



## Life Lab (replaces Social Issues)

### Overview Information

Title of Course: <b>Life Lab</b>	
Course Author(s): Jessica Colvin, Yvonne Milham, Jessica Skieresz, Kathleen McCormick, Lisa Kemp	Schools where the course will be taught: <b>Archie Williams, Redwood, TAM, Tamiscal</b>
Length of Course: <b>1 semester</b>	Subject Area and Discipline: <b>Elective</b>
Grade Levels: <b>9th</b>	Is this course an integrated course? <b>No</b>
Is this course being submitted for possible UC honors designation? <b>no</b>	Are you seeking UC approval? If so, in what area <a href="#">(A-G)</a> ? <b>Yes "G"</b>
Prerequisites (required or recommended): <b>none</b>	Co-requisites (required or recommended): <b>none</b>
If there are prerequisites for the course, please include a justification as to why they are in place:	
Check all that apply: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UC A-G course-"g" elective <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graduation Requirement ( specify the requirement this course meets)	

### Introduction to the Course

#### Course Overview:

Life Lab is a foundational course that provides essential knowledge and skills to enable 9th grade students to arrive at informed and healthy decisions in a complex and diverse world. This course emphasizes the following topics: identity, community and self, teen mental health and wellness, healthy relationships, sexual health and substance use/misuse. The course addresses key outcomes related to the California State Mandated Lessons\*, integration of key CA Content Standards for Health Education, the California Healthy Youth Act (AB 329), and the Common Core College and Career ELA Anchor Standards. This course will provide our youth with research based health and wellness information that will allow them to engage in analyzing perspectives and influences, and be informed decision-makers. The Life Lab course is required for TUHSD graduation and is taken during the first semester of the 9th grade school year.

#### The Life Lab Course will:

1. Be standards-based, theory-driven, and focused on research-based approaches to instruction.
2. Be academically challenging
3. Involve substantial reading and writing and develop students' speaking and listening skills.
4. Include problem-solving and attention to analytical thinking and research skills.

5. Focus instruction on essential knowledge and skills that will foster health and wellness risk reduction among students.
6. Include support and collaboration with our Wellness Center leaders, our Peer Resource student leaders who are trained to support their peers, and Community-based organizations that promote health and wellness around core outcomes.
7. Include concepts of decision-making, empathy, digital citizenship, and the use of relevant local resources throughout the course.
8. Focus on the six aspects of our TUHSD Graduate profile, including opportunities to deepen collaborative skills, think critically, build intercultural competence, develop communication skills, deepen creative and independent learning skills, and build character.

**Essential Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will become aware of how their health and wellness decisions shape their identity and impact their future goals.
2. Students will be critical thinkers and problem solvers when confronting personal and social decision-making related to topics that impact their well-being and the well-being of their community.
3. Students will become self-directed learners who have the competence to use basic health and wellness information and services in health-enhancing ways.
4. Students will become effective communicators who organize and convey beliefs, ideas, and information about health and wellness topics to their peers and community.

**\*California State Mandated Lessons that are integrated into this course and required to be taught include:**

- California Healthy Youth Act and Comprehensive Sex Education AB 329
- Suicide Prevention AB 2246
- Substance Mis/Use EC 51260 and EC 51890
- Teen Mental Health SB 224
- Human and Sex Trafficking Prevention AB 1227
- Sexual Harassment and Consent Education SB 695
- Digital Citizenship AB 307

**Unit Title: *Unit 1 Looking Beyond the Surface: Identity, Community, and Self (3 weeks)***

**Unit Summary:**

Students will explore who they are and the factors that influence their identity such as their family history and their roots that impact the development of their identity. They will explore other factors that continue to shape and influence one's identity over time. Students will gain a strong sense of self and work to build bridges and a strong communal classroom culture that enables critical discussions to take place that push them academically. Students will understand the dynamics of how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and their community play a role in the construction of one's identity.

