



Lesson Plan

Dear Abby Mentoring Activity

Grade: Middle School

Goal: Students provide helpful advice to pre-written Dear Abby letters (i.e., “my best friend has smoked marijuana several times and wants me to try it too. I don’t know what do to.”).

Time: 3 classroom periods

Learning Objectives: Students think critically about real-world problems. Students conduct relevant research, write helpful informed advice, problem-solve, and think about helping others.

Potential for Critical Assessment: Teacher may evaluate students’ participation.

Activity

Period 1: Describe for your students the problems associated with teen drinking, vaping, and drug misuse (see recommended readings for guidance). Then outline the assignment and explain that “Dear Abby” is an advice column and students will write down questions and concerns they may have about drinking, vaping, and drug misuse. Students will conduct internet research on various problems and write informed, helpful replies.

Each student will write an anonymous letter to “Dear Abby” in which they describe a drug, smoking, vaping, or alcohol-related problem they are dealing with or may be concerned about. The letters should include a question.

While students are writing, circulate through the class and check the work of each student assuring that they are writing about real, relatable problems on the subjects provided.

Collect letters at close of period.

Period 2: Pass out the questions, ensuring each student has another student’s question. Divide the class into small groups. Students will work together in their groups to research the different issues, collecting facts about the issues and



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problems, as well as reasons to not misuse the drugs or alcohol, and write informed, helpful replies to their questions.

Period 3: Students in each group take turns explaining their questions and the answers they wrote to the class. Ask students to talk about how the exercise made them feel and think and about the things they learned from the exercise.

Recommended Readings:

[Teens Ask: "Is There a Cure for Addiction?"](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

[Marijuana Withdrawal Is Real](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

[Drug Facts](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

Standards of Learning:

Common Core

Comprehension and Collaboration

6th Grade

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.B](#)

Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C](#)

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D](#)

Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas



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[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.4](#)

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

7th Grade

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1](#)

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C](#)

Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D](#)

Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

8th Grade

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1](#)

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.B](#)

Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.C](#)

Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.



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[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.D](#)

Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.