

APPENDIX 5

Using the HECAT to Analyze Curricula for Early Childhood Programs

The *National Health Education Standards* address student learning outcomes in pre-Kindergarten through grade 12. However, some education agencies serve younger children at school sites, and others are working with community-based organizations and private early childhood care providers to establish a foundation for early healthy child development and learning.

The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, in partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics; the American Public Health Association; and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau has produced standards addressing early childhood health education.¹ These standards recognize that health education is not typically structured around a curriculum but is integrated into the overall early childhood education program. Critical health topics include:

- Body awareness
- Personal/social skills
- Expression of feelings
- Self esteem
- Nutrition
- Personal hygiene
- Safety
- Conflict management and violence prevention
- First aid
- Physical health
- Hand washing

- Importance of sleep and rest
- Fitness
- Oral health
- Health risks of secondhand smoke
- Taking medications
- Dialing 911 for emergencies

Many of these topics are addressed in the pre-K–4 sections of the HECAT. However, schools may wish to make some modifications to the HECAT concepts and skills to accommodate the developmental and learning differences of younger children. Figure 1 identifies sample knowledge and sub-skills outcomes for early childhood education for children ages 4 & 5, consistent with the *National Health and Safety Performance Standards* and aligned with the *National Health Education Standards*. This list of concepts and skills can guide the analysis of a health education curriculum to be used in an early childhood program.

Some state and local education agencies have expanded their school health education standards to address all ages of children served in school, including those enrolled in early childhood programs. Some state education agencies have worked with state partners to promote state-level, early learning standards and guidelines that include health education. The HECAT can be modified to incorporate both types of standards if desired. For information on state-specific early learning guidelines, see http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/goodstart/elgw_ebsites.html.

¹ *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, 2nd Edition*, Washington, DC: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2002 (74-78). Available at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/CFOC/index.html>.

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Figure 1
Example Health Education Concept and Skill Outcomes for
Early Childhood (Ages 4-5) by *National Health Education Standard*²

National Health Education Standard #1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Recognize that healthy behaviors positively impact personal health.
2. Describe practical ways to prevent infectious diseases and illnesses.
3. List ways to stay safe and prevent common childhood injuries.
4. Describe ways to promote healthy growth and development (related to personal hygiene, sun safety, diet, and physical activity).
5. Explain why it is important to seek health care at school and from a doctor.

National Health Education Standard #2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Identify the important influence family has on personal health practices and behaviors.
2. Describe how the pre-school provider supports personal health practices and behaviors.
3. Describe how the media can influence health behaviors in positive and negative ways.

National Health Education Standard #3: Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information and products and services to enhance health. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Identify trusted adults and professionals who can help protect and promote health.
2. Demonstrate ways to locate school and community health helpers (such as dialing 911 in emergencies).

National Health Education Standard #4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.
2. Demonstrate listening skills to enhance health.
3. Demonstrate ways to respond in an unwanted, threatening, or dangerous situation.
4. Demonstrate ways to tell a trusted adult if threatened or harmed.

National Health Education Standard #5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Identify situations when a health-related decision is needed.
2. Differentiate between situations when a health-related decision can be made individually or when assistance is needed.

National Health Education Standard #6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting and skills to enhance health. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Identify a short-term personal health goal and take action toward achieving the goal (such as always washing hands before eating and brushing and flossing teeth daily).
2. Identify who can help when assistance is needed to achieve a personal health goal.

National Health Education Standard #7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate healthy practices and behaviors to maintain or improve personal health (such as brushing and flossing teeth, washing hands, covering mouth and nose when sneezing, getting proper rest and sleep).
2. Demonstrate behaviors to avoid health risks and reduce health risks.
3. Demonstrate personal safety behaviors to protect one's health.

National Health Education Standard #8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health. Pre-school students should be able to:

1. Request that others help protect or promote personal health.
2. Encourage others to make positive health choices.

² The Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. *National Health Education Standards: Achieving Excellence (2nd Edition)*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2007.