

# Skills-Driven Curricula: Navigate By the Stars

The New York State Education Department has implemented a health education curriculum and assessment leadership initiative titled Navigate by the Stars. Wherever possible, this curriculum has attended to the ten Navigational Stars. The Stars are guidelines for curriculum development and implementation, published in A Guidance Document for Achieving the New York State Standards in Health Education. They indicate that teaching and learning in a curriculum should be:

- **Skills-Driven:** Students learn, practice, and apply seven health education skills.
- **Standards-Based:** Students achieve benchmarks and learning standards.
- **Scientifically-Based:** Schools identify effective theory-based health education programs that integrate promising strategies that are likely to improve health behaviors; “use what works.”
- **Learner-Centered:** Students apply relevant health information facilitated by the health educator.
- **Strength-Based:** Students build on their prior knowledge, skills, and strengths.
- **Authentic:** Students apply real life learning experiences and skills.
- **Integrated into the Total Educational Program:** Schools provide a sound comprehensive health education program.
- **Taught by Qualified and Skilled Teachers:** Schools provide health educators with professional development and other effective professional mentoring.
- **Part of a Coordinated School Health Approach:** Schools provide related health services, physical education, food service, counseling and guidance
- **Supported by School and Community:** Schools provide parents, school staff and the community ways to support students through family and community based initiatives.

Skills-driven health education is that aspect or domain of education that has been, until now, neglected by most health curricula. Cognitive and affective approaches, though effective at teaching facts and concepts and helpful in shaping healthful attitudes, have not produced the desired effects, those of adaptive behavior changes that promote health. It is widely believed that behavior change requires learning and practicing the skills necessary to form or reshape behavior patterns in addition to cognitive learning and attitude formation. The seven Health Education Skills as outlined by the New York State Education Department and the Navigate by the Stars initiative are:

1. **Self-Management** Practicing healthful personal habits.
2. **Relationship Management** Behaving in ways that promote mutual or group benefit.
3. **Stress Management** Recognizing and modifying stress reactions.
4. **Communication** Skills of both transmitting and receiving messages.
5. **Planning and Goal Setting** Projecting needs and wants and establishing tasks.
6. **Decision Making** Choosing in healthful ways based on actual wants and needs.
7. **Advocacy** Acting assertively for one's beliefs.