

Purpose

This Guide is designed to help educators deepen their knowledge and skills to address vaping as part of the elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum, 2019. Information in this guide focuses on the following:

- “why” it is important to have conversations about vaping with elementary students at different stages of their development;
- where vaping is addressed in the curriculum and opportunities to make explicit connections to the Social-Emotional Learning Skills;
- approaches that create safer and more inclusive spaces when engaging students in conversations about vaping; and
- links to additional information, supports, and classroom resources to help educators address vaping as part of Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours.

How to Use This Guide

Educators may use the information in this guide in conjunction with the following resources:

- Instructional Moments videos: These videos help educators increase their knowledge of vaping and where vaping is addressed within the Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours topic in the elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum. The videos also provide sample strategies to create safer and more inclusive spaces and engage students in learning.
 - [*The Educator Voice: Talking About Vaping With Students - Part 1*](#)
 - [*The Educator Voice: Talking About Vaping With Students - Part 2*](#)
- Conversation Starter videos: These scenario-based videos are designed to facilitate conversations about vaping with students and help students acquire the knowledge and skills they need to respond to situations involving vaping.
 - [*Vaping: Making Safer & Informed Decisions*](#) (Grade 4-5)
 - [*Vaping: Responding to Peer Influences*](#) (Grade 6)
 - [*Vaping: Factors that Influence Personal Choices*](#) (Grade 7-8)

Instructional Moments Videos

This section provides a brief summary of the information contained in the Instructional

Moments videos: [The Educator Voice: Talking About Vaping With Students - Part 1](#) and [The Educator Voice: Talking About Vaping With Students - Part 2](#).

1. Why is it important for educators to have conversations about vaping with elementary students at different stages of their development?

“Children’s early learning experiences have a profound effect on their later development”.¹ Providing students with information about basic healthy concepts (such as the effects, risk and consequences of vaping) early on in their development enables them to make informed decisions, build resilience, and take more responsibility for their own health as they mature and become more independent. When students have the opportunity to develop skills such as communication and decision-making they are better able to resist the pressures to engage in harmful behaviours, such as vaping, and make informed decisions about their own health.

2. Where is vaping addressed in the elementary Health and Physical Education curriculum and how might I make connections to social-emotional learning skills? When talking about vaping, what does this integration look like, sound like, and feel like for elementary students at different stages of development?

Vaping can be addressed as part of the overall expectations connected to Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours. The overall expectations describe the types of skills and concepts that are required for healthy, active living *at any age or stage of development* and *over time*. Students may need to know about vaping and develop skills to respond to situations involving vaping at any grade and stage of their development. The overall expectations provide an entry point to address the topic of vaping as one of the broader health concepts in response to student needs. Vaping is also part of the intended learning in Grade 4 and Grade 6, and referenced in the examples, teacher prompts, and student responses in other grades. The learning summary charts found in [Appendix D. Health Living Learning Summary: Key Topics](#) are a great place to start to learn more about the concepts addressed within Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours, including vaping. Conversations about vaping provide opportunities for students to build their [Social-Emotional Learning Skills](#). These conversations can help students identify the emotions they might experience in situations involving vaping, identify sources of stress and healthy coping strategies, build self-awareness, and acquire decision-making skills and strategies to make safer and informed personal choices about behaviours such as

¹Ontario Ministry of Education. (2019). *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Health and Physical Education* (page 89). Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/2019-health-physical-education-grades-1to8.pdf>

vaping, including the choice to abstain. Students can also learn to communicate their choices in situations involving substance use, such as vaping.

3. How do you create safer and more inclusive spaces when engaging students in conversations about vaping?

[Fundamental Principle # 3](#) in the Health and Physical Education curriculum reminds educators that both physical and emotional safety are preconditions for effective learning. When approaching conversations about any health concept, including vaping, it is important to establish guidelines for having discussions in a space that is accepting, inclusive, and respectful. Everyone must be able to listen respectfully to each other and explore all sides of a topic to promote understanding. Educators should reflect on their own biases and present facts objectively so that students will have the information they need to make informed decisions.² Helping students consider their biases when talking about substance use, including vaping, enables them to understand that individuals have different backgrounds and viewpoints, and have the right to make their own health choices. Asking reflective questions will allow students to think critically about what influences their values, attitudes, assumptions, and perspectives about substance use.

4. What does it mean to adopt a harm reduction approach and how does it help to create a safer and more inclusive space when talking about vaping?

The harm reduction approach provides educators with a way to broach the topic of substance use with sensitivity. Harm reduction is a philosophy grounded in respect for the rights of people who use drugs. This approach includes non-judgment and compassion, and an understanding that there are various reasons why people may choose to use substances. It respects individual choices and everyone's right to access services regardless of their choices. It focuses on reducing the harm that may result from the use of substances and safer choices, with abstinence being a potential goal but not the only acceptable option. Adopting a harm reduction approach includes recognizing that as much as educators focus on prevention, students may still engage in drug use. *Ignoring this fact creates stigma and does not provide the right support for safe use.* Using harm reduction empowers individuals to make their own health choices.³

²Ontario Ministry of Education. (2019). *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1–8: Health and Physical Education* (page 40-41). Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/2019-health-physical-education-grades-1to8.pdf>

³ Extracted from Harm Reduction International. (2021). What is Harm Reduction? Retrieved from <https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

5. What teaching strategies do you use to build your students' knowledge and skills to respond to situations involving vaping?

