

Internal
Audit
Report

*Division of Curriculum and Instruction – Office of Science,
Health, and Physical Education*

**Health Education: Grade 5 Health
Curriculum Audit**

April 2024

Office of Science, Health, and
Physical Education



Baltimore County Public Schools
Office of Internal Audit

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Executive Summary

April 2024

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Health, and Physical Education*

Health Education: Grade 5 Health Curriculum Audit

Background

The Maryland State Board of Education repealed and replaced COMAR 13A.04.18.01 “Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Program for Grades PreK-12,” effective December 30, 2019. This changed Maryland's Health Education regulations. MSDE’s major update to its health education framework occurred in July 2020. As a result, BCPS had to update its Health Education Curriculum and began the process with the Grade 5 curriculum.

Objective

The audit objective was to determine if BCPS complied with COMAR 13A.04.18.01, the MSDE health education framework, and BCPS curriculum writing procedures when updating the Grade 5 health Curriculum.

Results in Brief

Our audit identified four commendations and two findings.

Potential Risks

- BCPS may not have met COMAR requirements.
- Students may not learn about relevant health education topics if MSDE indicators are not included in the curriculum.

Recommendations

1. A staff member from the Office of Science, Health & Physical Education should collaborate with the necessary individuals who will be able to address principal failures to complete and submit the required survey.

2. The Office of Health Education must update the Grade 5 health curriculum to include missing or incorrect MSDE standards.

Response

1. To enhance principals' understanding of the importance of completing the form and to emphasize its alignment with COMAR standards, we will be updating the form's name to "Grade 5 COMAR (13A.01.18; D2) Family Life and Human Sexuality Special Requirements Fidelity Checklist." Additionally, a representative from the Office of Health Education will reach out via email to any principal who has not completed the survey by one week before the deadline (mid-December) to provide a gentle reminder. Following the deadline, another email will be sent as a follow-up, copying the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and the area Executive Directors for any needed additional support.
2. The missing indicators were added to the respective lesson plans and the scope and sequence were updated to reflect these changes. The Grade 5 teachers were notified of the revisions by posting an announcement in the Grade 5 Schoology group.

Thank you for bringing to our attention the findings regarding BCPS potentially not meeting COMAR requirements and the concern regarding students' exposure to relevant health education topics. We take these matters seriously and are committed to addressing them promptly. Please refer to our plan to address and correct these potential risks in the respective sections below.

Contents

BACKGROUND	2
COMMENDATIONS	3
RESULTS	4
1. The process used to monitor compliance with COMAR related to the implementation of the Grade 5 health education curriculum is ineffective.	4
2. The Grade 5 health education curriculum does not fully align with the MSDE framework. .	5
OBJECTIVE, SCOPE & METHODOLGY	7

BACKGROUND

Organizational Status & Purpose

The Office of Health Education is within the Office of Science, Health, and Physical Education. The Office of Health Education is responsible for designing and maintaining the health education curriculum in BCPS. The goal of the office is to deliver a planned, sequential K-12 instructional program based on sound research that includes a strong performance base of skills and abilities within the content of current and future health and safety issues.

Health Education in BCPS

To meet the requirements of COMAR 13A.04.18.01, the MSDE Health Education State framework, health education is scheduled each school year for all students in grades PreK-8. Elementary Health Education Students take four health education units each school year in Grades PreK-5.

MSDE Health Education Framework

The Maryland State Board of Education repealed and replaced COMAR 13A.04.18.01 on December 30, 2019. The changes to Maryland's Health Education regulations resulted from consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, local education agencies, and legislative requirements that emphasize student safety.

MSDE updated the health education framework in July 2020 to align with the new COMAR requirements. School systems use the framework and its indicators to develop curriculum.

As a result, BCPS had to update its Health Education Curriculum and began the process with the Grade 5 curriculum. The health education curriculum updates were written in-house and aligned with COMAR regulations and the MSDE health education framework¹.

Applicable Policies and Regulations

The applicable policies and regulations related to this audit are:

- COMAR 13A.04.18.01 "Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Program for Grades PreK-12"
- MSDE Health Education Framework
- Board Policy and Rule 6000 – Curriculum and Instruction

Compliance Monitoring

The Office of Health Education has developed processes and resources for elementary schools to ensure compliance with the COMAR requirements that relate to the implementation of the Grade 5 health education curriculum:

¹ Our audit procedure determined that the curriculum did not fully align with the framework. See Finding 2 on page 5.

- COMAR 13A.04.18.01.(D)(2)(i) requires local Boards of Education to create opt-out provisions for family life and human sexuality instruction.
- COMAR 13A.04.18.01.(D)(2)(iv) requires all lessons and resources associated with the family life and human sexuality unit to be available for preview prior to instruction occurring in the classroom.
- COMAR 13.A.04.18.01(G) requires that local school systems develop guidelines and procedures for the support of qualified teachers. Each local school system shall establish planned and continuous programs as required to adequately train its personnel to update knowledge, instructional materials, and methodology in health education.

The Office of Health Education publishes an annual survey to principals to monitor each school’s compliance with the required procedures.

COMMENDATIONS

Communication

The Supervisor of Health Education was prompt in her responses to our requests and provided detailed explanations when follow-up was needed.

Advisory Committee

The Office of Health Education participates in a Family Life and Human Sexuality advisory committee consisting of classroom teachers, school-based leaders, BCPS parents, and staff from various BCPS offices.

