

The Oregon Department of Education's Perspective on Health Education

In the last few years, there has been increased national attention on the health of our nation's citizens and youth. More research is being focused on childhood obesity rates and the connection of health and academic achievement. Unfortunately, during this time of heightened awareness the nation is facing extreme economic difficulties. These economic challenges have caused severe reductions in all aspects of our educational system. One of the areas facing reductions is Health Education. Many districts across Oregon are looking at drastic cuts to their budgets and are searching for ways to maintain services to their students while still meeting the federal requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). However, even with First Lady Michelle Obama's focus on childhood obesity, health education is not a content area currently covered in the ESEA. As the Obama administration continues to work on the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), there is still hope that health education will be included in the Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students section of the blueprint.

One of the focus areas for ODE is to help districts understand the importance of health education for their students. There is more and more research that supports the positive connection between health and academic achievement. Oregon also has health standards and laws that require districts to cover certain health topics at specific grade levels. The Department also provides information on these requirements to districts to ensure that all students are receiving the education on health related topics that are necessary for the development of lifelong health habits. Districts are also encouraged to have health educators as the ones who deliver the health instruction to students. Health educators are the most qualified to provide effective instruction in their content area. The standards and grade level maps for health education can be found at: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=1745>. The latest sexual health laws can be located at: <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=2918>. For additional information on health or physical education, please contact Tanya Frisendahl at Tanya.frisendahl@state.or.us or 503-947-5754.