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Roughly 4 in 10 Americans are obese (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017). Heart disease is still the leading cause of death among adults (CDC, 2019a). Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and 7 million people die from the effects of tobacco use per year (CDC, 2019b). These discouraging health statistics highlight the importance of providing effective, reliable, quality health education instruction in K–12 health classrooms. Dissemination of health information is vital to our youth now more than ever. It is vital for children, adolescents and teenagers to make informed, accurate health choices and decisions into adulthood and throughout their lifetime. Health education teachers can be the messengers of quality, credible and valuable health information and advocate for positive health and wellness to help students adopt and achieve a healthy lifestyle.

For health teachers to accomplish these aims, they must have a broad understanding of instruction, what they teach, and who they

are teaching (Orlich et al., 2013). Historically in health education instruction, the main focus has been a teacher-centered classroom where teaching health content is the core of the curriculum (Black et al., 2009). This framework has shifted and evolved into a model that supports the teaching of health content areas but also includes life skill areas. The use of national health education standards is recommended and encouraged by both the CDC (2018) and SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators (2018). These guidelines support health-enhancing behaviors for students at elementary and secondary levels to provide a blueprint for teachers, school administrators and other stakeholders while developing health curriculum content, understanding needs and distribution of health resources, and charting and tracking student learning (SHAPE America, 2015). Health education teachers can use these national standards (along with their state ones if applicable) to guide their health lesson planning, instruction and assessment of their students.

Some Examples of Functional Health Content

- Mental Health
- Tobacco
- Violence Prevention
- HIV/AIDS
- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Sexual Health

Some Examples of Skills-Based Learning

- Self/ Relationship Management
- Goal Setting
- Decision-Making
- Communication
- Advocacy
- Stress Management

Figure 1.

Some examples of functional health content and skills-based learning

When developing and planning health curricula, health teachers can define health knowledge and functional health information as fundamental, dependable, current health content that supports health promotion and positive approaches to health (SHAPE America, 2018). In middle and high school classrooms, functional health knowledge topics related to physical activity, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, sexual risk, tobacco use, family life, violence prevention, alcohol and other drug use, electronic cigarette use, personal safety and mental health are some essential health content areas to be addressed through a well-developed curriculum. Besides teaching health information, teaching skills-based learning such as self-management, stress management, communication, planning and goal setting, decision making and advocacy skills is important and has a strong place in middle and high school health classrooms (see Figure 1). Both functional knowledge and skills-driven learning provide efficient, quality instruction, when teaching students age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate health content, health-driven skills and health literacy.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010), health literacy is the ability of an individual to comprehend and process health information and make suitable health decisions based on it. SHAPE America (2018) considers health-literate people to be able to understand the health needs of themselves and others while being able to make appropriate health choices throughout their life span. Health education teachers often serve as activists and sometimes warriors of health knowledge, functional health skills and health literacy. For integration of health knowledge, health skills and health literacy into health education, health education teachers have the opportunity to adopt effective strategies to implement in their best teaching practices. For best teaching practices, in agreement with Shultz et al. (2016), a student-centered environment explores deeper subject content and allows for students to retain more information than in past traditional school settings. Students “learn” content and develop as learners much less effectively and efficiently if they are never given

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the opportunity to “do” the learning tasks that facilitate acquisition of content (Weimer, 2002).

When taking a student-centered approach, a post-elementary health education strategy toolbox fosters effective, thoughtful, relevant health education material. The purpose of this article is to highlight and showcase instructional strategies for use in health education class to develop and enhance sound teaching pedagogy. These strategies enhance curriculum, delivery and instruction in middle and high school health education classrooms.



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Health Instructional Strategy: Word(s) of the Day

This language-focused learning strategy teaches academic health word(s) of the day around a particular health concept. This strategy is a fundamental way to introduce and reinforce health vocabulary, health word meaning, health context and health application for students. Health word(s) become the central focus of the lesson. All teacher or student instruction and activities during the health lesson are connected, extended, applied or related to the health vocabulary selected for that class. The health concept chosen is taught verbally, visually or kinesthetically to meet the learning needs of the students and maximize student learning.

