

The question and answer below were part of a discussion thread for the course Principles and Methods of Effective Health Education which I completed in the winter of 2017.

Smith, Laurie

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3. What would it mean to transform your curriculum to a skills-based curriculum, versus a content-driven curriculum? Basic content information is still a necessary element in comprehensive skills-based health education, but how does curriculum design, and scoop and sequence shift with a shift in focus toward skills?

I have spent much of my first year teaching health trying to squeeze the square peg of skills into the round hole of content. Needless to say, I have found limited success meeting the standards with this approach. I am eager to make the transition to the skills-based approach and I really believe that learning these transferable skills will be hugely beneficial for students.

I have decided, though, that the skills-based approach needs to be adopted fully, not by half measures. As our text points out, most of the skills are complex and multi-faceted. It will require significant time, organization, and planning to properly move through the steps for skill development. To be honest, I don't think I can truly transform my approach this year but I am hopeful that I can re-design my curriculum over the summer. I think consistency will be important, so that students understand that their health units move through a predictable rhythm. I hope that both the kids and I will get better at the skills-based approach as next year progresses!

At this point, I have more questions than answers! I've found the textbook chapters about each skill to be extremely helpful but so far they offer no advice on weaving in content. Should I design content-specific lessons to intermingle with each skill unit or is there a smoother way to blend the two? I'm concerned that the content delivery will feel like a sort of whiplash after lots of skills work. Right now, I really don't know how to approach this. I'm also concerned because, for a variety of reasons, I do not assign homework. Will it be possible for students to get the most out of a skills based approach if they are not required to do additional work outside of the classroom?

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