



ASSOCIATION FOR PREVENTION TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Health Literacy Competency- Based Curriculum for Health Professionals

8 Steps for Developing a Competency-Based Health Literacy Curriculum

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Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi, M.Ed., Assistant Professor
TUFTS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE | DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & COMMUNITY
MEDICINE,

8 Steps for Developing a Competency-Based Health Literacy Curriculum

The Association for Prevention Teaching and Research (APTR) believes that high quality, innovative education programs in prevention and population health are being offered across the country, but there are few venues or incentives for educators to share their work. Improving the nation's health requires health professionals to understand and apply prevention and population health principles, practice in interprofessional teams, and link with other programs and services that affect health. The APTR Healthy People Curriculum Task Force recommends that all health professions education programs incorporate clinical prevention and population health educational content in their curricula, evaluate students' knowledge and skills, use diverse teaching and learning methods to incorporate clinical prevention and population health content into degree and continuing education programs; and integrate innovative, interprofessional educational experiences and approaches focused on clinical prevention and population health.

Introduction

The APTR [Competency-to-Curriculum Toolkit](#) provided the framework for developing the **Health Literacy Competency-Based Curriculum for Health Professionals**. This is both a curriculum and a curriculum planning tool for health professions faculty. Faculty can follow the steps described to teach health literacy competencies identified by the Council on Linkages in the Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals. Faculty can also follow the steps used by this curriculum as a model to create their own health literacy competency-based curriculum. Following the steps described, faculty will identify health literacy competencies, develop learning objectives, select evaluation procedures, and use recommended teaching tools.

Step 1: Select the Competencies

For this example, competencies are taken from the Council on Linkages' [Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals](#).

Competency [3A1/B1]: Identify and assesses the literacy of populations served (e.g., ability to obtain, interpret, and use health and other information)

Tier 1 [A] level is for undergraduate public health / health department or community health professionals.

Competency [3A2/B2]: Communicates in writing and orally with linguistic and cultural proficiency (e.g., using age-appropriate materials, incorporating images)

Tier 2 [B] is for graduate level degree in public health / mid-career health department or public health professionals.

Step 2: Define Key Terms

Check and cite definitions.

Literacy / functional Literacy: An individual's ability to read, write, and speak, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential (National Literacy Act, 1999).

Health Literacy: The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions. (DHHS, 2000); A wide range of skills used by the public and health professionals to find, understand, evaluate, communicate, and use health information to enable people to live healthier lives (Calgary Charter, 2009).

Communicates in writing and orally (using plain language): Plain language is a strategy for making written and oral information easier to understand. It is *one* important tool for improving health literacy. Key elements of Plain Language include organizing information so that the most important points come first; breaking complex information into understandable chunks; using simple language and defining technical terms; and using the active voice. (Office of Communications and Public Liaison)

Linguistically and culturally proficient/competency: A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations. Culture refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. Competence implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities (Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis K., & Isaacs, M., 1989).

Step 3: Define Target Audience

Interprofessional groups of health professions students including public health (e.g. communication, policy, global, and other) and healthcare (e.g., medical, dental, nursing, administration, physician assistant, allied health, pharmacy, and other).

Step 4: Separate the Sub-competencies

Competency [3A1/B1]: Identify and assesses the literacy of populations served (e.g., ability to obtain, interpret, and use health and other information)

Sub-competencies: If learners are to assess the literacy of populations served (e.g., ability to obtain, interpret, and use health and other information), they will have to be competent to:

- Access population-based literacy and health literacy data
- Describe limitations of available health literacy assessment tools

Competency [3A2/B2]: Communicates in writing and orally with linguistic and cultural proficiency (e.g., using age-appropriate materials, incorporating images)

Sub-competencies: If learners are to communicate in writing and orally with linguistic and cultural proficiency (e.g. using age-appropriate materials, incorporating images) they will have to be competent to:

