

HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS

GRADE 7

SOMEWHERE ELSE TO TURN

ALBERTA LEARNING

- PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT -

Developed by AAC... everyday assessment tools for teachers

SOMEWHERE ELSE TO TURN

OVERVIEW

In this performance assessment, students are required to reply to a letter sent by a fictional teen character. In her letter, the teenager describes a difficult personal situation. The underlying goal is for students, acting as teen advice columnists, to write a reply to the teenager, recognizing and acknowledging her situation with respect and empathy and providing healthy suggestions for dealing with the situation, as well as reasons for the suggestions offered. In order to accomplish this, students will be required to examine the issues identified in a fictional letter and apply knowledge of related health outcomes to address these issues appropriately.

RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL – 7

TIME SUGGESTED

- **Assessment Task:** One to two 45-minute periods

GENERAL OUTCOMES

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

No.	Description	No.	Description
Health and Life Skills – Grade 7			
R-7	<i>Students will develop effective interpersonal skills that demonstrate responsibility, respect and caring in order to establish and maintain healthy interactions.</i>	R-7.1	<i>Students will analyze how thinking patterns influence feelings; e.g., positive thinking, all or nothing thinking, overgeneralization, perfectionism.</i>
		R-7.2	<i>Students will analyze the need for short-term and long-term support for emotional concerns; e.g., family, friends, schools, professionals.</i>
		R-7.4	<i>Students will analyze and practise constructive feedback; e.g., giving and receiving.</i>

W-7	<i>Students will</i> make responsible and informed choices to maintain health and to promote safety for self and others.	W-7.10	<i>Students will</i> identify and examine potential sources of physical/emotional/social support.
		W-7.11	<i>Students will</i> identify characteristics of resiliency; e.g., problem-solving skills, positive self-esteem, social bonding.
English Language Arts – Grade 7			
GO 5	<i>Students will</i> listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	5.1.5	Respect Others and Strengthen Community Use language to show respect <i>Students will</i> demonstrate respect for diverse ideas, cultures and traditions portrayed in oral, print and other media texts.

CRITERIA for assessing student products/performances based on specific outcomes that will be evaluated

Each student will:

- choose language that communicates respect and empathy and acknowledges an individual’s feelings and situation
- provide informed suggestions, with examples, for dealing with the individual’s situation
- provide justifications based on healthy choices—the need for support for emotional problems, embracing characteristics of resiliency, choosing positive rather than negative thinking patterns
- write in an appropriate format for a friendly letter of advice.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- handout: *Somewhere Else to Turn*
- examples of appropriate letter format and/or teen advice columns
- examples of suitable graphic organizers for recording group discussion information (optional)

PRIOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND INSTRUCTION

Before completing this performance assessment, students should be able to:

- recognize that individuals can choose their own emotional reactions to events and thoughts (review R–6.1)
- identify thinking patterns and analyze how they can affect feelings (from R–7.1)
- recognize/analyze the need for short-term and long-term support for emotional concerns (from R–7.2)
- provide constructive feedback in a variety of situations (from R–7.4)
- identify characteristics of resiliency (from W–7.11)
- identify and examine potential (local) sources of emotional support (from W–7.10)
- collaborate with peers in a group situation, to refine and revise ideas and generate additional ideas
- organize ideas from a discussion, using a graphic organizer (such as a mind map)
- compose a friendly letter, using correct format
- choose an appropriate tone and level of language to show respect and empathy in writing (English Language Arts – Grade 7, 5.1.5)

STUDENT PRODUCTS/PERFORMANCES

A thoughtful and well-informed letter of advice.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT TASK

Title: **There is Somewhere Else to Turn!**

Purpose: To show respect and empathy for a person experiencing personal difficulties and to suggest solutions and sources of support for the situation.

Assessment Activity: Students are to write a letter of advice in response to the letter to “Sam” from “Nowhere else to turn” on the handout provided. The letter should be written in response to problems/issues identified in the letter to “Sam” and should include advice and language suitable for the situation, as though it were being written to a real person. Suggestions, alternative solutions and sources of support for the problem should be well-informed, and based on accurate information. Upon completion of the letter, students will complete a self-assessment prior to submitting the letter for assessment by the teacher.

Role and Audience: Students assume the role of “Sam,” the advice columnist for the school newspaper, to address the problems of the fictional character identified as “Nowhere else to turn.” This fictional character becomes the primary audience. Classmates act as consultants in the process of revising the suggestions being offered, providing a secondary audience for “Sam’s” work.

Teacher Note: The following steps/activities are suggested in preparation for the assessment task.