A primary concentration on a word or set of words such as health-related fitness or skill-related fitness can be used as words of the day during a lesson about the importance of physical activity and health. Prior to students entering the classroom, posters on health or skill-related fitness as large visuals (i.e., a banner, capital letters, a word cloud) are made for the students to see, process and begin discussion. After introducing the word(s) of the day, teaching models such as peer instruction, guided discovery, eclectic or another teaching model should be used to define and explain these two fitness terms and their related components (i.e., muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, body composition, agility, speed, balance, etc.) in more depth. The emphasis stays solely on health or skill-related fitness as students dive into the content areas with learning activities that support student understanding of health or skill-related fitness and physical activity. For an abbreviated fitness lesson plan about health-related fitness, see [Table 1](#). Re-emphasis of word(s) of the day can be achieved through direct questions, exit slips or an alternative form of assessment related to health or skill-related fitness. For the next lesson, the word of the day is reintroduced to build on the next health concept. Other examples specific to health terminology include dimensions of wellness, understanding and managing challenging emotions, stress management, understanding self-identity, and relationship building. This continued magnification of a word or set of words develops student academic language,

understanding of a topic, and extensions of health content. Refer to [Table 2](#) for more examples of word(s) of the day.

Health Instructional Strategy: Picture(s) of the Day

Besides words, using pictures, images and graphics is a helpful method to convey health messages to students. When students enter health class, a highlighted image or set of images is shown. This image depicts a health message the class will learn about for that lesson, similar to word(s) of the day. This is a great introduction to health content and life skills and allows students to learn about the concepts they will focus on during class and connect to their health knowledge and choices. Using pictures and health quotes facilitates conversation among students, fostering important conversations. To elicit meaningful conversations from both of these means, teachers must engage students with direct questions of who, what, why, when and how and make health connections to the topic being addressed. Quotes and pictures speak volumes, and using images as a conversational piece is a great teaching tool, especially for visual learners.

Health Instructional Strategy: Journaling

“Reflective thinking is essential to identifying, analyzing, and solving the complex problems that characterize classroom teaching” (Spalding & Wilson, 2002, p. 1394). Journaling is a reflective process in which critical thinking and reflective thinking assist learning in the health classroom. This instructional strategy uses journaling as a means for students to reflect on newly acquired health knowledge for their personal growth or reflection. Students use a triple-entry journal to demonstrate their viewpoints. As seen in [Table 3](#), a sample student triple-entry journal includes target words, words in sentences and student thoughts. As a variation of triple-entry journaling,

Table 1.
Sample Abbreviated Health Lesson Format/Delivery Ideas

Sample Abbreviated Health Lesson Plan	Skill Introduction	Skill Steps	Skill Modeling	Skill Practice	Skill Feedback
Health lesson format	Facilitate a discussion by asking students open-ended questions (or having them ask each other) about their feelings and knowledge about a topic	Provide a definition and deeper explanation of the skill	Give or demonstrate skill examples	Supply students with opportunities to practice skill	Provide student feedback and skill application outside of class
Some health lesson plan delivery ideas	Use open-ended questions with an image, quote or student survey to start or support a topic of discussion	Define the topic and ask students to talk about their deeper understanding of the topic (the reasons behind the who, what, when, where and why)	Have students (or the teacher) give differing scenarios of health-related fitness and how it applies to their life at school or at home and in their community	Have students set goals, journal or log their health-related fitness activities each day or use a daily fitness	Use assessments to understand student learning (self-assessment; test, quiz; choral response; summary; 3-2-1 learning; four corners; think, pair, share; etc.) and complete a teacher reflection for lesson improvements
Health-related fitness lesson example	Open-ended questions: What is health-related fitness? Why is health-related fitness important for your health? What exercise or sports do you participate in that promotes health-related fitness? If you don't participate in any health-related fitness activities, how can you start?	Define health-related fitness and its components: cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility and body composition	Show the students video clips (from athletic events, movies, TV shows) of elite athletes and the everyday exerciser. Discuss the components of health-related fitness in the clips. Ask the students how they can execute improvements in their daily life	Divide students into groups and have them discuss their participation in health-related fitness in physical education and athletics, before or after school and on the weekends. Talk about what opportunities they have to exercise in school, at home and within their community	Brainstorm a class list of health-related fitness levels daily, weekly and monthly
	Quote: Your health is our greatest wealth				

Table 2.
Sample Word(s) of the Day

Word(s) of the Day	Health Topic	Learning Activity
Calorie	Nutrition	MyPlate Tracker
Depression	Mental health	Make A Friend
Health/skill-related fitness	Physical activity	Walk-A-Thon
Vaping	E-cigarettes	Myth Versus Truth

students use one word to summarize a health topic and write a one-paragraph description explaining the word of their choice. This journal activity allows students to think about different health content meaning and attach personal association. An extension to this activity is to create a word wall using key journal words that students are comfortable sharing.

