

Public Health Reflection Paper

Principles and Philosophies of Health

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Introduction

Upon entering the field of health it is important for future health promoters or educators to consider different philosophies, values and perspectives. Looking at the history of public health is also crucial because those in the health field can learn from movements and events from the past. Throughout this course I have been able to connect with material that will impact my career as a health educator. Some of the material has made me think about things in the health field in ways I hadn't before. As I begin my career as a health education teacher I will be able to use these values and philosophies in my own teaching to provide the highest quality health education that I can provide. As I go through my career I hope to continuously challenge myself to learn new things about health education and promotion as the health field is constantly changing.

Historical Perspectives of Public Health

When looking at the history of Public Health it is clear that much progress has been made in creating a healthier society. If health educators and promoters hope to continue this progress it is important to look back and see how people in the field have been successful. An advancement in the health field that resonated with me was the Healthy People publication which was first published in 1979 and continues to be expanded upon today. Harris writes, "Healthy People 2020 is a guide for U.S. public health professionals and health education specialists for the next 10 years. There are 42 different topic areas that are addressed in this report. Programs are developed to initiate and try and meet the established goals and objectives for that decade" (Harris, 2022, p. 32). I think that starting to introduce programs like this that focus on prevention of unhealthy behaviors and identifying areas of need instead of only focusing on fixing health problems through medicine, was a monumental advancement for the health world. This line of thinking

created the foundation for health education, which leads to healthier decision making and in turn, a healthier population.

Cultural Competence

The historical perspectives of health education and promotion showed a change in thinking for those in the health field. What started as focusing only on helping people recover from illness, has shifted to including prevention of unhealthy behaviors. A similar trend can be seen with values in public health as advancements have been made to better treat all people. A value that was discussed in the course content that resonated with me was cultural competence. This is the idea that health educators and promoters need to learn about the culture of their target group. By showing a genuine interest in the group's culture, an educator can help their target group feel more comfortable, better address their needs and have a more positive impact. This is important to me because I have to be able to teach a diverse student population and want to make sure my students are receiving the best possible education from me. To make this a reality with my students I will need to have an open mind and a willingness to make a serious attempt at learning about the cultures of all of my students.

Philosophies of Health Education

Another aspect of health that educators need to keep in mind to provide the best education possible is health philosophies. Harris writes, "As health educators, our primary concern is to protect, prevent, empower, and advocate for health and wellness. To do this, we must have a philosophy that aligns with our discipline" (Harris, 2022, p. 98). A philosophy that resonated with me was the eclectic health education philosophy. When reading through all the philosophies I thought that many of them could be useful in different teaching scenarios. Depending on my students and the topic I could see myself using the behavior change

philosophy, the cognitive-based philosophy, the decision-making philosophy and more. By taking an eclectic approach, I can use the best parts of each of these philosophies whether that means using SMART goals, case studies and more.

Prior Beliefs

The course content has given me a lot to consider in regards to the history, values and philosophies of health. Before this course I thought of health as limiting unhealthy behaviors and making responsible decisions. I think my beliefs align with the wellness philosophy which states that healthy people balance the eight dimensions of wellness and that health is not just the absence of sickness. As a health educator I believe it is my job to empower my students with information that could lead to healthy decision making, but ultimately they are responsible for their decisions. One area of the content that challenged me was the cultural competency. I had not given enough thought to the diverse needs of all of my students. It is not enough for me to be culturally aware and to treat everyone with respect. To be an effective educator I need to take it a step further and become culturally competent to best meet the needs of all students.

How Will Philosophies and Values be Reflected in my Teaching?

By looking at my prior beliefs and what has resonated with me in the course so far, it is clear the steps I need to take to become the best health educator I can be. Like I stated in the prior beliefs section, I will strive to become a culturally competent teacher to best meet the needs of my students. I will use an eclectic philosophy to use multiple philosophies to teach my students. This could include using SMART goals with my students to help them reduce unhealthy behaviors and to learn how to set effective goals. It could also include having students review case studies to work on healthy decision making. Finally I will continue using the

wellness approach to health to teach my students how to balance all eight dimensions of wellness and to promote healthy decision making.

References

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