

Promote the Comprehensive Health and PE Standards in 60 Seconds

You already understand the incredibly important role Comprehensive Health and Physical Education (CHPE) standards have on your community, but do others? That is the basic challenge of any advocacy effort, so informing your constituents should be your priority. When people understand the contributions health and physical education make to the quality of life in schools and communities, everyone's job gets much easier. This tool provides an overview of how to garner the support for CHPE that is so critical to students' current and future success.

1. Identify the key message.
2. Identify the target audience.
3. Craft an advocacy message that:
 - educates and informs,
 - explains benefits,
 - creates an image, and
 - requests action.

Define Your Key Message

What is the most important thing you want others to know about CHPE? This key message is one that you should repeat over and over. To be effective, this message should be something you can say in conversation. It should be easy to remember and no more than 15 words. It may be as simple as: "Healthy students learn better." Or, "Health and physical education provide the foundation for developing lifelong health and wellness."

Messaging by Target Audience

An audience "profile" is a good place to start as you define the people you want to reach with your messages. The profile provides a snapshot of your target audiences and gives you insight into how to impact your audiences and their "investment" in the issue.

The best way to get target audiences to listen to your message is to frame it in a way that addresses their perspectives, needs, and wants – and you can't do that without understanding them. Consider what your target audience needs and wants to know about the standards and choose your message based on that perspective. Select messages based on what outcomes you want to achieve as well. For example, parents may be concerned with the health and well-being of their children whereas principals may be most concerned with academic achievement. For parents, emotions are employed over statistics with highlights of health and wellness impacts. When addressing a school-based decision-maker, utilize data that highlights academic achievement impacts; and when addressing a funder or politician, use data that highlights economic impacts in addition to whatever issue is of import to that individual or institution.

* A well-crafted advocacy message increases awareness, requests action, and elicits an emotional response.

Integrating Your Own Messages

Do not hesitate to draw upon personal reflections to support your points—or to add compelling examples from your own experience. The advocacy messages provided in this resource are examples. Reshape the examples to meet your delivery style. When an individual feels that they understand a message, they feel better able to connect and engage and are more likely to lend their support.

Sample Promotional Message

"Did you know that Colorado has comprehensive health and physical education standards? Our students could really be better prepared to make better decisions about how they treat others in our school. Focusing some time in our school day to address the skills in the health and physical education standards could really help our students and our school culture. Would you mind if we took a few minutes to look at the standards and see how our school might be able to address this content area?"

Key messages to Principals, Administrators or School Boards:

“Students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy.”

“Students excel socially and academically when they learn how to understand their emotions, empathize with others and make good decisions.”

“Schools with less bullying have higher scores in reading, writing and math.”

“Comprehensive health and physical education standards include the skills students need to have healthy and safe relationships.”

“Maintaining or increasing time dedicated to physical activity during the school day may positively impact students’ academic performance. Studies show students enrolled in PE have higher Math and Reading scores.”

“Colorado’s new comprehensive health and physical education standards reinforce the tested subjects and prepare students for life.”

Key Messages to Teachers:

“Research confirms that students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy.”

“Improved health can also improve attendance at school.”

“Comprehensive Health and Physical Education reinforce other subjects.”

“Comprehensive Health and PE provide an opportunity to teach and learn through personal experience.”

“Maintaining or increasing time dedicated to physical activity during the school day may positively impact students’ academic performance. Studies show students enrolled in PE have higher Math and Reading scores.”

Key Messages to Parents and Community:

“Healthy, active students achieve more in school and in life.”

“Healthy, active students concentrate better, make better decisions about their behavior, and feel better about themselves.”

“Schools, families, and communities need to work together to help students learn to make healthy choices for their minds and bodies.”

“Students involved in healthy activities are more likely to have a team approach and less conflict.”

“For the first time in history, U.S. children may have a lower life expectancy than their parents due to increased obesity and related conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.”

“A recent meta-analysis showed that well-planned and well-implemented Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) environments can positively affect academic outcomes.”

“Health education and physical education provide the foundation and practical application of many 21st Century and career readiness skills.”

CHPE Promotional Messages:

From Teacher to Superintendent, School Board or Principal:

Hello, my name is _____ from _____ school district and I am a __ grade teacher at _____. Have you heard about ASCD's whole child approach to learning? It is a great way to look at the whole child to support student learning. The approach encourages schools to be the place that challenges students, supports their individual needs, engages their interests, and focuses on their safety and health so that they can learn. The new comprehensive health and physical education standards are a great way to start looking at the health and safety of our school while engaging them in real world issues that matter to them now.