Health Instructional Strategy: Scavenger Hunt

This strategy allows students to participate in a game where students find specific items related to health in a specified time. The goal is for students to work in pairs, small groups or virtually to find all of the items on the list. Additionally, students should be assigned a health topic and set of guidelines to make their own scavenger hunt. Giving students the creative license to build their own health scavenger hunt is enjoyable for students and gives them a role in their learning process. Refer to [Figure 2](#) for an example of a student health and fitness scavenger hunt.

Health Instructional Strategy: One-Minute Paper

This strategy asks students to answer questions or respond to statements by writing a “mini” paper and gives students exactly one minute to complete their answer (Angelo & Cross, 1993). The one-minute paper

Table 3.
Sample Student Triple Entry Journal

Target Word	Sentence in Text	My Thoughts
Anxiety	During lunch, I feel anxiety when I sit by myself	This makes me feel sad and lonely. I want to sit with my classmates during lunch
Self-esteem	Having positive self-esteem makes me feel good about my achievements, accomplishments and, most important, about myself	I feel happy when I think about my grades in school and how well I play tennis. It makes me smile and feel good
Family	My family consists of my mom, dad and brother	I love my family and enjoy going to the movies with them on the weekends. We have a lot of fun when we are all together

Note. Adapted from Wells-Greene and Coxhead (2015).

asks students about what they learned during class or what they did not understand. Students write down the key messages or takeaway concepts they remember as being most important. This strategy guides further questions and discussion regarding any area of health. Besides asking students what they learned, asking them the most challenging aspect during class is helpful. The one-minute paper is a quick check of understanding, shows where students may need further support in a topic area, and helps to frame the introduction for the next class. An example one-minute paper form is shown in [Figure 3](#).



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Student Health and Fitness-Related Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Please find a partner or small group. Once the teacher gives the go signal, each member of your pair or small group will work together to check off all fifteen items on the checklist. Each item can be found in the classroom. Please record all of your answers on one sheet of paper and complete all physical activity as a team. Once you have completed the scavenger hunt, please see the teacher to have your answers checked. You have 30 minutes to complete this health scavenger hunt. This scavenger hunt may also be done virtually. Good luck and have fun! ☺

Item Checklist:

- ___ Perform 30 jumping jacks in place.

 - ___ Record the definition of health-related fitness in the classroom (or search on the internet).

 - ___ Look at the classroom bulletin board (or search on the internet) to find three different examples of health-related fitness activities and record them.

 - ___ Hold a plank position for 30 seconds; complete this exercise three times.

 - ___ Find another pair/ group/ student or person at home and complete 20 squats together.

 - ___ Ask the teacher (or search on the internet) for the definition of skill-related fitness.

 - ___ Use the Internet to research five facts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website on the importance of daily exercise.

 - ___ Perform 30 crunches.

 - ___ Hold three yoga poses for thirty seconds each.

 - ___ Look up the American Heart Association website and write three to five sentences about their exercise requirements for children, youth and teens.

 - ___ Research goal planning and identify five SMART fitness goals for your entire group.

 - ___ Record three resources where you can exercise in the community.

 - ___ Write a paragraph of five to seven sentences about what you learned in class today.

 - ___ Perform 30 calf raises.

 - ___ List three phone applications you can use to practice daily exercise.
-

Figure 2.
Student health and fitness-related scavenger hunt

One-Minute Paper Form

Directions: Using clear sentences, please answer the following two questions in one minute:

What two concepts did you learn in class today?

Was there anything you were confused about or did not understand?

Figure 3.

One-minute paper sample form (adapted from Angelo & Cross, 1993)

Health Instructional Strategy: Three-Part Interview

This strategy uses an interview format where students are asked a question regarding health. After the question is asked, a selected student shares three responses to that question in one minute. This interview process allows students to reveal thoughts and opinions about a certain health area (see Table 4). Student responses lead to a conversation about health topic areas and possible solutions, emotions, ideas or possible truths or myths about them.

Health Instructional Strategy: Myth Versus Truth

In this strategy, students are asked whether a statement is a health myth or truth. Students select a true or false answer based on the question given and explain why they gave their answer. A class discussion ensues regarding each student's answers, prompting more questions and further discussion about health truths and myths. For example, students may be asked a question about mental health and depression. Students then have a conversation about the proposed myth or truth and the teacher can further debrief about feelings of anxiety and self-regulation and other ways to cope with feelings of depression.