- Spend sufficient time reviewing/discussing the health outcomes identified, if they have not already been covered in sufficient detail.
- You might wish to look at good examples of advice columns to analyze the language and tone used in the replies; more time can be spent here in an integrated Language Arts and Health class.
- Discuss the objectives and assessment criteria for the letter of advice, and then assign the writing of a draft version.
- Place students in groups of 3–4.
- In the groups, have each student share his/her suggestions from the draft letter while others listen and record ideas in an appropriate graphic organizer—suggest a mind map/thought web, or provide alternative suggestions.
- Students in the group discuss and record the merits of all suggestions.
- Suggest and record possible problems or disadvantages of any of the suggestions.
- Revise suggestions to reflect discussion, or generate new/better solutions and record these.
- When all information is recorded in the graphic organizer, students return to their draft letters to complete revisions based on their group discussion.
- The revised letter becomes the performance assessment described.

Somewhere Else to Turn

You are on the staff of the school newspaper, and you've been given the job of "Sam," the teen advice columnist. Your task is to reply to letters from students who find themselves in difficult situations. One letter stands out as needing your immediate attention. In your reply to "Nowhere else to turn" you must:

- recognize and acknowledge the person's problem/situation (demonstrate respect and empathy)
- suggest three alternative strategies to help him/her address the problem (based on accurate health information and appropriate choices for personal health and emotional wellness)
- suggest sources of emotional support from local support services or agencies
- provide reasons justifying why these strategies and support services would be effective
- let the person know that there **is** somewhere else to turn.

Turn the page over for a copy of the letter to which you will reply.

Dear Sam,

I have tried to commit suicide on four different occasions but I never end up going through with it because I'm always interrupted right before that crucial moment. I just want to die. Everything in my life is going wrong. School is hard. I play full-time sports, field hockey with my school and basketball with my church. To top it all off, I dance 4 times a week after sports practice and then I go into the city to model on the days I don't dance. My parents are never home. I'm pretty ugly and what guy is going to like that! I am going to kill myself pretty soon. I mean, what other choice do I have?

Signed,

Nowhere else to turn

ASSESSMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

“Continual self-reflection throughout the performance assessment enables students to assess progress, identify areas of difficulty, define learning and reassess goals. Self-reflection is the key to continued, powerful learning.” *How to Develop and Use Performance Assessments in the Classroom*, p. 31.

Students should be invited to evaluate and support their own performance based on the criteria from the rubric provided. Sufficient time should be spent going over the criteria, or a simplified version should be created for student use. Student assessment of the letter should be done prior to teacher assessment. Both student and teacher assessments can be filed in a portfolio or student notebook.

RUBRIC: LETTER OF ADVICE

Level	The letter from Sam
4 Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paraphrases the situation as expressed accurately and effectively • identifies with the situation of the troubled individual by relating similar personal experiences • provides at least three solutions directly applicable to the individual's problem • provides solutions that are realistic and effective because they are based on accurate health information • provides informed justifications for solutions, with examples for each • is written in a nonjudgmental and empathetic tone • conforms accurately to an appropriate friendly letter format
3 Proficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paraphrases the situation as expressed • attempts to identify with the individual's situation by describing some of own personal problems experienced • provides at least three solutions that apply to the individual's problem • provides solutions that are based on accurate health information • provides justifications for solutions with some examples • is written in an accepting and understanding tone • conforms to an appropriate friendly letter format, with only minor inconsistencies
2 Adequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sometimes paraphrases the situation as expressed, yet tends to repeat word for word • makes some attempt to identify with the troubled individual • provides two solutions to the individual's problem • offers suggestions that demonstrate some consideration of health information • provides simple explanations for solutions offered • is written in a friendly tone • conforms to an appropriate friendly letter format, with some errors
1 Limited*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repeats word for word the situation as expressed • makes minimal or no attempt to identify with the situation of the troubled teen • provides unrealistic and ineffective solutions, and offers minimal or no support • solutions have no explanations, and show little evidence of considering health information • is written in a biased, judgmental or stereotyped tone • does not conform to a proper friendly letter format
Insufficient/ Blank*	No score is awarded because there is insufficient evidence of student performance based on the requirements of the assessment task.

- When work is judged as limited or insufficient, the teacher makes decisions about appropriate intervention to help the student improve.

LINK AND LEARN

Adaptations/extensions for use in other subjects or settings

- Invite a guest speaker, such as an advice columnist, therapist or counsellor, to discuss problem solving, empathy and respect.
- Identify or start a peer support group in the school.

Integrated Health and Language Arts classes:

In addition to writing letters of advice, have students create informational brochures, posters or videos related to the issues identified in the letter from the troubled teen, which include such things as various ways to approach/solve the problem and links to various organizations and literature.

Integration with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) outcomes:

Have a class or group develop and maintain a Web site (or link to the school Web site) that may provide opportunities for individuals to link to suitable health sites with information on related teen issues such as suicide or depression.

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