From PE Teacher to Superintendent or Principal:

Students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy. They miss fewer classes, are less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behavior, concentrate more, and achieve higher test scores. Comprehensive health and physical education standards reinforce other subjects, too. For example, health education enhances students' understanding of science when students learn how the body's immune system fights disease and physical education reinforces math when students learn to dribble balls in patterns. Let's get together to discuss ways we can incorporate CHPE concepts and skills in science and social studies units to improve our students' thinking and reasoning skills, concentration and behavior.

From District Health and Wellness Coordinator to Superintendent or Principal:

Hello, my name is _____ from _____ school district and I am the district health and wellness coordinator. It seems like we have had a problem with students (insert local health data or recent event). Did you know that the health standards address this problem? Can we take a few minutes to look at the standards and see how we might be able to help our students? Not just because it is the right thing to do to support our students, but because healthy students are better able to focus on learning and have higher attendance rates.

From Community Partner or Teacher to Superintendent or Principal:

We live in a global economy that requires our students to be prepared to think both critically and creatively, evaluate massive amounts of information, solve complex problems, and communicate well. A strong foundation in reading, writing, math, and other subjects is still as important as ever, yet by itself is insufficient for lifelong success. Health and wellness skills are critical to students' readiness for college, career, and civic life. Health education supports students in developing critical thinking and information literacy skills around the quality of health information, including diets and drugs. Health and PE also support students in developing key social skills that employers demand, like teamwork, appreciating people's differences, managing stress, and resolving conflicts. When can we meet to discuss further how health and PE are engaging subjects for students to learn 21st Century skills?

From Teacher to Superintendent or Principal:

Comprehensive health education is nutrition and much, much more. It includes concepts and skills that are relevant to what is happening in students' lives now at home and in the hallways. Health education equips students with the skills to make good choices about: behaviors and relationships (like bullying prevention), injury and disease prevention, stress management, and conflict resolution. Healthy students with effective emotional and social skills achieve more in school and in life because they are able to concentrate better, make better decisions about their behavior, and feel better about themselves. When can we meet to discuss how we can make students' wellness an academic priority now?

From Health Educator to Curriculum and Content Area Specialists:

Health and wellness are meaningful and relevant to what is happening in every student's life right now. Sex, drugs, and bullying are hot topics that make learning engaging and "real-world." Oftentimes, health and wellness are mentioned in the "Relevance and Application" section of the standards document for other content areas. This is because health education is frequently used to help students apply many literacy, math, science, social studies, and arts concepts to their personal lives. Can we spend some time at the next curriculum planning meeting discussing how to meaningfully integrate health and wellness into the curriculum to increase student engagement in the content?

From Teacher to School Board or Teacher:

Hello, my name is _____ from _____ school district and I am a 9th grade teacher at _____. No matter how effectively teachers can teach, no matter how well curricula are designed, no matter how schools are organized and financed, and no matter what leadership plans are put into practice, learning will be jeopardized unless students are healthy, safe and have the skills they need. Teaching Comprehensive Health and PE standards will not only help our students with health issues, but it will help all of our students manage their own feelings and behaviors so that they can realize their personal goals. I would be willing to give up some of my time teaching (insert content area)_____ to specifically address students' emotional and social wellness. Can we find some time to discuss the research that demonstrates setting our students up for success with social and emotional skill building leads to increased academic achievement and less absenteeism?

From School Health Coordinator to Teacher:

Improved health can also improve attendance at school. Higher rates of absenteeism have been shown in students who are overweight, suffer from asthma, have poor health status, an unhealthy diet, or a lack of sleep compared to their healthier peers. Health-related absenteeism can be reversed by increasing access to comprehensive health and physical education. Students gain self-management and critical thinking skills when they study chronic disease management and prevention practices. Would you mind if we took a few minutes to look at the standards and see how our school might be able to integrate comprehensive health and PE into other content areas?

From Parent to Principal, School Board, or Teacher:

Hello my name is _____ from _____ school district and I am a parent of a 4th grade student at _____. I have noticed that a goal in our district is to raise performance expectations for all students. Did you know that girls who were enrolled in PE for 70 or more minutes per week had significantly higher achievement scores in mathematics than girls who were enrolled in PE for 35 or fewer minutes per week?¹ When can we meet to look at our school's schedule to strategize how we can plan for more PE minutes for all students?