Health Education Throughout the School Day, at Home, and in the Community

Successful health education is a collective effort in which schools, the home, and communities have to come together. The health instructional strategies in this article should be used during middle school or high school health class or outside of health class in other subject areas such as physical education, science, math or social studies to promote an interdisciplinary curriculum. Teachers in other subject areas can also adopt these strategies. Table 5 gives some examples of how these health instructional strategies and health content can be used in other subject areas. Going beyond schools, these instructional strategies can be used at home and in the larger community. Figure 4 provides examples of how health education can be integrated into the home and community environment.

Conclusion

Ensuring a quality health education curriculum that is content centered and skill guided provides a comprehensive health framework to better serve the needs of all students and their health (CDC, 2018). As health education teachers, it is imperative to use differing instructional approaches to provide health learning opportunities for all students. Using the instructional strategies outlined in this article can help teachers deliver more effective,

Table 4.

One Student Sample Three-Part Interview

Example Health Questions	Student Response #1	Student Response #2	Student Response #3
What are examples of distracted driving?	Texting and driving	Changing the radio station and talking to your friends while driving	Being lost in thought and driving
Why is making good decisions about your health important?	To be able to live longer	To stay disease and injury free	To feel good about yourself
What do you know about healthy nutrition?	Eat lots of fruits and vegetables	Hydrate throughout the day	Keep portion sizes accurate

Table 5. Health Instructional Strategies and Health Content Topic Examples in Health and Across Other Subject Areas

Health Instructional Strategy/Health Content Topic	Health Class	Physical Education Class	Science Class	Math Class	Social Studies Class
Word of the day: Bones	Discuss bone form and function	Demonstrate where the different bones are in the human body (humerus, scapula, clavicle, etc.)	Manipulate different bones (femur, tibia, fibula, etc.)	Discuss bone density measurements and what that means for bone health	Discuss the history of the skeleton
Picture of the day: Exercise	Show an image of famous athletes doing exercise	Show an image of an individual working out (running, swimming, lifting weights, walking, etc.)	Show an image of exercise and connect it to the effects on the nervous system, specifically, the brain	Show an image from the American Heart Association and calculate blood pressure or other fitness metrics	Show an image of exercise in different countries and their societal impacts in each country
Journaling: Lifetime physical fitness	Write about a physical fitness activity that you can do with your friends or family	Write about a few lifetime physical fitness activities you enjoy	Write about lifetime physical fitness activities and the benefits for your body	Calculate heart rate (resting and maximum heart rate) and explain your thoughts about how lifetime physical fitness activities can help you stay within healthy heart rate range for you	Write about which sports in the Winter or Summer Olympics are considered lifetime physical fitness activities and tie them to different cultures
Scavenger hunt: Muscles	Search for specific jobs of each muscle group in the text/Internet in under 45s	Search for the muscles posted in the gymnasium or on the web (gastrocnemius, soleus, biceps, triceps, etc.)	Search for types of muscular contractions using the Internet (isometric, isotonic, concentric and eccentric)	Calculate the measurements of different muscular angles and share an answer with another classmate	Search out which muscles groups are more or less developed in different types of people in different societies and why
One-minute paper: Dimensions of wellness	Write about what the emotional dimension of wellness means to you	Write about what the physical dimension of wellness means to you	Write about what the environmental dimension of wellness means to you	Write about what the financial dimension of wellness means to you	Write about what the social dimension of wellness means to you
Three-part interview: Motor skill-throwing	Interview another student about the proper steps of an overhand throw	Interview another student about the proper steps of an overhand throw	Interview another student about the definitions of speed, force, torque and rotation when throwing a baseball	Interview another student about the calculations regarding speed, force, torque and rotation when throwing a baseball	Interview another student about baseball in different parts of the world
Myth Versus Truth: Nutrition	Discuss myths and truths about a balanced diet versus fad diets	Discuss myths and truths about food labeling and essential nutrients	Discuss truths and myths about carbohydrates, amino acids, fats and proteins	Discuss myths and truths about calorie measurements found in carbohydrates, amino acids, fats and proteins and their differences	Discuss myths and truths about nutrition in different cultures

- **Some Examples of Implementing Health Education at Home**
 - Taking family hikes
 - Planning and preparing healthy meals
 - Going on family bike rides
 - Having weekly family problem-solving sessions
 - Creating a family wellness vision board
- **Some Examples of Implementing Health Education in the Community**
 - Going for a free health screening
 - Taking a yoga class at the YMCA
 - Attending a local group counseling session
 - Spending time in a town park
 - Participating in a community led health and wellness fair

Figure 4.

Some examples of health education implemented at home and in the community

quality health education to students. Students with more health knowledge, health skills and health literacy will be able to make better, more informed health choices for themselves and others throughout the course of their lifetime (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

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