

Builds Personal Competence, Social Competence, and Self-Efficacy by Addressing Skills

Description: An effective curriculum builds essential health-enhancing skills that enable students to build their personal confidence, deal with social pressures, and avoid or reduce risk behaviors. Essential health-enhancing skills included in the National Health Education Standards¹ and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)² are

- Analysis of internal and external influences,
- Assessment of valid and reliable health information, products, and services,
- Communication skills (e.g., refusal, conflict resolution, negotiation, and expressing feelings),
- Decision-making,
- Goal setting,
- Self-management, and
- Advocacy.

Health skills are critically important to teach in every health unit that is taught at each grade level. The goal for school districts is to teach every health skill at least two times, in two different health content areas, at every grade level. Therefore, it is important for curriculum



directors and health teachers to be purposeful and thoughtful about which skills to include in each health content area and at each grade level. Several questions should be answered when making these decisions.

- Which skill(s) will be most likely to help students adopt the selected Healthy Behavior Outcomes (HBOs) in the unit?
- How many lessons are dedicated to each health topic that is taught?
- What is the developmental level of the students?
- What skills have already been taught at this grade level in other units?
- What health skills are being taught at each grade level for each topic that is taught (scope and sequence)?

Once decisions have been made regarding the health skills to be included in each health content area at each grade level, teachers may find the HECAT helpful. The HECAT includes a list of priority skill expectations to further delineate the health skills for each grade level span (e.g., K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12) ([HECAT Skill Expectations](#)).

For students to be successful in mastering a health education skill, lessons need to include the following instructional developmental steps:

Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.

Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.

Step 3: Model the skill.

Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.

Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.

When teaching a health skill, all these steps are imperative. It isn't adequate to introduce the skill, present the steps of the skill, and model the skill. If students don't have multiple opportunities to *practice and apply the skill and receive feedback*, it is unrealistic to expect students to master the skill.

¹ The Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards, *National Health Education Standards: Achieving Excellence*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society; 2007), https://cairnguidance.com/wp-content/uploads/NHES_FINAL.pdf.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool* (Atlanta, GA: CDC, 2021).

³ CDC, *Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool*.

Grades K–2 Examples

Example 1

The unit being taught is Emotional and Mental Health, and the HBO for the lesson is *EMH-8: Establish and maintain healthy relationships* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

Note: The skill in this example is active listening, which will help establish and maintain healthy relationships.

1. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.* The teacher begins the lesson by reading a story that emphasizes listening as an important part of healthy relationships.
 - a. The teacher asks the students:
 - i. Why is listening important when we are with our families and friends or at school?
 - ii. What is a good listener doing when they are listening to a family member or a teacher?
 - b. The teacher tells the students that the teacher is confident that the students will be able to develop good listening skills.
2. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.* The teacher shows and discusses a poster of the steps to being a good listener. For example,
 - a. Look at the person who is talking (eyes),
 - b. Focus on what they are saying (ears),
 - c. Wait patiently for them to finish talking (hands, feet, and body still), and
 - d. Ask questions if you don't understand what they have said.



3. *Step 3: Model the skill.* The teacher next models the skill:
 - a. They ask a student to tell them about a feeling, event, or something they enjoy.
 - b. They remind students to watch for the teacher to
 - i. Look at the student,
 - ii. Focus on what the student is saying,
 - iii. Wait for the student to finish talking, and
 - iv. Ask questions.
4. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* The teacher asks students to practice and rehearse listening to another student tell them about a feeling, event, or something they enjoy.
5. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* As the students are practicing with a partner, the teacher walks around the room and provides feedback and reinforcement to the students (e.g., nice job looking at your partner when they are talking, what questions could you ask your partner, good job letting your partner finish talking before you started talking).
6. The teacher closes the lesson by asking two questions:
 - a. Why is it important to be a good listener?
 - b. What are the steps to being a good listener?