- Apply plain language writing and design principles
- Avoid jargon and check for understanding
- Address language needs
- Recognize cultural differences

Step 5: Develop Learning Objectives

Competency	Sub-Competency	Learning Objectives
<p>[3A1/B1] Assess the literacy of populations served</p>	<p>Access population-based literacy and health literacy data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define literacy / health Literacy • Recognize literacy demands in health and health care • Cite link between literacy / health literacy and health outcomes • Name population-based literacy / health literacy data sources
	<p>Describe limitations of available health literacy assessment tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name health literacy assessment tools • Recognize how the complexity of information and health system influence health literacy
<p>[3A2/B2] Communicate in writing and orally with linguistic and cultural proficiency</p>	<p>Apply plain language writing and design principles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define plain language • Apply plain language writing principles • Apply plain language design principles
	<p>Avoid jargon and check for understanding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid jargon • Use living room language • Construct open ended questions • Avoid stigmatization • Practice teach back
	<p>Address language needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards • Name language access interventions • Define interpreter and translator • Describe approaches to interpreting • Describe approaches to translation
	<p>Recognize cultural differences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe link between culture, language and literacy • Recognize the culture of health care • Define the role of a cultural broker

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Step 6: Select Evaluation Procedures

Learning Objectives	Quiz	Report	Discussion	Product	Observed
Define literacy /health literacy	X	X			
Recognize literacy demands in health and health care		X	X		
Cite link between literacy / health literacy and health outcomes	X	X			
Name population-based literacy / health literacy data sources	X	X			
Name health literacy assessment tools	X	X			
Recognize how the complexity of information and health system influences health literacy		X	X		
Discuss limitations of health literacy assessment tools		X	X		
Define plain language	X		X		
Apply plain language writing principles				X	
Apply plain language design principles				X	
Avoid jargon				X	X
Use living room language					X
Construct open ended questions	X				X
Avoid stigmatization					X
Practice teach back					X
Describe the CLAS Standards	X	X	X		
Name language access interventions	X	X	X		
Define interpreter and translator	X		X		
Describe approaches to interpreting	X	X	X		
Describe approaches to translation	X	X	X		
Describe link between culture, language and literacy		X	X		
Recognize the culture of health care		X	X		
Define the role of a cultural broker		X	X		

Step 7: Identify Relevant Key Content

Recommended Resources in Health Literacy

Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations

Proposed attributes of a health literacy organization and what organizations can do to reduce health literacy barriers.

Source: Institute of Medicine, Roundtable on Health Literacy, 2012

nam.edu/perspectives-2012-ten-attributes-of-health-literate-health-care-organizations/

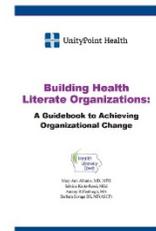


Building Health Literate Organizations: A Guidebook to Achieving Organizational Change

Strategies to help organizations move toward becoming a health literate organization.

Source: UnityPointHealth, 2012

www.unitypoint.org/filesimages/Literacy/Health%20Literacy%20Guidebook.pdf



Health Literacy Care Model

A visual and interactive component that links health literacy universal precautions to a Chronic Care Model.

Source: US Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

health.gov/communication/interactiveHLCM/

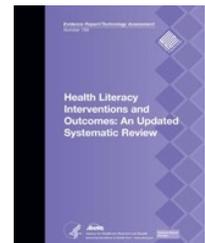


Health Literacy Intervention and Outcomes: An Updated Systematic Review

Review of health outcomes related to low health literacy level and interventions designed to improve health outcomes for those experiencing low health literacy.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), 2011

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK82434/

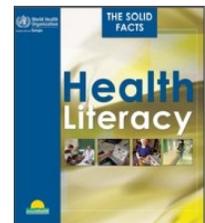


Health Literacy: The Solid Facts

Offers a population-based perspective and presents action steps for how public health and other sectors can strengthen health literacy.

