

Focuses on Clear Health Goals and Related Behavior Outcomes

Description: This characteristic is foundational for an effective health education curriculum. The goal of health education is to help students adopt or maintain healthy behaviors.¹ Given this charge, health goals, behaviors, or outcomes must be clearly defined, focused, and meaningful to students. Students need to know the healthy behaviors that are expected of them. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have identified a list of healthy behavior outcomes (HBOs) for students in grades K–12 that align with nine health topic areas and help to promote health and prevent disease ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

Functional health knowledge and skills taught in health education should align and focus on addressing HBOs. Prioritizing and selecting HBOs should reflect developmental appropriateness and cultural inclusivity, as well as health-behavior data and trends from a variety of sources. For example, using the *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, state and local education and health data, and input from key partners such as students, parents, and health professionals can inform HBO selection.

Across the health topic areas, each HBO is important, but there isn't enough instructional time allotted to health education in most school districts to address all of them. Therefore, health curriculum coordinators and health teachers need to be selective when determining which HBOs to address in the district's health education scope and sequence, unit plans, and curriculum lessons. HBOs are the starting place for every health education unit and lesson plan, and they guide the development or selection of student learning objectives, functional knowledge and skills, and assessment.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* (Atlanta, GA: CDC, 2021).



Grades K–2 Example

For this teaching example, the health unit is Personal Health and Wellness, and the selected HBOs for the lesson are *PHW-1: Practice appropriate hygiene habits* and *PHW-5: Practice behaviors that prevent infectious disease* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)). The specific behavior associated with these HBOs is handwashing.

1. The teacher shows students a picture of children their age washing their hands and tells students the focus for the day is on handwashing.
2. The teacher and the students then discuss the importance of handwashing and when students should wash their hands.
3. The teacher then demonstrates and has the students practice the steps of washing their hands.
4. The teacher concludes the lesson by asking the students to commit to washing their hands throughout the day.
5. To support this lesson, signs with the steps for handwashing are posted near the school's handwashing stations, and students are given a sign to take home and share with their families.

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Grades 3–5 Example

For this teaching example, the unit that is being taught is Safety, and the HBO for the lesson is *S-4: Apply safety rules and procedures to avoid risky behaviors and injuries* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The teacher posts the HBO for the lesson on a classroom whiteboard, poster, or slide.
2. The teacher introduces the HBO to students so they understand the focus of the lesson is to apply safety rules in school, at home, and within the community.
3. The teacher and students discuss examples of safety rules and why it is important to follow safety rules at home, in school, and within the community.
4. The students work in small groups to create lists of safety rules for their homes, school, and communities.
5. At the end of the lesson, the students complete an exit ticket explaining why it is important for them to commit to following safety rules at home, in school, and within the community.

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Grades 6–8 Example

For this teaching example, the unit that is being taught is Sexual Health, and the HBO for the lesson is *SH-5: Be sexually abstinent* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The teacher posts and introduces the HBO to students so there is a clear understanding that the expected outcome for this lesson is for students to be sexually abstinent.
2. The teacher then asks the students to complete a journal entry regarding the benefits of being sexually abstinent.
3. The teacher then has the students work in small groups to create a list of the benefits of middle school students being sexually abstinent. One student from each group writes their group's benefits for being sexually abstinent on the classroom whiteboard. The teacher and the students then compare the groups' benefits for being sexually abstinent.
4. At the end of the lesson, the teacher conducts a whip-around by asking the students to name one benefit they learned today that will help them be sexually abstinent.

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Grades 9–12 Example

For this teaching example, the unit that is being taught is Alcohol and Other Drugs, and the HBO for the lesson is *AOD-3: Avoid the use of alcohol* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The teacher posts and introduces the HBO to students so the students understand the expected outcome for the lesson is to avoid the use of alcohol.
2. The teacher then has the students complete a small-group activity in which they create two lists. The first list includes the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional consequences of the use of alcohol among high school students. The second list includes the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional benefits of avoiding the use of alcohol among high school students.
3. The students share their lists of consequences of using alcohol and the benefits of avoiding alcohol use among high school students.
4. At the end of the lesson, students think of one thing they learned that will help them avoid the use of alcohol. They write their idea on a sticky note and place it on the door on their way out of class.



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