Grade 5 Teacher Training

MSDE and the Office of Health Education provide training opportunities to ensure that Grade 5 teachers are prepared to teach puberty education lessons, including curriculum-related training, and how to handle student questions.

Curriculum Writing Procedures

An SOP for curriculum writing was developed by the Department of Teaching and Learning in December 2020, after the Grade 5 health curriculum was updated in the summer of 2020. However, the Office of Health Education provided documentation of the processes they followed when writing the new curriculum, including creating a proposal for the curriculum update, pre-planning the curriculum writer’s workshop, conducting unit audits of each revised lesson, and the review and approval of every lesson by the Supervisor of Health Education prior to being posted to Schoology. The Grade 5 Health Education Curriculum revisions were presented to the Curriculum Committee on June 17, 2021.

RESULTS

1. The process used to monitor compliance with COMAR related to the implementation of the Grade 5 health education curriculum is ineffective.

Criteria	Principals are asked to complete an annual survey certifying that the requirements related to Grade 5 health education are met.
Finding	The response rate for the principal survey is low. In school year 22-23, it was 46.8%. In school year 23-24, it was 54.1%.
Cause	Principals have not responded to the survey although they were given reminders. The Office of Health Education shares the survey in the weekly principal's newsletter three times. After the due date, the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning shares the list of schools that haven't responded with the area Executive Directors.
Effect	Due to the low response rate, BCPS cannot validate compliance with COMAR regulations related to the Grade 5 health curriculum.
Recommendation	A staff member from the Office of Science, Health and Physical Education should collaborate with the necessary individuals who can address the failure of elementary school principals to complete and submit the required survey.

Management's Corrective Action

To enhance principals' understanding of the importance of completing the form and to emphasize its alignment with COMAR standards, we will be updating the form's name to "Grade 5 COMAR (13A.01.18; D2) Family Life and Human Sexuality Special Requirements Fidelity Checklist." Additionally, a representative from the Office of Health Education will reach out via email to any principal who has not completed the survey by one week before the deadline (mid-December) to provide a gentle reminder. Following the deadline, another email will be sent as a follow-up, copying the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning and the area Executive Directors for any needed additional support.

Responsible Person(s)

Coordinator - Health Education

Anticipated Completion Date

December 2024 and each fall semester thereafter.

2. The Grade 5 health education curriculum does not fully align with the MSDE framework.

Criteria	<p>The health education framework developed by MSDE identifies what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. BCPS uses the indicators of the framework to develop curriculum. Curricular lessons, assessments, and student resources are designed to be aligned with the indicators in the framework.</p>
Finding	<p>Nine of the 79 MSDE indicators were not included in the Grade 5 Health curriculum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review short and long-term effects of alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, and other products (1.b.5.3).2. Identify the benefits of being free from alcohol, opioid, nicotine products, marijuana products, and other drugs (1.b.5.6).3. Identify nutrients that should be consumed daily (1.e.5.1).4. Describe how different types of food work together to deliver nutrients to parts of the body (1.e.5.2).5. Summarize the benefits of drinking water versus other beverages (1.e.5.3).6. Construct a nutritious eating plan utilizing school lunch and restaurant menus (1.e.5.4).7. Evaluate the benefits of eating in moderation and in line with the idea that "all foods fit" (1.e.5.5).8. Set a personal health goal and track progress towards its achievement (6.E2.a).9. Identify resources to assist in achieving a personal health goal (6.E2.b). <p>Additionally, there were two MSDE indicators from Grade 8 that were included with the Grade 5 curriculum:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Apply effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (4.8.1).2. Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance the health of self and others (4.8.4).
Cause	<p>It was an oversight of the Office of Health Education that the MSDE indicators were not included or were from the incorrect grade level.</p>
Effect	<p>The MSDE indicators identify what students should know at each grade level. Students may not learn about all relevant topics if all indicators are not included or correct.</p>

Recommendation The Office of Health Education must update the Grade 5 health curriculum to include missing or incorrect MSDE indicators.

Management's Corrective Action

The missing indicators were added to the respective lesson plans and the scope and sequence were updated to reflect these changes. The Grade 5 teachers were notified of the revisions by posting an announcement in the Grade 5 Schoology group.

Responsible Person(s)

Coordinator - Health Education

Anticipated Completion Date

March 20, 2024

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

- Objective** To determine if BCPS complied with COMAR 13A.04.18.01 "Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Program for Grades PreK-12", the MSDE health education framework, and internal curriculum writing SOPs when updating the Grade 5 Health Curriculum.
- Scope** The audit period is FY 20 to FY 24.
- Methodology** To achieve the audit objectives, we performed the following:
- Discussed health education curriculum updates with Office of Health Education staff to ensure an understanding of the process.
 - Reviewed Board policies and Superintendent Rules, COMAR 13A.04.18.01 – Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Program for Grades PreK-12, MSDE Health Education framework, and SOP for curriculum writing.
 - Compared MSDE Health Education Framework to BCPS Scope & Sequence for Grade 5 Health Education.
 - Compared BCPS Scope & Sequence to Grade 5 Health Education lessons in Schoology.
 - Reviewed advisory committee group information.
 - Reviewed responses to principal survey on Grade 5 Health Education.
 - Reviewed documents related to curriculum writing process created by the Office of Health Education.