

## Is Research Based and Theory Driven

**Description:** An effective curriculum has instructional strategies and learning experiences built on theoretical approaches (e.g., social cognitive theory, theory of planned behavior, social norms theory, and transtheoretical model) that have effectively influenced health-related behaviors among youths. The most promising curriculum goes beyond the cognitive level and addresses health determinants, social factors, attitudes, values, norms, and skills that influence specific health-related behaviors.<sup>1</sup>

Because the characteristics of effective health education curricula are based on the evaluation of curricula and are theory driven, teachers who purposely apply and incorporate the characteristics into all health education unit or lesson plans, learning activities, and assessments may help increase students' likelihood of adopting and maintaining healthy behaviors.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* (Atlanta, GA: CDC, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> "Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curricula," CDC Healthy Schools, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified May 29, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/characteristics/index.htm>.



## Grades K–2

### Example

1. A primary school receives funding to buy a health education curriculum. The principal forms a committee representing classroom teachers, other school personnel (e.g., health teachers, nurses, social workers, counselors, and administrators), parents, and community health partners (e.g., public health, county extension, faith leaders, and medical personnel) to select a health education curriculum.
2. The committee receives professional development related to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) characteristics of an effective health education curriculum to guide their selection of a health education curriculum.
3. The committee selects a curriculum that includes teacher guides, student materials, and related materials specific for students in kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade.
  - a. The curriculum is based on the social cognitive theory and social norms theory, which focus on helping students develop health-enhancing attitudes and norms as well as confidence to apply functional health knowledge and health-related skills to engage in healthy behaviors.
  - b. Additionally, the curriculum is evaluated and found to positively affect students' health-related behaviors.

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## Grades 3–5

### Example

1. An intermediate school for students grades 3 to 5 receives funding to buy a health education curriculum. The principal forms a committee representing classroom teachers, other school personnel (e.g., health teachers, nurses, social workers, counselors, and administrators), parents, and community health partners (e.g., public health and county extension personnel) to select a health education curriculum.
2. The committee receives professional development related to the CDC's characteristics of an effective health education curriculum and the [Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool \(HECAT\)](#) to guide their selection of a health education curriculum.
3. The committee selects a curriculum that includes teacher guides, student workbooks, and related materials specific for students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade.
  - a. The curriculum is based on the theory of planned behavior, which focuses on helping students develop health-enhancing attitudes and norms as well as confidence to apply functional health knowledge and health-related skills to engage in healthy behaviors.
  - b. Additionally, the curriculum is evaluated and found to positively affect students' health-related behaviors.



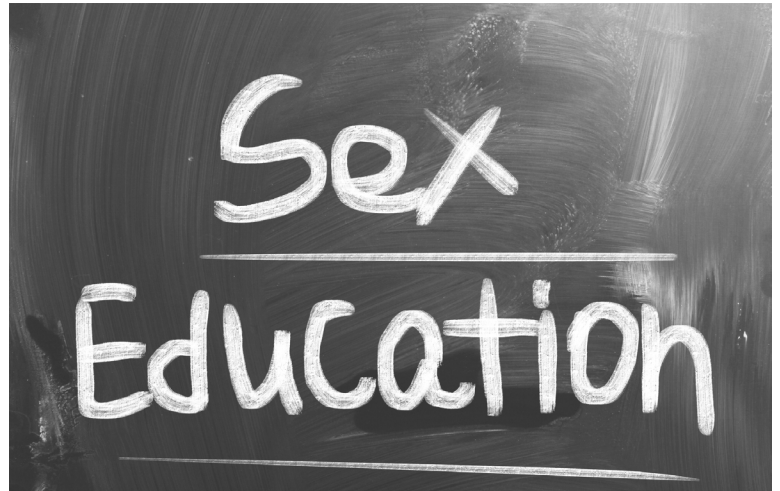
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## Grades 6–8

### Example

1. Seeing an increase in teen birth rates and sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates, the school health team, consisting of health educators, school nurses, mental health providers, parents, students, administrators, and community-based organizations, decides to institute an after-school HIV/STI/pregnancy prevention program for students in grades 7 and 8.
2. The health educators, in partnership with the community-based organizations, select three potential commercial evidence-informed programs that positively affect health behaviors.
3. The school health team uses the CDC's [HECAT](#) to select a program that best supports the needs of their students and is based on social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behavior.



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## Grades 9–12

### Example

1. A school district has received a grant to purchase a new high school health education curriculum. The district forms a committee composed of health teachers, parents, school administrators, local health department health educators, high school seniors, and the health education curriculum coordinator.
2. The committee selects three health education curricula to review. The committee uses the CDC's [HECAT](#) to help them determine which curriculum to select.
3. The committee determines that the health education curriculum it is going to select has been evaluated and has shown a positive effect on student health behaviors. In addition, the curriculum is based on the theory of planned behavior.



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