Example 2

The unit being taught is Physical Activity, and the HBO for the lesson is *PA-1: Engage in moderate to physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

Note: The focus of this example is goal setting. (This activity would work best with 2nd grade students.)

1. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.*
 - a. The teacher starts the lesson by asking and discussing with the students the following questions:
 - i. What does it mean to set a goal?
 - ii. Why is it important to set a goal?
 - b. The teacher then explains that a health goal is a plan to do something that keeps you healthy.
 - c. The teacher tells the students that the teacher is confident that the students will be able to develop their own skills to set goals.
2. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.* The teacher shows and discusses a poster of the steps of goal setting.
 - a. Identify a goal. (Note to teacher: make sure that your example is a short-term goal.)
 - b. Make a plan.
 - c. Take action to reach the goal.
 - d. Identify people and things to help you reach the goal.

3. *Step 3: Model the skill.* The teacher shows and discusses with the students an example of an age-appropriate goal to be active every day.
4. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* The teacher provides students with a goal-setting planning worksheet that includes the following:
 - a. Examples of well-written, age-appropriate short-term personal goals for being active every day
 - b. An action plan that includes four elements
 - i. A goal for being active every day
 - ii. People and things that can help them reach their goal to be active every day
 - iii. What the student will do to reach their goal to be active every day
 - iv. A chart to track their progress toward their goal to be active every day
5. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* The teacher provides feedback and reinforcement to the students by
 - a. Guiding the students in the completion of the goal-setting planning worksheet,
 - b. Asking the students why it is important for them to have steps toward reaching their physical activity goals,
 - c. Encouraging the students to take action to reach their physical activity goals, and
 - d. Checking on the students' progress toward reaching their physical activity goals.

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Navigational Grade Icons



Grades 3–5 Example

Example 1

The unit being taught is Promoting an Alcohol- and Other Drug-Free Lifestyle, and the HBO for the lesson is AOD-2: *Avoid the use of alcohol* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

Note: The focus of this example is decision-making.

1. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.* The teacher starts the lesson by telling the students that they will be learning about making healthy decisions related to using alcohol.
 - a. The teacher asks students the following questions:
 - i. Have you ever made an important health-related decision?
 - ii. Why is it important that you make healthy decisions related to alcohol?
 - b. The teacher then tells the students that they can learn how to make healthy decisions to avoid the use of alcohol.
2. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.* The teacher provides the students with a worksheet that includes a template with the steps of decision-making. The teacher and the students discuss the questions associated with each step of decision-making:
 - a. Is this a situation that needs a health-related decision?
 - b. Do you need help to make a healthy decision?
 - c. How do your family, peers, technology, media, and culture influence this health-related decision?
 - d. What are the options and potential outcomes of this health-related decision?
 - e. What is the healthy choice for this health-related decision?
 - f. What is the outcome of this health-related decision?
3. *Step 3: Model the skill.* The teacher uses an alcohol-related scenario to model the steps of decision-making.
4. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* The students work with a partner to practice the decision-making steps related to avoiding the use of alcohol by completing the worksheet.
5. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* The teachers and students then discuss the completed worksheets. The teacher provides feedback and reinforcement to the students using these methods:
 - a. Asking the students why it is important for them to make decisions to avoid the use of alcohol
 - b. Encouraging students to seek help from trusted adults when making decisions to avoid the use of alcohol
 - c. Encouraging the students to make healthy decisions to avoid the use of alcohol
 - d. Asking the students about their confidence related to making health decisions to avoid the use of alcohol



Example 2

The unit being taught is Promoting a Tobacco-Free Lifestyle, and the HBO for the lesson is *T-4: Support others to be tobacco free* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

Note: The focus of this example is advocacy. This activity should be implemented after students have learned the benefits of being tobacco free and the negative consequences of tobacco use.

1. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.* The teacher starts the lesson by showing the students an age-appropriate example of a video, poster, or other artifact advocating for a healthy behavior.

a. The teacher then asks and discusses with the students the following questions:

- i. What does it mean to advocate?
- ii. What is the healthy behavior that the creators of this artifact (video, poster, or other) want people to do?
- iii. Do you think the creators of this artifact were persuasive in getting people to participate in this healthy behavior? Why or why not?
- iv. Today we are going to work on our skills to advocate to others to not use tobacco. Why is it important that we encourage others not to use tobacco?

b. The teacher then tells the students that they can learn how to advocate for others to be tobacco free.

2. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.* The teacher shows the students a poster with the steps to advocacy. These steps include

- a. Giving facts to improve the health of others,
- b. Stating personal beliefs to improve the health of others, and
- c. Persuading others to make positive health choices.

3. *Step 3: Model the skill.* Next, the teacher models the skill by creating, showing, and discussing with the students a poster or other artifact that the students will create to advocate to their peers to be tobacco free. Examples of other artifacts to advocate to others include T-shirts, videos, sidewalk chalk talks, and bookmarks.

4. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* The students then work in small groups to create and then persuasively share with their classmates the posters they created to advocate to their peers to not use tobacco.

5. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* The teachers and students discuss the posters and the presentations of the posters. The teacher provides feedback and reinforcement to the students using these methods:

- a. Leading a class discussion in which the students provide feedback related to each group's poster and presentation of its poster
- b. Providing specific feedback to each group about their poster and their presentation of the poster
- c. Asking the students why it is important to advocate for others to engage in healthy behaviors, such as not using tobacco
- d. Asking the students about their confidence related to advocating for others to not use tobacco



Grades 6–8 Examples

Example 1

The unit being taught is Tobacco, and the HBO for the lesson is *T1: Avoid using (or experimenting with) any form of tobacco* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The focus for this activity is on refusal skills. Students will focus on interpersonal communication—specifically, learning how to demonstrate effective refusal skills to avoid using vaping products. Prior to this activity, the students learned the dangers of experimenting with vaping products, situations that could lead to the use of vaping, and the benefits of not vaping.
2. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.*

The teacher posts the term “peer pressure” on a whiteboard and asks students to write their definition of “peer pressure” on a sticky note. Once they have completed their definitions, the teacher asks students to list on another sticky note what kinds of things young people may feel pressured to do by their peers. The students post their responses on the whiteboard, and the teacher reads the student-generated definitions of “peer pressure.” The teacher explains that peer pressure is the feeling that a person has to do the same things as their peers in order to be liked or accepted. Sometimes these things are positive, and sometimes they are negative. The teacher reads the sticky notes of things that students may feel pressured to do. The teacher then explains that during today’s lesson, they are going to discuss peer pressure and skills for refusing the use of vaping products. The teacher tells the students that they can learn how to use refusal skills to resist pressures to vape.

3. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.* There are several ways to refuse pressure from your peers to do negative things. The teacher asks the students for examples of strategies to refuse the pressure from a peer to use vaping products. As students share their ideas, the teacher processes their responses on the whiteboard. The teacher then hands out a list of the five strategies for responding to and resisting peer pressure. The teacher discusses and models each.
 - a. Use verbal communication. Say “no” in a firm tone. Communication should be assertive and respectful.
 - b. Use nonverbal communication. Make eye contact, hold your head up, stand up straight, and use a loud and clear tone of voice.
 - c. Express why you do not use vape products—for example, I care about my own health, I don’t want to disappoint my family, I value my future, etc.
 - d. Offer alternatives to prevent vaping. Blame parents or household rules, or suggest other activities such as going to the movies.
 - e. Have a plan to leave the situation if it becomes unsafe. Walk away, or call a parent or trusted adult.



4. *Step 3: Model the skill.* The teacher asks for two student volunteers to model refusal skills. The teacher provides a scenario of one student pressuring another to try vaping. The second student models assertive verbal communication and nonverbal body language, expresses why they do not want to vape, offers alternatives, and has an escape plan. Each method is modeled.

5. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* Students are divided up into groups of three to practice the five strategies. Two students will role-play, and one will observe. Roles will be rotated so each student has an opportunity to practice all refusal skills.
6. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* The teacher rotates around to each group to monitor, and together with the student observer, they provide feedback and reinforcement.
7. The students are then asked to write a reflection about how confident they are in using an effective form of interpersonal communication, including refusal skills, to help influence them to avoid using (or experimenting with) any vaping product.



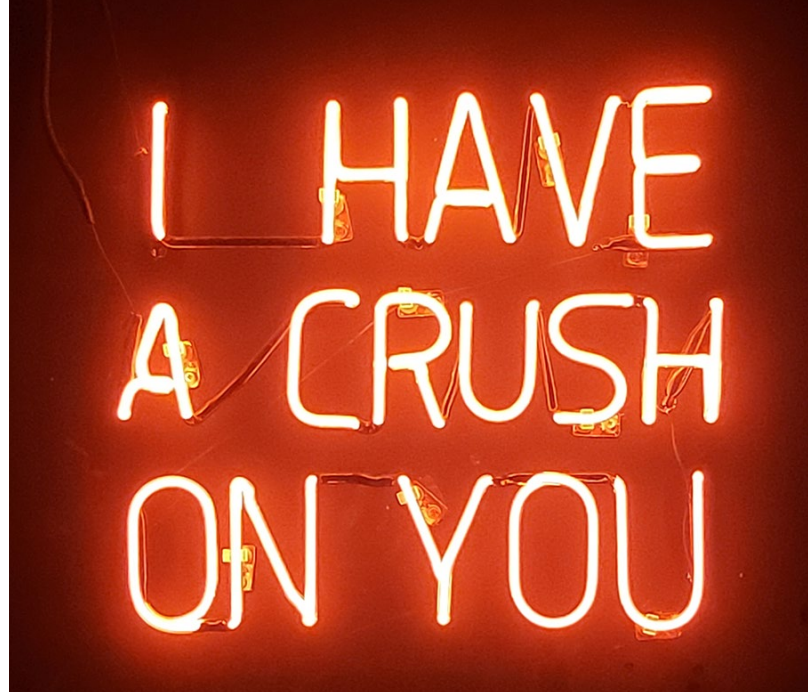
Example 2

The unit being taught is Sexual Health, and the HBOs for the lesson are *SH-5: Be sexually abstinent*, *SH-6: Engage in behaviors that prevent or reduce sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV*, and *SH-7: Engage in behaviors that prevent or reduce unintended pregnancy* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The focus for this activity is responsible decision-making. Prior to this activity, students have been taught about the importance of setting personal limits to avoid sexual risk behaviors; the benefits of being sexually abstinent; why sexual abstinence is the safest, most-effective risk-avoidance method of protection from STIs, including HIV, and unintended pregnancy; and the factors that protect against engaging in sexual risk behaviors.
2. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.* The teacher starts the activity by saying that we all make decisions every day; some are simple, and some are more detailed. All decisions have consequences. The teacher asks students to think about a decision they have made recently and calls on several students to share their examples and how they felt making different decisions. The teacher explains that they are going to learn the steps for decision-making and how they can use this skill in many aspects of their lives. The focus today is on the healthy behavior of being sexually abstinent and avoiding STIs/HIV. The teacher tells the students that they can learn how to apply decision-making steps to be sexually abstinent and avoid and reduce their risk of STIs/HIV and unintended pregnancy.



3. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill and Step 3: Model the skill.* (These steps are sometimes taught together—the teacher will explain and then model the steps of decision-making).
- The teacher reads a scenario to the students:
 - You have been having strong romantic feelings for one of your classmates, and you think they feel the same way. You have been asked to come over to their house after school to play video games, which sounds like fun; however, you know that their parents won't be home until after work. Even though you would love to go and spend more time with them, your gut tells you it may not be a good idea. What should you do?
 - The steps of responsible decision-making are then presented through the DECIDE model. Based on the complexity of the decision, you may not always need to go through each step. However, it is important to know the process when needed:
 - Define the decision that needs to be made. (Does a decision need to be made, and do I need help from a friend or trusted adult?)
 - Explore your options. (Make a list of options.)
 - Consider the consequences. (What are the positive and negative outcomes for each option?)
 - Identify your values (influence of family, culture, technology, peers, and personal beliefs).
 - Decide and act. (What is the best choice based on the information?)
 - Evaluate the results. (Are you happy with the results, and would you make the same choice again or change next time?)
4. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* After the teacher finishes modeling the steps of decision-making (Step 3), the students find a partner and identify a decision that students their age may be confronted with related to being sexually abstinent and avoiding STIs and HIV. The students will work together and complete the steps of the DECIDE model.
5. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* The students share their completed DECIDE steps with a partner and then share with the class. The teacher and others provide feedback for each scenario.
6. The students complete an exit ticket about how confident they are in using the DECIDE model to promote sexual abstinence and to protect from STIs/HIV and unintended pregnancy.



Grades 9–12 Examples

Example 1

The unit being taught is Food and Nutrition, and the HBOs for the lesson are *FN-1: Follow a healthy eating pattern that meets individual preferences and needs for growth and development*; *FN-2: Choose a variety of options within each food group*; *FN-3: Eat lots of fruits and vegetables*; *FN-4: Choose to eat whole-grain products*; *FN-5: Choose to drink or eat fat-free or low-fat dairy or fortified-dairy alternatives*; *FN-6: Drink lots of water*; *FN-7: Avoid sugary drinks*; *FN-8: Limit foods high in added sugars, saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium*; and *FN-9: Choose to eat or drink nutrient-dense foods and beverages when dining* ([HECAT Appendix 3](#)).

1. The focus for this activity is goal setting. Prior to this activity, students have already learned functional health information about healthy eating. They also completed a food diary for 2 days and determined their strengths and weaknesses related to their eating behaviors.
2. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.* The teacher starts the activity by asking students if they have ever set a goal before. The teacher then calls on several students to share their goals and asks the students to share how it felt if they reached those goals. The teacher explains that students are going to learn how to set a goal, the steps to reaching that goal, and how they can use the skill of goal setting in many aspects of their life. The teacher then tells the students they have the ability to learn how to effectively set goals to improve their nutritional habits.



3. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill and Step 3: Model the skill.* (These steps are sometimes taught together — the teacher will explain and then model the steps of goal setting).
 - a. The teacher asks students to review the results of their food diary activity and determine an area of weakness in which they would like to improve.
 - b. The steps of writing a SMART goal are then presented. The qualities of a SMART goal are as follows:
 - i. S—the goal is *specific*. (What will be accomplished?)
 - ii. M—the goal is *measurable*. (How will you know the goal was met?)
 - iii. A—the goal is *achievable*. (Is the goal doable? Do you have the resources to reach the goal?)
 - iv. R—the goal is *realistic*. (Is the goal within reach and relevant to your life?)
 - v. T—the goal is *time bound*. (What is the time frame for achieving the goal?)



(Note: It is helpful for the teacher to have several SMART goals written related to each HBO so that students can select one. If not, a lot of time can be spent on just writing a SMART goal.)

- c. The teacher shows examples of SMART goals related to healthy eating (e.g., I will eat fruit for a snack instead of junk food at least three times this week, I will order a salad instead of fries when I go to a fast-food restaurant, I will eat five servings of fruit and vegetables 5 days a week). The teacher then uses the following SMART goal for demonstration purposes: I will drink 64 ounces of water every day.

d. Next, the teacher reviews additional goal-setting steps along with examples.

