



Teaching Techniques for Healthy Eating

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Effective teaching to promote healthy eating use requires skill, knowledge and commitment. The following outline lists some of the strategies, techniques and elements that need to be in place for effective teaching.

Effective Teaching in Health Education

Research has identified several characteristics of effective teaching in health education that should be applied to nutrition education. They are:

1. Before You Teach

Before you begin to teach about healthy eating, you should consider these issues:

- **Setting ground rules:** How you ensure that over or under weight students in the class are not stigmatized and that discussions are respectful?
- **Depersonalizing and normalizing class discussions:** How will you frame the discussions and your questions in ways that prevent students from personalizing the issue or arguing with each other?
- **Dealing with questions in class:** Have you anticipated the tough questions that you may face?
- **Enabling students to ask questions anonymously:** Have you placed a question box where it can be accessed easily and discretely? Have you suggested appropriate web sites and local health services to students?
- **Knowing how to respond to disclosures of possible crisis, eating disorders**
With regard to tobacco, teachers should make students aware of local and on-line smoking cessation services. However, students who smoke may also be facing other significant health and social risks, so teachers should be aware of relevant, local emergency services.
- **Referrals to health services, clinics or support groups:** Teachers should prepare lists of such local and online services and distribute them to their class. Also, ensure that these lists are readily available and publicized within the school on bulleting boards, guidance offices, classrooms etc.

- **Providing appropriate take away materials:** Student learning in class can be enhanced with take away reference and self-reflection materials, URL's of web sites, materials for parents (that need to be signed for younger students) and local brochures and pamphlets. Your local public health clinic is a great place to start and the Canadian Health Network (www.canadian-health-network.ca) is a great web site for finding links to health agencies and for excellent FAQ's for youth.

2. Teaching Techniques

Here are several techniques that you should be using in teaching about tobacco. Read the summary below, read our page on health education, and check out this excellent resources published by the [Saskatchewan Department of Education](#).

- **Using active and cooperative learning and teaching techniques:** [Inquiry-based learning](#), [problem-based learning](#) and [project-based learning](#) has become recognized as essential to [Constructivist learning](#). [Cooperative learning](#), where students work with others in assignments, discussions and projects is also essential to learning where the students "construct" meaning from the information. For a great list of student health project ideas and how to evaluate the student work in those projects, go to our web page on [Teacher Tools](#) for webquests. [Games, role plays and simulations](#) are also excellent tools to promote active and cooperative learning. Teachers need to know about the evaluation of student work from such active and cooperative learning. See our page on [Evaluation Rubrics](#) and learn more about [portfolios](#) as a basis of student evaluation.
- **Effective use of small group discussions:** The fine art of teacher-led and small group discussions is critical to health education. Students need time to explore their feelings, find meaning and relevance in health topics and to test their ideas with their peers.
- **Effective use of media and technologies:** Most of the professional discussion of the [effective use of technologies in learning](#) has been focused on science, math and technology itself. More recently, there have been concerns about [inappropriate and ineffective uses of technology](#) in the classroom. As part of this strategy, students should be taught [media literacy skills](#) as they apply in health education. Webquests have become a tool for teachers in all subject areas, although they are relatively underused in health education. Read our pages on [webquests](#) and the use of [webquests in health education](#). Also, go to our [start page for webquests](#), where you can [choose from over 100 health webquests](#) or even [create your own webquest](#).
- **Effective use of the arts, drama, literature, poetry and music:** Vicarious, like virtual learning, is engaging to the learner and can help in the formation or development of attitudes and beliefs. Students can explore the anguish of health

problems, personalize risk and can be led into class/group discussions or self-reflection from the spring board of music, drama, literature, poetry and music.

- **Effective use of student reflection through journal writing:** Health education journals are highly recommended as a way to encourage students to record, reflect and write about their health learning. For more about journaling in health education, go to our [summary](#) . For an example of a health journal, go to the [Personal Health Journal](#) we have prepared for use with our webquests.
- **Effective use of direct instruction, drills, lectures, research and writing assignments:** We cannot forget that health knowledge is also an academic discipline and can be taught by more traditional methods. Research has showed us that young people need practical, functional knowledge about many health issues and that this information needs to be delivered in a timely way, coordinated with the stages of child and adolescent development and relevant to the time when young people will experiment of be confronted with these health issues.

Equally important is that you match your selection of these teaching techniques with the specific outcomes that you are trying to achieve. See the chart below:

Type of Learning Outcome	Teaching/Learning Method
Awareness	Lectures, Group Work, Video/Media, Displays, Exhibitions, Brochures, Internet Reading Assignments, Quizzes
Knowledge	Lectures, One to One Teaching, Written Materials, Research Assignments, Group Work, Reading Assignments, Internet Assignments, Individual Webquests, CD-ROM Resources
Self-Awareness, Attitude Change,	Group Work, Clarifying/Discussing Values, Journaling, Ranking, Categorizing, Role Playing, Individual Webquests, Use of the arts, Music, Theatre, Films, Celebrities, Survivors/Victims, Debates
Skill Development	Role playing, Field Trips, Group Work, Group Webquests
Seek/Access Social Support	Role playing, Theatre/Drama/Films, Parent-Student Assignments, Group Webquests, Field Trips
Access Health Services	Applied Research Assignments, Field Trips, Project Work, Interviews with Experts, Individual and Group Webquests
Behavioural Intentions/Personal Health Action Plans	Group Work, Self monitoring, Identifying benefits/risks, Setting goals, targets, Devising Coping Strategies, Accessing social support, Accessing support services, Overcoming physical, economic, practical barriers, Group Webquests, Journalling
Influencing their Environments	Advocacy projects, Community Service Learning, Group Webquests, Parent-Student Assignments, School and Class Projects,

3. Communicating with parents

- **Involving parents in take home learning activities:** Research has proved that parents can be a positive influence on their child's responses to health issues. Parents need to be informed about the health curricula, be offered opportunities to learn about health and social problems in workshops, newsletters and other means, be involved in parent interviews that include attention to their child's health and developmental needs, be offered the chance to volunteer within the school on health related issues, and be supported by respectful, private and timely referrals to health and social services in their community. Read more from our web pages on [parental involvement in health promotion](#) .

4. Gain Support for Effective Health/Nutrition Education

- links with community, youth groups and nutrition/dietician services
- local media cooperation
- supportive, comprehensive policy and leadership from the school trustees
- supportive administrative leadership at the school district and school levels
- data to monitor implementation and evaluation
- dedicated staff, with adequate time, training and resources
- regular parent information sessions, resources to use at home and effective communication about the program

5. Effective Lesson Planning and Learning Activities

Lesson plans and learning activities should follow a well-planned and implemented format. See below for a general outline. For [more on lesson planning](#) , read the summary prepared by the US Department of Education from their ASKERIC service.

- Goals
- Objectives
- Prerequisites
- Materials
- Lesson Description (clear definition of age, suitability, specific audiences)
- Lesson Procedure
 1. Closure
 2. Follow-up/Enrichment
 3. Assessment/Evaluation Criteria

Lesson Procedures/Learning Process (As summarized by the [ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabled and Gifted Children](#))

1. Gain the learners attention.
2. Review relevant past learning.
3. Communicate the goal of the lesson.
4. Model the skills to be learned.
5. Prompt for correct responses.
6. Check for skill mastery.
7. Close the lesson.

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