



**HAL**  
open science

## The urgent need to address health literacy in schools

Orkan Okan, Leena Paakkari, Didier Jourdan, Vivian Barnekow, Martin Weber

► **To cite this version:**

Orkan Okan, Leena Paakkari, Didier Jourdan, Vivian Barnekow, Martin Weber. The urgent need to address health literacy in schools. *The Lancet*, 2023, 401 (10374), pp.344. 10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00104-6 . hal-04493303

**HAL Id: hal-04493303**

**<https://uca.hal.science/hal-04493303>**

Submitted on 7 Mar 2024

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Version auteur – Acceptée par la revue

Référence : Okan, O., Paakkari, L., Jourdan, D., Barnekow, V., & Weber, M. W. (2023). The urgent need to address health literacy in schools. *The Lancet*, 401(10374), 344. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(23\)00104-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)00104-6)

## The urgent need to address health literacy in schools

Orkan Okan, Leena Paakkari, Didier Jourdan, Vivian Barnekow, Martin W Weber

The Editorial<sup>1</sup> raised an important question: why is health literacy failing so many? It urgently called for effective responses to support people to better manage health information, but also to account for the environmental and social forces that shape people's choices. Overcoming the commercial determinants of health and the increase in disinformation on social media and the internet are being highlighted as key drivers of mistrust among people, families, and communities.

The WHO<sup>2</sup> concept note, published on Sep 6, 2021, emphasises health literacy in the context of schools, already responding to many of the issues raised in the editorial—including environmental and social factors, the commercial determinants of health, and the adverse effect of disinformation on healthy choices. The report makes the case for harnessing the potential of schools to educate children about health and improve school processes and structures, aiming at both behaviour and social change.

Health literacy is a relational concept<sup>3</sup> that requires addressing personal and organisational health literacy. Organisational health literacy provides a unique framework on the systems level for implementing a whole-of-school approach to promoting health literacy including students, teachers, families, and communities.<sup>4</sup> Schools as educational institutions have the potential to address individual differences in learning and to narrow the disparities in learning caused by disadvantaged backgrounds.

We believe health literacy failing so many is not the primary issue, but the policy support gap and inequity in investments for health literacy across systems, sectors, and governments should be the target for action.

We declare no competing interests.

## References

### 1.The Lancet

Why is health literacy failing so many?.

Lancet. 2022; 4001655

### 2.WHO

Health literacy in the context of health, well-being and learning outcomes the case of children and adolescents in schools: the case of children and adolescents in schools.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/344901>

Date: 2021

Date accessed: December 1, 2022

### 3.WHO

Health literacy: the solid facts.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/326432>

Date: 2013

Date accessed: December 1, 2022

### 4.Kirchhoff S Dadaczynski K Pelikan JM et al.

Organizational health literacy in schools: concept development for health-literate schools.

Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022; 198795