elementary and secondary school teachers as well as teacher candidates. Two major statewide networks of health educators and professionals joined together in this comprehensive staff development and pre-service training effort. Under the administrative leadership of the Upstate Center for School Safety at the Ulster BOCES, the Comprehensive School Health and Wellness Centers (CSHWC) serving all regions of the State, and the New York State Federation of Professional Health Educators (NYSFPHE) collaborated on implementing the project design.

For teachers currently providing health instruction in elementary and secondary schools, eight two-day training sessions were conducted at sites throughout the State to help educators understand the new health education standards and to assist them in aligning their current instruction to the new standards. On the first day, an initial awareness training on the new standards and their implications for instruction was



provided. On the second day, a more in-depth workshop focused on curriculum alignment and assessment strategies.

The training was provided by a cadre of CSHWC staff and NYSFPHE teacher members who implemented the training protocol developed in the initial planning stage of the project. Subsequent to the statewide training, a group of teachers in each region of the State who volunteered to participate were provided intensive on-site assistance by CSHWC staff to implement instruction and assessment directly related to the new standards. They are now sharing their experience with colleagues in health education.

For teacher candidates in health education programs, a Higher Education Workgroup of the Goals 2000 Project consisting of representatives of eight institutions of higher education in New York State was formed to identify the needs of post-secondary institutions. This initiative, entitled Excellence in Teaching: A Healthy Choice, was designed to support faculty at the post-secondary level to assess and adjust their programs in relation to the movement towards higher standards in elementary and secondary education. The extensive amount of material being developed around the implementation of new standards suggested a need for an integrative work that brought key concepts together in a practical and simple format for use by college administrators, faculty, and staff. The formation of the Higher Education Workgroup helped to strengthen New York State's Goals 2000 effort to improve teaching and learning in New York State. It ensured that higher education representatives were present and involved in the planning for achieving higher standards.

## Instructional Strategies for Higher Education Faculty

The Goals 2000 Higher Education Workgroup discussed a number of alternatives for supporting improved training for school health educators that would help them gain the knowledge and skills needed to teach to the higher standards. Members of the group agreed that development of instructional strategies was the most practical way to provide technical assistance to higher education institutions. The document, which has been organized into six chapters, includes information and resource materials to provide instruction and learning experiences to enable students to reach the higher standards as set forth by the State. The instructional strategies and related materials can be used in ways that support effective instruction within existing programs.

- *Chapter 1* provides a format for teaching about health education learning standards and performance indicators that have been established for organizing health knowledge and skills into curricula for teaching in the schools. The standards identify what students should know and be able to do, and the performance indicators provide a basis for assessing student achievement and progress.
- *Chapter 2* provides a format for teaching about the skills-based approach to learning standards in health education. Focusing on the development of students' skills and competencies, and not simply on acquisition of facts and information, it provides a different strategy for helping ensure that students achieve learning standards.
- *Chapter 3* provides a format for teaching prospective school health educators how to develop effective learning experiences for helping learners gain mastery of important health knowledge and development of skills leading towards the achievement of the learning standards.



- *Chapter 4* provides a format for teaching about new assessment strategies and techniques and development of rubrics for performance assessments. With the new higher standards in place, prospective teachers need to understand the dramatic shift in emphases occurring in assessment strategies and their relationship to classroom instruction.
- *Chapter 5* provides a format for teaching about the integration of health education across the curriculum. Today's teachers need skills to ensure that subject matter is not taught in isolation, and that key skills, such as critical thinking, reasoning and decision making, are consistently taught and reinforced across all subject areas.
- *Chapter 6* provides a format for teaching about the use of technology in health education. Given the prolific expansion of health information, today's students will need to use technology to ensure that they can access the most current and accurate information.
- A *Glossary* is included with definitions that will enable prospective health educators to understand the new terms associated with higher standards and their relationship to existing concepts and practices.
- An *Annotated Bibliography* provides a comprehensive list of resources that can be used for strengthening health education programs.

The implementation of standards-based health curriculum and assessment products is in a formative and developmental stage. The emerging emphases on development of health concepts and skills represents a significant shift in teaching and learning strategies for both students and teachers. While much progress has been made over the past several years, considerable work is still being devoted to refine and extend initial efforts to reach greater segments of the health education community in this State and in the nation. Excellence in Teaching: A Healthy Choice brings together current information and understandings about the new skills-based approach in health education that can serve as a solid introduction and resource in the preparation of teacher candidates.