Sources: World Health Organization, 2013

www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/190655/e96854.pdf



Health Literacy: Accurate, Accessible and Actionable

Website with information and resources for learning about and taking action to improve health literacy and public health, includes tools for materials development, organizational improvement, national action, and more.



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Source: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/

National Center for Cultural Competency (NCCC)

A leader in the field of cultural and linguistic competency and health disparities. See "Infusing Cultural and Linguistic Competence into Health Promotion Training" video for teaching and training ideas. nccc.georgetown.edu/projects/sids/dvd/index.html

Source: Georgetown University

nccc.georgetown.edu/



Prescription to End Confusion

Seminal document that presents growing evidence documenting health literacy barriers to health information and services. Recognizes the need to promote a health literate society and provides examples for action.

Source: Institute of Medicine 2004

www.nap.edu/catalog/10883/health-literacy-a-prescription-to-end-confusion#toc



Think Cultural Health

Website developed and maintained to advance health equity. Offers fundamentals on the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards and other professional development resources and materials.

Source: US Office of Minority Health

www.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov



Step 8: Plan the Learning Experiences (Teaching Tools)

Competency [3A1/B1]: Assess the literacy of populations served

Sub-competency: Access population-based literacy/health literacy data

Learning Objectives	Resources	Teaching Tools	Activity	Assessment
Define literacy / health literacy	Health Literacy: The Solid Facts	Health Literacy Solid Facts- report and infographic	Read Health Literacy: The Solid Fact and view the infographic	Write a 2-4-page paper defining health literacy and describing communities at risk and possible approaches to addressing the problem
Recognize literacy demands in health and health care	Health Literacy Care Model	Prescription to End Confusion- Video	View Prescription to End Confusion	
Cite link between literacy / health literacy and health outcomes	Health Literacy Intervention and Outcomes: An Updated Systematic Review	Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals –Tutorial	Complete Health Literacy for Public Health Professionals	
Name population-based literacy/health literacy data sources	Prescription to End Confusion Report	Health Literacy: Accurate, Accessible, and Actionable - Website	Search Health Literacy: Accurate, Accessible, and Actionable Measures of People’s Skills and Experiences for population-based health literacy data	

Sub-competency: Describe limitations of health literacy assessment tools

Learning Objectives	Resources	Teaching Tools	Activity	Assessment
Name health literacy assessment tools	Attributes of Health Literate Health Care Organizations	The Health Literacy Environment- Activity Packet	Review Attributes of Health Literate Health Care	Write a four-page report on findings from the health literacy organizational assessment of a local health facility, and include recommendations for improvement
Recognize how the complexity of information and health system influence health literacy	Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit	Health Literacy Tool Shed- Database	Use The Health Literacy Environment Activity Packet to conduct a health literacy organizational assessment at a local healthcare facility of their choice	
			Search the Health Literacy Tool Shed for measures appropriate for use with a specific audience	Discuss strengths and limitations of available tools

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Competency [3A2/B2]: Communicate in writing and orally with linguistic and cultural proficiency

Sub-competency: Communicate in writing					
Learning Objectives	Resources	Teaching Tools	Activity	Assessment	
<p>Define plain language</p> <p>Apply plain language writing principles</p> <p>Apply plain language design principles</p>	<p>Simply Put: A guide for creating easy to understand materials</p>	<p>Watch This is Bad Enough video</p> <p>SKR Health Literacy and Plain Language -Webinar [Members Only]</p>	<p>Review Simply Put: A guide to creating easy to understand materials then define what is plain language</p> <p>Complete SKR Health Literacy and Plain Language</p>	<p>Discuss what is hard to read and what makes it hard to read. Define “plain language” and list plain language principles.</p> <p>Develop a two-page fact sheet on a health topic of their choice demonstrating plain language writing and design principles.</p>	
Sub-competency: Communicate orally / check for understanding					
Learning Objectives	Resources	Teaching Tools	Activity	Assessment	
<p>Avoid jargon</p> <p>Use living room language</p> <p>Construct open ended questions</p> <p>Avoid stigmatization</p> <p>Practice teach back</p>	<p>Building Health Literate Organizations: A Guidebook to Achieving Organizational Change</p> <p>Always Use Teach-back! Teach-back Toolkit</p>	<p>Always Use Teach-back: Interactive Teach-back Learning Module</p> <p>Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand – Video</p>	<p>Complete the Always Use Teach-back Interactive Learning Module</p> <p>View Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patient Understand video, then give examples of open ended question to illicit teach-back.</p> <p>Write script for 2-3 min role play demonstrating use of plain language oral communication (avoid jargon) and teach-back (asking an open-ended question)</p>	<p>Demonstrate in 2-3 min role play use of plain language oral communication (avoid jargon) and teach-back (asking an open-ended question)</p>	

