

Uses Strategies Designed to Engage Students

Description: An effective curriculum includes instructional strategies and learning experiences that are student centered, interactive, and experiential. Such strategies may include small-group discussions, cooperative learning, problem-solving, role-playing, simulations, and peer-led activities. Teachers can examine existing lessons to determine strategies that are teacher driven (or led), and teachers can identify ways to adapt strategies to be more student centered. Ensuring that new or existing lessons include frequent opportunities for students to think critically and be actively engaged may help to improve interest, passion, and motivation for learning. Lessons should encourage maximum participation, for the maximum number of students, for the maximum amount of time.¹

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



Grades K–2 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Promoting Safety, and the Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO) for the lesson is *S-5: Avoid safety hazards in the home and the community* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)). The focus of this lesson is on poison safety.

1. The teacher begins the lesson by informing the students they are going to learn how to stay away from poisons. The teacher shows the students pictures of a variety of items used and stored in the bathroom, kitchen, or garage (i.e., hygiene products, cleaning supplies, gasoline). The teacher asks the students to describe what they see in the pictures.
2. The teacher asks the students to explain the word “poison,” summarizes their responses aloud, and then shares the following common definition of the word “poison”:
 - a. Poisons are things that can hurt your body, make you very sick, and even kill you.
3. The teacher explains that a basic rule about poisons is to never touch, smell, or taste anything that is poisonous, even when students are unsure if something is a poison.
4. The teacher shows students pictures of various household products (e.g., hand soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toilet bowl cleaner, dish soap, window cleaner, liquid car wax, paint, gasolines) that are safe and not safe for children to touch, smell, or taste.
5. The teacher asks students to identify if the pictured product is safe to touch, smell, or taste by using hand signals (thumbs up = safe; thumbs down = not safe; and thumbs sideways = not sure). Throughout this activity, the teacher emphasizes the importance of trusted adults as sources of help in staying safe from poisons.
6. The teacher uses a variety of what-if scenarios related to poison safety rules and asks the students to explain what they should do in response to each scenario:
 - a. What if you need to brush your teeth, and you can't find your toothpaste but find another tube in the bathroom cabinet that might be toothpaste?
 - b. What if you are in the garage, and you find a bottle with a creamy liquid in it that looks like it might be good to drink?
 - c. What if you are at your aunt's house and want to wash your hands, but you are not sure that the bottle by the sink is soap?
 - d. What if you find something that looks like candy and want to taste it?



Example 2

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Promoting Mental and Emotional Health, and the HBO for the lesson is *MEH-2: Engaging in activities that are mentally and emotionally healthy* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The teacher begins the lesson by asking students to think of things that they can do to have healthy bodies, minds, and feelings.
2. The teacher shows pictures of children participating in various activities to improve healthy bodies, minds, and feelings (e.g., sleep, physical activity, healthy eating, healthy relationships with friends). The teacher describes each picture and asks the students to identify how each activity can help them to have healthy bodies, minds, and feelings.
3. The teacher takes the students to a space large enough to have the children engage in a series of activities related to things to stay healthy including the following:
 - a. Running or walking around the playground
 - b. Walking with a classmate and talking about their favorite activity
 - c. Practicing deep breathing
 - d. Playing a cooperative game
 - e. Drinking water
 - f. Having a healthy snack
4. The teacher discusses with students how each activity helps people have healthy bodies, minds, and feelings.
5. The teacher ends the lesson by having the students draw a picture of two things they can do to have healthy bodies, minds, and feelings.



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Grades 3–5 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Promoting Personal Health and Wellness, and the HBO for the lesson is *PHW-2: Get an appropriate amount of sleep and rest* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The teacher begins the lesson by informing students that the lesson is about getting an appropriate amount of sleep every day. The teacher asks the students to write down how many hours of sleep they usually get each night. The teacher then explains to students they should have 9 to 12 hours of sleep every night.¹ The teacher asks the students to compare their usual amount of sleep with the guideline and asks the students to share their findings with a partner.
2. The teacher creates small groups (three to four students) and distributes chart paper and markers to each group. One half of the chart papers have the words “benefits of sleep” written at the top of the paper, and the other half of the chart papers have the words “rules for sleeping” at the top of the paper. The small groups work together to complete their assigned chart paper (benefits of sleep or rules for sleeping). Throughout this activity, the teacher is working with the students to keep them on task and support the completion of their assigned topic.
3. Once the small groups have completed their assignments, the groups with the charts about the benefits of sleeping trade their chart papers with the groups with the charts about the rules for sleeping. Students review the new charts and add new content.
4. The teacher leads an activity debrief by having the groups with the charts about the benefits of sleep present and compare their lists, followed by the groups with the charts about the rules for sleeping.

The teacher concludes the lesson by using an around-the-room technique and asking each student one piece of new information they learned about the amount of sleep they should get each night, the benefits of sleep, or rules for sleeping.¹ Shalini Paruthi et al., “Recommended Amount of Sleep for Pediatric Populations: A Consensus Statement of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine,” *Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine* 12, no. 06 (June 15, 2016): 785–86, <https://doi.org/10.5664/jcsm.5866>.



Example 2

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Promoting Mental and Emotional Health, and the HBO for the lesson is *MEH-3: Prevent and manage emotional stress and anxiety in healthy ways* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)). The specific focus of this lesson is preventing and managing emotional stress.

