

# VAHPERD

## Position Statement for School Health Education

In our complex society, comprehensive school health education is needed now more than ever. Today's students are forced to deal with issues that include violence, adolescent pregnancy, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use and abuse, and acute and chronic disease. Health education prepares students to take responsibility for their health decisions by educating them on all aspects of health. In addition, health education provides students with skills to make responsible health related choices to prevent disease and promote health and wellness.

Health education programs must be comprehensive. They should be organized to include the entire school community and they should require all students to learn basic health concepts for daily living. Comprehensive school health education teaches students the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for maintaining and improving their own health. School health education must include children at all grade levels for instruction, services, and health promotion. Comprehensive school health education must be led by school administrators who care about their own health, and promote personal healthy lifestyles for all who touch the lives of the children. Teachers must value their own health as well as the health of their students, and schools must be places where thinking and acting healthy is expected of everyone. The quality of life for Vermont citizens depends on this type of comprehensive school health program.

Students in Vermont should receive instruction in the following areas: mental health; tobacco; alcohol and other drugs; personal and consumer health; nutrition and fitness; safety and injury prevention; family life and human sexuality; and disease prevention and control including HIV/AIDS.

Health education is an instrument used to improve the health behaviors and health status of its students. Strong preparation of those who teach health education should increase the success of the health program. Therefore, the Vermont Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance recommends the following teacher preparation guidelines: at the elementary level, health should be taught by a certified health teacher or a classroom teacher who has had additional training in health education; at the middle and senior high school levels, health instruction should be provided by certified health educators. In addition, students in Vermont should receive instruction in the following areas: mental health; tobacco, alcohol and other drugs; personal and consumer health; nutrition and fitness; safety and injury prevention; family life and human sexuality; and disease prevention and control including HIV/AIDS.

The overall aim of health education in Vermont schools should be self-responsibility for health behavior. Health habits do not exist apart from attitudes and values. Schools can model healthy attitudes and values by providing students with the opportunity to practice what they are taught through health instruction. The school environment is the perfect place to practice healthy lifestyles through physical exercise, food selection, time management, and safe behaviors. Now is the time to stop allowing our youth to become passive recipients of the health trends set for them in society, and time to teach them to be active participants in their own health and the health of our communities.