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Sub-competency: Linguistic proficiency - address language needs					
Learning Objectives	Resources	Teaching Tools	Activity	Assessment	
<p>Describe the CLAS Standards</p> <p>Name language access interventions</p> <p>Define interpreter and translator</p> <p>Describe approaches to interpreting</p> <p>Describe approaches to translation</p>	<p>Think Culture Health - Website</p> <p>National Center for Culture Competency-Infusing Cultural and Linguistic Competence into Health Promotion Training</p>	<p>The National CLAS Standards– Webpage</p> <p>Think Speak Act Culture Health: Part 1 and Part 2</p> <p>Communication Tools: Interpreter Tool: Working with An Interpreter Tool</p> <p>More Than Words Toolkit</p>	<p>Review The National CLAS Standards</p> <p>Watch Think Speak Act Culture Health: Part 1 and discuss the CLAS standards.</p> <p>Review Think Culture Health-Communication Tools: Interpreter Tool Working with An Interpreter Tool</p> <p>Watch Think Speak Act Culture Health: Part 2 and discuss working with Interpreters</p> <p>Review More Than Words Toolkit and discuss working with Translators</p>	<p>Create word list and plain language definition of 10 technical terms related to a health topic of their choice</p> <p>describe process for getting document translated and create budget</p>	
Sub-competency: Cultural proficiency - address cultural differences					
Learning Objectives	Resources	Teaching Tools	Activity	Assessment	
<p>Recognize the culture of health and health care</p> <p>Describe link between culture, language and literacy</p> <p>Define role of a cultural broker</p>	<p>Primer on Cultural Competency and Health Literacy: A Guide to Teaching Students in Health Professions and Continuing Education of Practicing Professionals</p> <p>National Center for Culture Competency (NCCC)-Website</p>	<p>The Culture of Health Systems- video clip</p> <p>NCCC - The Gonzales Family Data Vignette</p> <p>NCCC - Cultural Brokers - article</p>	<p>Watch The Culture of Health Systems, then discuss the statement: every public health and healthcare encounter is a cross cultural experience</p> <p>Complete The Gonzales Family Data Vignette case study, then discuss how the vignette demonstrates the link between health literacy language and culture.</p> <p>Read Cultural Brokers and discuss role</p>	<p>Write a 2-4 page paper describing a public health or healthcare scenario demonstrating the link between health literacy, language and culture</p>	

Health Literacy Teaching Tools >> **Members Only**

APTR/ODPHP Health Literacy Teaching Award

The APTR/ODPHP Health Literacy Teaching Award recognizes Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health & Community Medicine, Tufts University School of Medicine, for exemplary teaching of prevention and population health with a health literacy focus. With this subaward, Professor Kurtz-Rossi developed the Health Literacy Competency-Based Curriculum for Health Professionals along with an annotated collection of health literacy recommended resources and teaching tools, and three examples of health literacy educational programs from her teaching.

Professor Kurtz-Rossi presented a webinar on health literacy and plain language materials development for CDC Public Health Fellows, and presented her work at the International Health Literacy Conference in Taiwan, and at the APTR annual meeting, Teaching Prevention 2017, in New Mexico.