Why Skills-Based Health Education?
A little bit about us ...

Sarah Benes
she/her
Associate Clinical Professor
Merrimack College

Holly Alperin
she/her
Clinical Assistant Professor
University of New Hampshire
“In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity”

~Sun Tzu
Objective

By the end of this presentation, you will be able to:

✔ Describe at least 3 reasons why a skills-based approach to health education is an effective approach
A skills-based approach to health education is a culturally responsive/sustaining, trauma-sensitive, student-centered approach to health education in which the focus and emphasis is on the development of health-related skills.
Reason 1. Health literacy
Health Literacy

“... entails people’s knowledge, motivation and competencies to access, understand, appraise, and apply health information in order to make judgments and make [sic] decisions in everyday life concerning healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course.” (Sorensen, et al, 2012, p. 3)
Health Literacy Con’t

★ Health education supports health literacy
★ Skills are an integral aspect of health literacy
★ Promotes transfer into “real life”
★ Make a positive impact for students now and in the future (across the lifespan)
Reason 2. Health Behavior and Learning Theories
Health behavior theory tell us . . .

★ No health behavior theory suggests that knowledge alone changes behavior (nope!)
★ One theory (Social Cognitive Theory) suggests that knowledge is a pre-condition to change
★ We need to focus on what DOES work:
  ○ Self-efficacy
  ○ Goal setting
  ○ Skills to overcome barriers and obstacles
  ○ Skills to manage influences
Let’s be real...

★ We do things we KNOW we shouldn’t do
★ Information is ALWAYS changing
★ Youth have more access but aren’t as good at being discerning
★ Information can’t meet the needs of all students but skills can – now and over their lifetime
Learning theory tell us . . .

★ Student-centered learning that is culturally responsive/sustaining is most effective
★ Active learning supports retention and deeper learning
★ Transfer is increased when students can practice the learning in multiple settings and contexts
★ Participatory methods (a critical aspect of SBHE) are methods through which we learn best
Reason 3. Informed by Research and Evidence
The research base tells us . . .

- Research of effective health curricula have skills in common.
- Effective health education curricula have a narrow focus of information.
- Addressing multiple risk factors using a skills-based approach has been shown to be more effective.
- Aligns with Characteristics of Effective Health Education Curricula from the CDC.
Reason 4. Supports social justice and health equity
A social justice approach . . .

★ Frames health and health education within a broader context
★ Social determinants of health are examined and explored
★ Issues such as oppression, racism, discrimination are part of the curriculum
★ Students develop skills that can support critical inquiry and social change
★ Teachers practice cultural humility
Reason 5. Don’t take our word for it
From a high school health educator...

“When I see the results after a few years of kids’ response to what they learned in class... prime example is the kids who go off to college and every one of them said they remember practicing refusal skills... it makes so much sense. It is like a light goes on when you get into this [skills-based health education]”
“What stands out to me this year is the relationship I have with the kids, and how they really see value in what we are learning and in the skill. They feel better and more confident in being able to be prepared for the situations that they... In their head, they’re like “Oh, my god. I don’t know what to do” but now they’re more confident to hopefully make the right decision when they’re put into these situations.”
From Andy Milne (former National Health Teacher of the Year)

“It feels awkward but it’s right, and I think that needs to drive teachers forward. If you care about kids and you care about their lifelong health, then it would be wrong of you not to consider skills-based health”
We are here to help . . .

lighthousehealthconsulting@gmail.com

@sarahrennes12
@hollyalperin

www.skillsbasedhealtheducation.com
Thanks!