- i. What are the benefits I can expect if I reach the goal? (e.g., I will have more energy and improved brain function.)
- ii. What steps do I need to take to reach my goal? (e.g., I will fill up a container with 64 ounces of water every day and drink from it throughout the day.)
- iii. What are barriers (i.e., things that will get in the way) to reaching my goal, and how can I overcome these barriers? (e.g., I might forget the container, so I will write a reminder sticky note and place it on the door I go out of in the morning.)



4. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* After reviewing the goal-setting steps and providing an example to the students, the teacher directs students to write their own SMART goals and related action steps based on one of their weaknesses from their food diaries. It is helpful if the teacher creates an activity sheet with each of the goal-setting steps on it for the students to complete.
5. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* The students should share their completed SMART goals and steps with a partner and/or the teacher for feedback. Then, the students should be assigned to track their goals for at least 3 weeks. (The teacher should provide a tracking worksheet to help students keep track of their progress.) The teacher provides opportunities for students to adjust their goals if they are too challenging or too easy. Throughout the goal-tracking process, the teacher asks students how their confidence levels are changing in setting, revising, and achieving their goals.

Example 2

The unit that is being taught is 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 focus for this activity is on accessing valid and reliable health information. Students will learn how to access information that will encourage them to get an appropriate amount of sleep and rest.
2. *Step 1: Discuss the importance of the skill, its relevance, and its relationship to other learned skills.* The teacher begins the activity by asking students where they find information when they have a question they want answered. The teacher then calls on several students and lists their answers on the board (e.g.,



Facebook, Instagram, the internet). The teacher explains that most of the sources that they listed do not contain accurate and truthful information. The teacher then explains that in today's activity, they are going to learn and become confident in locating accurate and truthful health information on the internet.

3. *Step 2: Present steps for developing the skill.* There are rules that should be followed to help determine if information on the internet is accurate and truthful. The teacher asks students to meet with a partner and brainstorm potential rules they think would be good to follow when trying to find health information that is accurate and truthful.
 - a. After several minutes, the teacher asks students to share their rules and lists their rules on the board.
 - b. The class then compares the student-generated rules with the following rules that can ensure information found on the internet is accurate and reliable:
 - i. Know who sponsors the website. If the website is sponsored by a for-profit group, it might not be accurate. (These websites usually are identified by .com.) Websites from .gov organizations are a great place to find accurate health information. Websites from .edu (identifies an educational institution) and .org (usually identifies a nonprofit organization) are also more likely to have accurate and truthful information.
 - ii. Know who wrote the information on the website. Is the person an expert in the field? Websites that contain accurate and truthful information will tell you where their health information came from and how and when it was reviewed.
 - iii. The information on the website should be current.
 - iv. Know why the website was created. Is the website trying to inform the public, or is it trying to sell a product?
 - v. Social media websites typically do not contain accurate and truthful health information.
4. *Step 3: Model the skill.* The teacher shares several online health websites and reviews the rules for each one. It would be helpful to choose a .org, .com, and .gov website to model the application of each rule.
5. *Step 4: Practice and rehearse the skill using real-life scenarios.* The teacher assigns the following questions related to getting an appropriate amount of sleep and rest for students to answer.
 - a. How much sleep should an adolescent get each night?
 - b. What are the benefits of getting an appropriate amount of sleep each night?
 - c. What are things that get in the way of adolescents getting enough sleep each night?
 - d. What are strategies adolescents can use to get enough sleep each night?



The teacher allows students to work individually or in pairs, asking students to report the answers to their questions and to include the websites where they found their information.

6. *Step 5: Provide feedback and reinforcement.* As students are reporting their findings, the teacher and students provide feedback about the website sources they used to find the answers to their questions.
7. The students are then asked to write down three things they learned today that will help them get the appropriate amount of sleep each night. The teacher asks them also to rate their confidence levels in locating accurate and truthful health information on the internet.