

Disciplinary Literacy in Health and Physical Education

Text Types in Health and Physical Education

The texts in health and physical education are diverse and non-traditional, including print, video, audio and data-driven sources. Examples of health and physical education texts include infographics, scientific studies, research reports, rule books and coaching manuals, public health campaigns, playbooks and video content.

To ensure students have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in health and physical education, it is critical to explicitly teach discipline-specific literacy practices. The next section describes several key literacy practices for health and physical education texts.

“Disciplinary literacy in health and physical education enables students to become informed and critical thinkers in health-related topics, participate fully in their own health and wellness decisions, and advocate for health and wellness in their communities.”

(Oregon’s Adolescent Literacy Framework, page 160)

Explicitly Teaching Literacy Practices in Health and Physical Education

PRACTICE: Leverage background knowledge to teach specialized language.

When teachers help students build on their existing knowledge and experiences with health-related concepts, students more readily develop knowledge of the specialized disciplinary vocabulary while deepening their understanding of health and physical education topics.

EXAMPLE: *After completing a unit on the environmental impact of food waste, the teacher builds on student learning by modeling annotation of reliable and less reliable evidence (e.g., terms like “statistically significant” versus vague terms like “experts say”) used in texts about food waste in production. Students then apply this critical lens in small groups, evaluating an infographic, a scientific study and a social media post to identify credible sources and disinformation. They note their findings first in a graphic organizer, then use the information in the organizer to develop a written explanation comparing the strength of evidence in different texts.*

PRACTICE: Teach comprehension strategies for Health and Physical Education texts.

Students deepen their ability to evaluate physical education and health information by analyzing complex texts, synthesizing information from multiple sources and applying key concepts to real-world scenarios.

EXAMPLE: *Using a think-aloud strategy, a health and physical education teacher models the process of annotating and interpreting data from the Oregon Student Health Survey. Then students work collaboratively to annotate selected data sets from the survey and discuss patterns in physical activity, substance use and sexual health and implications for personal and community health decisions.*

PRACTICE: Provide opportunities for health- and physical-education-focused writing.

Teachers help students develop written communication skills in health and physical education by explicitly teaching students to write analytically, using data and research to support their claims. Through instruction and practice, students learn to write with clarity and precision by structuring their ideas logically and tailoring their messages to specific audiences and purposes.

EXAMPLE: *A high school health teacher guides students to analyze how health campaign texts effectively incorporate research. In groups, students create campaign documents and materials on trends like sleep and mental health. They produce flyers and infographics for both their school and local elementary schools, comparing their writing techniques for different audiences.*

PRACTICE: Support structured opportunities for collaboration and discussion.

Collaborative discussions in health and physical education help students develop essential communication skills that support teamwork, leadership and critical thinking while deepening their understanding of health and wellness topics. Through structured conversations, students learn to express ideas clearly, critically evaluate information and adapt their communication for diverse audiences and contexts.

EXAMPLE: *In a personal fitness planning unit, students build on their learning about the components of a balanced fitness program through small group discussions of sample fitness plans, evaluating how well they align with individual health goals and lifestyle factors and how different choices in exercise and recovery impact long-term wellness.*



Questions for teachers reflecting on and discussing their practice:

- What types of relevant texts can teachers of health and physical education use with students in their classrooms?
- How can teachers support students to interpret health and physical education texts to make the best decisions for themselves?
- How can teachers facilitate discussions on the cultural and ethical dimensions of health and physical education topics, encouraging students to reflect on diverse perspectives and values?

Learn more about disciplinary literacy in health and physical education , read [Oregon's Adolescent Literacy Framework, pages 160–168.](#)