**Skills:**

- Practice respect for individual differences and diverse backgrounds. CA HE 9-12.7.4.M
- Promote a positive and respectful environment at school and in the community. CA HE 9-12.8.2.M
- Develop better oral and speaking skills by drawing from the concepts addressed to engage in dialogue, activities, experiences and presentations with their classmates. CCSS.ELA. CCRA.SL.1
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3

**Content:**

- Gain a strong sense of self while working to cultivate empathy for others

- Understand the dynamics of how race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality play a role in the construction of one's identity.
- Consider factors that influence identity and experiences.
- Value and seek diverse voices/perspectives when trying to understand others
- Build bridges and develop a strong communal classroom culture that enables critical discussions to take place that push them academically.

#### **Essential Questions:**

- What does my personal history and identity feel, sound, and look like?
- How can we build a strong, respectful classroom community that values and appreciates diverse identities, experiences and perspectives?
- How do our experiences impact our beliefs and perspectives?
- How can media literacy foster realistic and healthy identities?

#### **Sample Unit Assignments:**

Students will write first-person narrative essays that tell a story and should embody writing techniques that enable a reader to experience the subject-matter through the writer's strategic retelling. Examples include short vignettes – or written portraits that require students to choose words carefully to emphasize the power of descriptive detail (showing, not telling) and/or the use of figurative language (personification, simile, metaphor) to deliver a sensory experience to the reader.

#### **Sample Summative Assessment:**

Students create and share a personal time capsule that includes elements of the assignments completed throughout the unit to reflect a “snapshot” of their life in this time and place. Students will also write reflective paragraphs that address their understanding of identity, the elements that create and shape identity, including how community has helped shape identity.

### **Unit Title: *Unit 2 Teen Minds Matter: A Deep Dive into Mental Health (3 weeks)***

#### **Unit Summary:**

Students will study essential mental health-related concepts by learning about and practicing healthy behaviors, analyzing influences, practicing decision-making, setting goals, and learning how to access valid information with in the topic of mental, emotional, and social health. This unit provides information on stress, and its relationship to overall health; healthy ways to express emotions, and manage stressors. Students will learn the warning signs for suicide and identify ways to help themselves or someone who may need professional support.

#### **Skills :**

- Evaluate how preventing and managing stress and getting help for mental and social problems can help a person achieve short- and long-term goals. HE 9-12.6.1.M
- Assess personal patterns of response to stress and use of resources. HE 9-12.7.1.M
- Practice effective coping mechanisms and strategies for managing stress. HE 9-12.7.2.M
- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. CCSS.R.CCR.1
- Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources. CCSS.ELA.RH.9-10.9

#### **Content:**

- Recognize that mental health is directly connected to overall health and academic success.
- Understand that mental health is equal in importance to physical health and appreciate that seeking help is a sign of strength.
- Recognize that mental health is a spectrum and that coping strategies can support managing challenges.
- Learn about protective factors, self-care, and the resources available to support mental health.
- Understand mental health stigma, including peer-to-peer and lived experiences.

- Develop coping and self-care strategies to maintain mental health.
- Learn about suicide prevention to recognize the warning signs and know when to seek support from school-based mental health professionals and services when necessary.

#### **Essential Questions:**

- What factors shape our physical and mental health, and how do our choices impact our overall well-being?
- How can we develop and use strategies to maintain good physical and mental health in our daily lives?
- What are the signs of suicide, and when is it appropriate to seek help from a professional for oneself or peers?
- How can media literacy foster mental and social-emotional health?

#### **Sample Unit Assignment:**

Students will reflect on messages they have received about mental health. With a definition of mental health provided in class, students will evaluate their perceptions of mental health. They will further explore myths and facts to recognize and understand the impact stigma has on mental health and begin to develop the necessary skills to have accurate discussions about mental health.