1. The teacher begins the lesson by informing students they will engage in various activities to help them learn about health-enhancing strategies to manage emotional stress and anxiety.
2. The teacher then guides the class through a series of stress management activities, including the following:
 - a. Deep breathing
 - b. Progressive muscle relaxation
 - c. Walking
 - d. Guided meditation
3. At the end of the lesson, the teacher has the students do a “think-pair-share” with a partner to identify the stress management strategy that they think they will use in the future. (A think-pair-share activity is when the students are asked to think about the answer, then compare their answer with a partner, and then share their answers with the entire class.)



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Grades 6–8 Examples

Example 1

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Sexual Health, and the HBO for the lesson is *SH-6: Engage in behaviors that prevent or reduce sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)). The specific focus of this lesson is analyzing the myths and facts about HIV.

1. Prior to this teaching activity, students have already learned about how the most common STIs, including HIV, are transmitted; the signs and symptoms of the most common STIs and HIV; ways to protect oneself from HIV; and care and compassion for people infected by or living with HIV.
2. Students engage in the following choice activity by dispelling myths and misconceptions about HIV.
 - a. The teacher posts three signs around the room: Fact, Fiction, Unsure.
 - b. The teacher explains the activity instructions:
 - i. The choice activity will serve as a review of information taught about HIV.
 - ii. A statement about HIV will be read aloud, then students will move to the sign (Fact, Fiction, Unsure) they believe is accurate based on prior learning.

3. Once students have moved to a specific sign, the teacher asks why students selected their respective responses and facilitates discussion between the three groups. The teacher then shares the correct response with students and explains why that answer is correct.



4. Examples of HIV myths or facts may include the following:
 - a. You can tell if someone has HIV because of the way they look.
 - b. HIV is spread through having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex and the sharing of needles or syringes with someone who has HIV.
 - c. You can get HIV by donating blood.
 - d. HIV can be spread by sneezing or coughing.
 - e. People should not hug those who are living with HIV.
 - f. HIV is not transmitted by casual everyday contact.
 - g. A child can be born with HIV.
5. On a sticky note, students write one HIV-related fact they learned and one question they have and place them on the wall as they leave the classroom. The teacher will then follow up with any outstanding questions during the following class.

Example 2

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Mental and Emotional Health, and the HBO for the lesson is *MEH-7: Show acceptance of difference in others* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)). The specific focus of this lesson is creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

1. Prior to this teaching activity, students have already learned about gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation; characteristics that make people unique or special; the benefits of living in a diverse society; and what students need for each student to feel safe and supported in school.
2. The students have completed a questionnaire as a homework assignment analyzing how safe and inclusive their school is for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) students. The questionnaire may include these areas:
 - a. Lesson content, stories, and graphics are inclusive of LGBTQ adolescents.
 - b. Materials and resources about and for LGBTQ students are available in the library.
 - c. The school has a Gay/Straight Alliance or Gender & Sexuality Alliance or diversity club for all.
 - d. Teachers, staff, or other significant adults are known to be LGBTQ friendly (e.g., display safe-zone stickers or rainbow flags).
 - e. Educational materials depict LGBTQ people/couples, histories, and events.
 - f. Gender-neutral bathrooms and changing areas are present in the school.
 - g. Parent/guardian materials and resources use inclusive terminology, content, and graphics (i.e., include same-sex and same-gender families).
3. The students select a partner and discuss findings from their homework assignment, including the following:
 - a. Identify areas in which the school does a good job to support LGBTQ students.
 - b. List three areas in which the school could do a better job.
 - c. Write two specific actions that students and/or adults could take to make the school more supportive and inclusive for LGBTQ students.
4. The teacher asks each group to report, discussing their responses and how these actions could create inclusive, safe, and accepting environments for every student.
5. Student groups select one action to focus on during the semester and submit worksheets and action steps to the teacher. Students should include the resources needed to achieve each step (e.g., adult support, time, money, materials for advocacy).

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Grades 9–12 Examples

Example 1

For this 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](#)). The specific focus of this lesson is avoiding becoming a teen parent.

1. Prior to this teaching activity, students have already learned about the benefits of being sexually abstinent and the consequences of being sexually active. The lesson will focus on the emotional, social, physical, and financial effects of becoming a parent.
2. The teacher posts six pieces of chart paper in the room and labels them as follows: emotional, social, family, financial, education, and future.
3. The teacher then gives each student a marker and directs them to individually go to each piece of chart paper and write at least one negative consequence of becoming a teen parent that fits under each category. Students can repeat answers. After students have an opportunity to write at least one negative consequence on each piece of chart paper, the teacher reviews the answers with students, focusing on the answers that were repeated the most often.
4. Students then complete an exit ticket on a sticky note, completing the following sentence stem: I don't want to become a teen parent because . . .



Example 2

For this example, the unit that is being taught is Food and Nutrition, and the HBO for the lesson is *FN-8: Limit foods high in added sugars, saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)). The specific focus of this lesson is learning how to read a food label to help students select foods that are low in sugars, saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium.

1. The teacher begins the lesson by teaching students the different information found on a food label (e.g., serving size, total fat, amount of sodium).
2. The teacher divides students into pairs and provides each pair with two food labels from foods commonly eaten as a snack. Students compare the food labels based on serving size, number of calories, amount of fat, sodium, and carbohydrates. They are then asked to decide which snack is most nutrient dense and why.
3. Students share the information learned about their two snacks with the class, and explain which items they chose as the healthier snacks and why.