From Parent to Teacher:

Positive learning environments are motivating and psychologically and physically safe. Students in these environments feel more connected to peers, teachers, and their school, and they are more likely to adopt the prosocial and proacademic norms promoted by these individuals and settings. Students in these settings have better academic performance and attendance, as well as significantly lower rates of emotional distress, violence, delinquency, substance abuse, and sexual activity. Comprehensive health education provides students with opportunities to practice social/emotional skills relating to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. When can we meet to discuss where these critical skills and topics are addressed and practiced in my child's educational experience?

From Parent to Parent or Community Partners:

Hello my name is _____ from _____ school district and I am a parent of an 8th grade student at _____. Teamwork, leadership, and appreciating others' differences as strengths are skills built in PE and lead to students becoming better classmates and neighbors. Students engaged in physical education learn to socially interact during a variety of physical activities, which are skills that easily transfer to the classroom and our community. Families and community partners can support students in building these skills by reinforcing the concepts and skills found in the PE standards. As parents, we can engage in conversations with our children about how it feels to be cheered on even when you do not "win" and relate those feelings of support to how to be a good friend and neighbor. We need to support and challenge our students to be engaged in healthy and safe physical activities. Let's plan to meet at the next board meeting to discuss ways we can ensure time and value is placed on health and PE in the classroom.

¹ U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. (2008) - <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/>

From Parent/PE Teacher/Health Coordinator to Math/Science/Literacy/Civics Teacher:

Hello my name is _____ from _____ school and I am a parent of a 6th grade student in your class. Comprehensive Health and PE builds essential 21st Century skills that every child deserves so that they are fully prepared for college, work, and citizenship. Health education enhances reading, information literacy, research skills and science concepts through dialogue about topics such as the body's immune systems. PE enhances reading skills when students visually track objects through activities like juggling, catching, or striking moving objects. Math skills are enhanced through simple fractions when students dribble balls in specific patterns. Through movement, students learn to think and act simultaneously and improve their attention and brain power. When can we meet to look at the standards and see how you might be able to integrate comprehensive health and PE into other content areas?

From Parent or Community Member to Principal or Teacher:

Comprehensive health and physical education prepare students to work in careers that have not yet been invented, to think both critically and creatively, and to solve complex problems and communicate well. Health and PE programs develop and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow. The new comprehensive health and physical education standards are a great framework for teaching and practicing 21st Century Skills connected to real world issues, such as the alarming increase of cancer and diabetes as well as suicide among teens. When can we meet to discuss where these critical skills and topics are addressed and practiced in my child's educational experience?

From Parent to Principal, Superintendent, School Board:

Hello my name is _____ from _____ school district and I am a parent of a 4th grade student at _____. I have noticed that today's health and physical education lessons aren't what I experienced when I was in school. When I think of health and PE, I think of gym time, playing with a ball, or teaching the food pyramid, but it is so much more. Comprehensive Health and PE standards incorporate a wealth of 21st century skills that are critical to making healthy choices for the lifelong success of my child. Teaching CHPE standards in every Colorado school means that students will have more opportunities to learn life skills including goal-setting, healthy competition, and social skill building. Let's plan to meet at the next board meeting to discuss ways we can maximize health and PE time in the classroom.

From Parent to Principal, Superintendent, School Board:

Hello, my name is _____ from _____ school and I am a parent of a 6th grade student. I want to make sure that the accurate information I am sharing with my child at home regarding non-stereotypical messages about gender roles, teen pregnancy, and accurate labeling of body parts is being reinforced, or at least not contradicted, with the information she is receiving in school. Nearly one-third of teen girls who have dropped out of high school cite early pregnancy or parenthood as a key reason. Only 40 percent of teen moms finish high school, and less than two percent of teen mothers (those who have a baby before age 18) finish college by age 30. The high school dropout rate in this country continues to be a crisis. Teaching Comprehensive Health in every Colorado school means that students will be informed about sexual health and relationships by educators adhering to the CHPE standards. Let's plan to meet at the next board meeting to discuss ways we can ensure our students are receiving a comprehensive health education that includes sexual health.

References:

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5. U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Institute of Education Sciences. Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. (2008) - <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/>