

# Code of Ethics for Health Educators, Physical Educators, and Wellness Professionals



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## Position

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators asserts the position that all health education, physical education, and wellness professionals are responsible for conducting themselves in an ethical manner.

## Definition of Terms

**Code of Ethics** — A code of ethics document aligns with the mission and values of the organization and provides a set of principles designed to help professionals conduct themselves with honesty and integrity; it includes the standards to which the professional is held.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice (appropriate practice)** is using methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play based approach to joyful, engaged learning (National Association for the Education of Young Children, n.d.).

**Health Education** is the development of health-promoting strategies that focus on behaviors, knowledge, and influences, such as attitudes and motivation; individual *and* community or population perspectives; and the goal is to improve health (move people toward the “healthy” end of the continuum) (Siedentop & van der Mars, 2022).

**Physical Activity** is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in expenditure of energy (Caspersen et al., 1985).

**Physical Education** is an academic subject characterized by a planned, sequential K-12 curriculum based on SHAPE America’s National Standards for K-12 Physical Education (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; Institute of Medicine, 2013; SHAPE America, 2015). Physical education provides cognitive content and instruction designed to develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors for physical activity and physical fitness and is the foundation of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011; 2013; Institute of Medicine, 2013; SHAPE America, 2015; 2017).

**Well-Being** is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

**Wellness** is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence. This definition describes a shift from unconscious living — where you do not think about your health until you have a problem or experience symptoms — to conscious living — where you are actively making healthy choices to promote your success and wellbeing (According to the National Wellness Institute, n.d.)

### **Purpose**

To support this position, SHAPE America outlines principles for achieving and maintaining high ethical standards of competency of knowledge, skills, and integrity of practice. Ethics are demonstrated through fair, honest, equitable, safe, inclusive, and respectful behaviors toward students, colleagues, the profession, and society.

### **Intended Audience**

Health educators, physical educators, wellness professionals, supervisors/administrators and school community members.

### **Principle I: Nurture each student’s physical, mental, social, and emotional health.**

#### **Health education, physical education, and wellness professionals:**

- 1.1 Utilize a variety of evidence-based materials to provide quality, standards-based learning experiences.
- 1.2 Create and maintain a physically and emotionally safe, culturally relevant teaching and learning environment for all students.
- 1.3 Respect each individual’s dignity and worth; help students value their own identities while appreciating differences in others.
- 1.4 Foster growth in all students by integrating intellectual, physical, emotional, and social learning.
- 1.5 Provide a supportive and inclusive environment that develops agency for all students to engage in positive social interaction and celebrate whole-group collaboration.
- 1.6 Use a variety of culturally relevant, appropriate instructional strategies that address all learning styles and ability levels (i.e. [SHAPE America Appropriate Instructional Practice Guidelines](#)).
- 1.7 Encourage students to be inquisitive and reflective individuals who monitor and value their progress and learning related to personal health and wellness.

**Principle II: Collaborate with school district and school building personnel, parents/guardians, and the community to provide a wide variety of opportunities that support physical activity, physical education, health education, and well-being.**

**Health education, physical education, and wellness professionals:**

- 2.1 Align practices with the CDC's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model.
- 2.2 Serve as the physical activity and health education leader within the school by contributing expertise to school and community activities/events/projects for all stakeholders.
- 2.3 Collaborate and coordinate shared efforts toward building an active school culture to maximize students' understanding and application of concepts, knowledge, and skills for lifelong engagement in appropriate activities that support/improve health and well-being.
- 2.4 Engage stakeholders in roles that support the implementation of a school-wide wellness culture.
- 2.5 Engage and partner with community members and agencies to share resources, thereby building collaborative services in support of all students.
- 2.6 Collaborate with school staff in support of the school-wide wellness policy (e.g., resources, curricula, professional development).
- 2.7 Identify opportunities to incorporate health education, physical education, physical activity, and wellness into school-wide initiatives, themes and events.

**Principle III: Commitment to lifelong learning and contributing to the profession.**

**Health education, physical education, and wellness professionals:**

- 3.1 Maintain membership and engage in a professional association related to physical education, health education, and well-being, including state, national and/or international organizations.
- 3.2 Engage in a variety of professional development activities to stay current in the field and advance professional practice. These may include research projects, conferences, presentations, and reading and contributing to professional publications.
- 3.3 Serve as a mentor to both new and veteran educators.
- 3.4 Encourage and support colleagues in their efforts to set and attain high standards for all students.
- 3.5 Utilize a variety of strategies to continually improve the quality of instruction and teaching practice, such as self-reflection, discussion, collaboration, and/or student voice as a means of self-assessment.



- 3.6 Seek to continually extend personal knowledge base and best practices with relation to health education, physical education, physical activity, and wellness.
- 3.7 Adjust teaching and communication practices based on current technology trends.
- 3.8 Serve as role models by advocating for, participating regularly in, and engaging in the ongoing promotion of health-enhancing behaviors across multiple dimensions of wellness.

### **Principle IV: Demonstrate personal and professional integrity in all environments and situations.**

#### **Health education, physical education, and wellness professionals:**

- 4.1 Abide by the laws of confidentiality concerning the personal matters of all students, families, and colleagues.
- 4.2 Follow school and district policies and procedures regarding ethical and/or legal professional behavior (e.g., accepting gifts or favors that could influence actions or decisions).
- 4.3 Reflect a high degree of professionalism and awareness in all personal communication, both orally and written, so that actions are always characterized by respect and concern for others.
- 4.4 Arrive and depart school in accordance with the teaching contract, allowing adequate time to prepare for instruction and other administrative and professional responsibilities.
- 4.5 Understand that these professional practices extend not only to the individual, but also to the broader community with the purpose of improving the health and well-being of society.

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## Acknowledgement

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