Peer to peer conversations in a safer and more inclusive space helps students think ahead about their personal choices and decisions and acquire strategies to use in situations involving vaping. Teaching strategies (for example, [Placemats](#), [Think/Pair/Share](#), [4 Corners](#), and [Gallery Walk](#)), and technology-enabled strategies (for example, whiteboards, breakout rooms, and chat boxes) help students identify what they know and want to know more about concepts such as vaping, hear a variety of perspectives, consolidate their thinking, and share their ideas and opinions before they share with the larger group. Role-playing scenarios about situations related to substances, such as vaping, that are authentic and relevant to students' lives provides them with opportunities to apply their knowledge, practice coping strategies, and relationship and decision-making skills in a safer space. Follow-up discussions allow students to reflect on others' choices and decisions that may be different from their own. [Inquiry-Based Learning](#) engages students in finding answers to their questions by accessing and gathering credible information, analyzing that information, and then using it to make healthier, informed personal choices. This empowers students to take responsibility for their personal health choices and decisions as they mature and become more independent.

6. What are your next steps in building your confidence and competence to talk about vaping with your students?

- Consider co-planning and co-teaching lessons with colleagues to build your own and your colleague's confidence;
- Ask your administrator about any board policies and procedure that might exist related to teaching about substances, such as vaping;
- Contact your board support staff and community public health partners to ask about local supports and resources; and
- Explore the Additional Resources section of this guide to find Ophea's webinars, additional facts about vaping, the [Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey \(OSDUHS\)](#), and classroom resources.

Additional Resources

Ophea's Related Webinars

- [***Ask Us: Vaping and Making Connections to the Elementary H&PE Curriculum webinar***](#): Access this webinar to learn more about vaping, adopting a harm reduction approach, and making connections to the curriculum.

- [**Exploring and Applying Vaping Education within the Elementary H&PE Curriculum webinar**](#): Access this interactive webinar to learn more about the scope and sequence of learning about vaping, applying a harm reduction approach through student scenarios, and lesson plans and resources available to support vaping education.

Ophea's Related Blogs

- [**Ask Us: Vaping and Making Connections to the Elementary H&PE Curriculum Webinar Blog**](#): Access this blog for a summary of the webinar and for links to additional resources and supports.
- [**Exploring and Applying Vaping Education within the Elementary H&PE Curriculum Webinar Blog**](#): Access this blog for a summary of the webinar and for links to additional resources and supports.
- [**Clearing the Air about Cannabis: What is Vaping**](#): Access this blog to learn about vaping and how to approach conversations with students as well as resources for further reading.
- [**Clearing the Air About Cannabis: To use or not to use? Youth share their perspectives**](#): Access this blog to learn about the reasons that young people have provided about why they use or don't use cannabis.
- [**Clearing the Air about Cannabis: Key Learnings from our Live Chat with CSSDP**](#): Access this interactive chat about harm reduction in the context of cannabis education with Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy.

Ophea's Related Resources

- [**Conversation Starter Videos**](#): Use these videos with students to generate conversations about vaping and for students to practice the social-emotional learning skills they need to make healthier, more informed choices about vaping.
- [**Cannabis Education: Activate the Discussion Guide**](#): Access this guide for tips on how to lead cannabis-related conversations that may be readily adapted to vaping.
- [**Cannabis Education Resource Database**](#): Access this database to explore a compilation of evidence-based tools to help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions and reduce harms associated with cannabis use.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Resources

Access these resources for additional information for students and educators, and for activities to help students develop their social emotional learning skills.

- [Fact sheets for youth and educators](#)
- [Vaping: What elementary teachers need to know](#)
- [Vaping: What you and your friends need to know](#)

- [Drug Use Among Ontario Students, 1977–2019: Detailed Findings From the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey \(OSDUHS\)](#)

School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) Resource

- [Social-emotional learning skills](#)

Health Canada Resources

Access these resources for more background information about vaping, tips for teachers, and resources to use with students.

- [Health Canada: About Vaping](#)
- [“Consider the Consequences” activities for teens](#)
- [Smoking, vaping and tobacco](#)
- [Talking with teens about vaping: Tip sheet](#)
- [The Mechanics of Vaping](#)
- [Toxic Emissions in Tobacco Smoke](#)

Ophea’s Classroom Resources

- [Ideas for Action: Cannabis](#)
- [H&PE Elementary Resources](#)
- [Fundamental Principle Resources](#)
- [Inquiry-Based Learning](#)