

Issue XXIII

# STEMBoost Newsletter



Brought to you by the STEMBoost Editorial Team

## Fun Fact:

If you were to lay out an adult's blood vessels from end to end, how long would they stretch?

## Quick Summer Update!

Angela Zhang, Editor in Charge

As the summer has begun, so have our 5th annual STEMBoost summer workshops. This summer features new courses such as Intro to Java, What's In a Computer?, and Simple Machines, on top of old favorites such as Intro to Cybersecurity, Anatomy and Physiology, and Forensics and Crime. Registration is still open for workshops happening later in the summer and we encourage everyone to check out our workshops and sign up for workshops they are interested in. For more information, please visit our website:

<https://www.stemboost.org/2022-summer-workshops.html>

Additionally, we have begun the process of transfer of power. We welcome our 2022-2023 co-presidents, Iona Xia and Angela Zhang, as well as our vice president, Joseph Lee, and look forward to welcoming new officers into our ranks. Though officer applications are closed, we welcome any interested parties to fill out the interest form on our website to join us.

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## The Importance of Health Education

Joseph Lee, Editor in Chief

Amongst many schools across the country, what students know as “health ed” often doesn’t amount more than a few cursory classes about puberty from elementary school or an optional sex-ed unit in middle school that put an emphasis on abstinence. Students may also have also done mandatory activities on “mindfulness” during break times, which their teachers may or may not have taken seriously. Many might also note nutrition posters hung up around the cafeteria, at odds with the greasy or lackluster lunches that are often served.

Because kids spend so much of their lives in school, it is a vital place where early habits and behaviors grow and take root. As such, a comprehensive health education that addresses the physical, social, and emotional health of students, is essential for schools to help students be aware of their own health and take care of themselves.

First, health education is important for promoting nutritional health, especially in the face of an obesity epidemic currently affecting the country. According to the CDC, more than 4 in 10 Americans today are obese (CDC.gov). Today, grocery stores are stocked with snacks containing high levels of fat and sugar, and the convenience of fast food is making it more popular than ever. Without knowledge of how an unhealthy diet can affect a person, it is tempting for kids to turn to these foods without a second thought. However, neglecting the nutritional needs of one's own body can have a variety of negative consequences. For example, an unbalanced diet is at the core of issues such as nutrient deficiencies and obesity, and can also raise the risk of deadly illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. Teaching kids about nutrition through a health education curriculum will inform them about how to take care of their bodies along with the importance of doing so. Armed with such knowledge, kids will understand why and how they should eat healthy and will be more motivated to lower their intake of less healthy foods.

Second, health education gives students a safe source of information about sexual health that they may not have a chance to get elsewhere. Past studies have shown that proper education helps significantly decrease rates of STDs and unplanned pregnancies by teaching students about safe sexual practices along with resources that provide reliable information (acog.org). Some parents may believe that they should be the ones to teach their kids about sex, or that sexual education in schools has a negative influence on kids. In reality, countless parents have never had a serious talk about sex with their parents, often because they find it embarrassing or believe that kids will learn on their own as they age. This is a dangerous mindset, since kids who are not taught to respect boundaries may cause harm to others without even realizing it. Parents are also prone to offering information that is biased or outdated, which can encourage questionable behaviors in a child or increase stigma about their sexual identities. Overall, sexual education that teaches kids to act responsibly is essential for children's health and safety.

Finally, health education spreads awareness about mental health and things students can do to take care of it, which tends to be an overlooked problem in younger generations. Recent data shows an upward trend in teen suicide rates since 2007 (CDC.gov). Mental health problems such as depression and anxiety are more common than ever, especially in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially for students who receive little support from their families, managing mental health can be extremely difficult, and addressing this topic in health classes can help to inform students of the resources out there and decrease the stigma associated with them. For example, educating kids about mindsets like "mental

illness is all in your head” will allow them to better acknowledge the toxicity of such thoughts and break out of them. Realizing an issue exists is the first step in addressing it, and schools can provide an environment to do so by implementing mental health education. It can be a great benefit for such students when schools offer guidance by encouraging students to meet with on-site medical professionals or pointing them towards mental health resources. Additionally, teaching students skills such as mindfulness can help them deal with stress and improve the quality of their lives.

Therefore, complete health education is crucial for a student's proper development and well being. However, as it currently stands, statistics reveal that the current health education curriculum is lackluster, and that many health problems plaguing today's youth have only been growing in the past few decades. This calls for more urgent change, but fortunately, studies also support the effectiveness of implementing a health curriculum in making a positive impact on kids' behavior. Ultimately, implementing proper education in nutrition, sexual health, mental health, etc. would give kids a framework to develop good habits and make healthy decisions in the future.

Sources Used:

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6630a6.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2016/11/comprehensive-sexuality-education>

Around 100,000 miles,  
enough to wrap around  
the Earth four times!

ANSWER: