

Curriculum Framework for Life -skills Health and Family Life Education

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Introduction

Life -skills Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) is an intervention aimed at preparing children and young people for the challenges of adolescence and adulthood. It is a means of providing increasing awareness among children and young people of the relationship between their health and development and the choices they make in every day life.

Recent global trends and realities underscore the need to help children and young people modify behaviours which put their health at risk and block their total development. These trends have led to new health threats, such as alcohol and substance abuse, early parenting, violence and accidents, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and poor nutrition, to name a few. Additionally, recent research (CARICOM Multi Agency – Health And Family Life: Needs Assessment Study; 1997) which sought to explore the problems, concerns and values of young people in St. Lucia revealed a range of psycho-social problems. These include lack of decision-making opportunities, poor parenting, emotional guilt, lack of information and skills in managing stress and lack of religious support.

The Health and Well-Being of the nation is critical to the development of a productive society. Recognition of the impact of these risks on children and youth in St. Lucia, underscore the need for Education to strengthen the role of the school in reshaping health practices and values and behaviours.

Nature and Purpose of the Health And Family Life Education Curriculum Framework

The purpose of this Life- skills Health and Family Life Education Curriculum Framework is to equip children and young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that would enable them to meet the health challenges which confront them. This would enable students to develop their capacities to live and work in dignity, participate in development, improve the quality of their lives and continue learning. The main thrust of this philosophy is to help children and young people develop,

maintain and accomplish goals towards positive lifestyles, and to demonstrate behaviours and practices that promote and protect their own health, that of their families and their communities.

This philosophy is guided by two underlying principles:

The first is the notion of health, both as the prevention and the absence of disease. It is a resource which would help to maximize the full potential and development of the individual. It also accepts that the decisions, choices and lifestyles made by individuals and communities determine the level of health attained by both.

The second principle focuses on the complexity of the human being as social, physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional. Each of these dimensions impact on the other. Good health promotion practices acknowledge and nurture the interrelatedness of these dimensions in order to facilitate appropriate health promotion practices.

Goals of the Life- skills Health and Family Life Education Curriculum Framework

The goals of the Life skills HFLE Curriculum Framework are to help students to:

- display a secure sense of personal identity guided by a worthwhile code of ethics.
- demonstrate the capacity to introspect and understand that every human being is valuable.
- make appropriate adjustments in their behaviours.
- demonstrate a willingness/commitment to the creation of supportive environments for social interaction.
- appreciate the importance of the development of interpersonal relationships.
- value the importance of mental well-being in human interaction.
- demonstrate the ability to combine appropriate eating and fitness that will contribute to wellness.
- demonstrate an understanding of the interdependence among all living things and the non living environment.
- display a commitment to the conservation and preservation of the environment.

- appreciate the positive impacts that the individual, family and community can have on environmental health
- understand the personal responsibilities that are attached to sexual expression.
- understand and appreciate their physiology as it relates to reproduction.
- understand and practise the maintenance of sexual health.
- develop an understanding of the values, mores, norms which influence human sexuality.
- value and respect health.
- make lifestyle choices that are in harmony with the environment.
- practise behaviours which promote and maintain intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional and social well-being.
- appreciate that health is an individual and community responsibility.
- understand that most health problems are preventable.
- practise behaviours of disease prevention and healthful living.

Structure of the Life-skills Health And Family Life Education Curriculum

This Curriculum Framework is organized into five strands or core areas believed to encompass all the health issues that impact on children and youth. These include: Social, Emotional and Spiritual Well- Being; Health, Welfare and Lifestyle; Appropriate Eating and Fitness; Sexuality and Sexual Health; Managing The Environment. These core areas run across the grade levels using a spiral approach. In order to facilitate programme planning, each strand or core area is divided into two headings which are as follows:

The Content area comprises the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that learners should acquire. The second heading focuses on specific learner outcomes and what learners should be able to do at the end of the programme. The material for Grades Ten and Eleven has been combined in order to facilitate the completion of the programme for students in Grade Eleven.

Methodology

The implementation of the Curriculum Framework must be informed by the characteristics of learners. It must cater to their cognitive and social development and reflect individual differences to include the varying background and values of learners, gender sensitivity, learning style, the gifted and those who are mentally challenged.

During childhood and adolescence much social interaction occurs in groups. Teachers are therefore encouraged to capitalize and use this type of interaction in a structured way to provide a situation in which children and adolescence can learn, share experiences and practice skills together.

The role of the teacher therefore is to facilitate this participatory learning of the group members, rather than conduct lectures in didactic style.

It is recognised that there are advantages of working in groups with adolescents because group work:

- increases participants' perceptions of themselves and others.
- promotes co-operation rather than competition.
- provides opportunities for group members and their teachers to recognise and value individual skills and enhance self esteem.
- enables students to know each other better and extend relationships.
- promotes listening and communication skills.
- facilitates dealing with sensitive issues.
- appears to promote tolerance and understanding of individuals and their needs.
- encourages innovation and creativity.

This participatory student centred learning

- utilises the experience, opinions and knowledge of group members.
- provides a creative context for exploration and development of possibilities and options.
- provides a source of mutual comfort and security which is important for the learning and decision making process.

In order to help learners construct meaning to their learning experiences and the building of health concepts, they should be engaged in a continual process of reflective enquiry. “To empower students to direct their own learning and to make decisions about health issues which impact on their lives, deliberate attempts must be made to engage learners in the use of the following life skills”:

- **Decision making**
- **Problem solving**
- **Creative thinking**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Effective communication**
- **Interpersonal relationship skills**
- **Self awareness**
- **Empathy**
- **Coping with emotions**
- **Coping with stressors**
- **Value reasoning.**

Students can be helped to transform information, concepts and experiences into personal action through the use of the following strategies.

- **Games:** these are very effective in combining the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of learning.
- **Learners may also engage in surveys, creative and performing arts to include role-play, story telling, music, dance, art, drama, poetry, puppetry etc.**

These activities and experiences will empower learners to critically examine their own experiences and to internalize responses to problem situations in their personal lives.

Assessment and Reporting

As in other subject areas, assessment is a critical component of the HFLE programme. Assessment is important for the following reasons:

- **It will help teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the HFLE Programme.**
- **It will also guide teachers to make on-going changes that would allow learners to achieve the expected outcomes.**

However, teachers are reminded that the HFLE Programme aims at developing competencies and skills in students and the impact of HFLE on the individual or group. As such, traditional forms of assessment cannot adequately measure the kinds of competencies that are being developed.

Therefore, in addition to traditional forms of assessment, teachers are encouraged to use these additional strategies:

The class teacher is encouraged to produce a profile for each student and to use observation to complete the profile on each child.

Teachers may also use performance-based tasks, records, checklists, interview guides, surveys, conferences, self assessments and portfolios.

Efforts must be made to evaluate all the outcomes on a student by student basis.

Teachers are encouraged to share what students have achieved with the students, parents or guardians and any other person involved in the child's learning. In reporting, the teacher must indicate what follow-up measures will be taken to improve the student's performance, as well as how effective the programme has been. It is recommended that teachers use both written reports and discussions in reporting.