#### **Sample Unit Assessment:**

Students create a mental health advocacy campaign to reduce the stigma for mental health by identifying an audience for their campaign, choosing a topic from the unit that interests them most, considering how the topic is most relevant to their chosen audience, and identifying the information they want to share and the misinformation they wish to correct. Students will then choose a product for their campaign by considering what interests them and is appropriate for their audience, gather necessary resources, and create. Students will present their final campaign and an artist's statement that includes what they created and why.

### **Unit Title: *Unit 3 Complexity of Connections: Building Healthy Relationships ( 3 weeks)***

#### **Unit Summary:**

In the unit, students will analyze the characteristics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships and how positive relationships can provide support and meet physical, mental, emotional, and social needs. Students will understand and recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse, bullying and cyberbullying. Students will learn to identify these types of situations and how to implement preventative bystander intervention strategies effectively. Additionally, students will compare and contrast passive, aggressive, and assertive communication styles to learn the components and importance of communication to effectively enhance one's overall health and well-being.

The focus on the unit will include healthy relationships: peer to peer, adult and family, boundary setting, unhealthy relationships, consent and dating relationships, violence and domestic violence (power, privilege, status). The unit will utilize resources from the Be Real. Be Ready. Curriculum, which provides a comprehensive relationship and sexuality curriculum for high school students.

#### **Skills:**

- Describe the benefits of having positive relationships with trusted adults HE 9-12.1.1.M
- Analyze the qualities of healthy peer and family relationships. HE 9-12.1.2.M
- Analyze how interpersonal communication affects relationships. HE 9-12.4.1.G
- Demonstrate effective negotiation skills for avoiding dangerous and risky situations. HE 9-12.4.1.S (Develop communication strategies and conflict resolution)
- Demonstrate effective communication skills within healthy dating relationships. HE 9-12.4.3.G
- Practice setting personal boundaries in a variety of situations. HE 9-12.7.6.M
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. CCSS.ELA.CCRA.SL.1
- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. CCSS.ELA.CCRA.SL.2
- Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in

presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.  
CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.5

**Content:**

- Learn the process of creating and nurturing a relationship with themselves as individuals before learning skills and strategies surrounding relationships with family, friends, and romantic interests.
- Evaluate and understand complexities of relationships; develop skills to effect more healthy relationships.
- Navigate friendships and group dynamics (cliques)
- Recognize and create healthy relationships
- Social media and relationships

**Essential Questions:**

- How do we sustain healthy relationships within our family, with friends and with intimate partners?
- What are some of the skills that we need to develop more healthy relationships?
- How can media literacy foster realistic and healthy relationships?

**Sample Unit Assignment:**

Students will explore the qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Each student will get a card with a relationship quality to categorize on the spectrum from healthy to unhealthy relationships. Once all cards are up, students will discuss the placement of each card together as a class to create a list together of qualities of a healthy relationship and qualities of an unhealthy relationship. Students will then reflect on the following questions independently and share in pairs: Did anything surprise you during this exercise? Would it be important to have the same beliefs as someone you were in a relationship with? How would you find out if you have similar or different ideas/beliefs? Is it important to develop your own beliefs about relationships? Why? How would you communicate with someone with different beliefs? We didn't include the gender of the partners in any of the cards. Did you assume gender when you read any of the statements? How would it have changed things if gender had been included? What did you learn about yourself in this exercise?

**Sample Assessment:**

Students will compose written responses about how to help a friend by considering the questions: How would you know if your friend is in an unhealthy relationship? What unhealthy behavior might you notice in your friend's relationship? How would it make you feel to know your friend was in an unhealthy relationship? How would you support your friend in this situation? Who would you talk to for support?

**Unit Title: *Unit 4 The Real Deal on Sexual Health (3 weeks)***

**Unit Summary:**

Students will gain the knowledge and skills to develop healthy, positive, and safe relationships and behaviors. Students will learn how to access valid information on the topic of sexual health to make informed decisions and how to protect their sexual and reproductive health from HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, and unintended pregnancy. Throughout this unit, students will consider what they want from a healthy relationship and learn how to navigate conversations about sex with intimate partners. Additionally, students will evaluate the risks of engaging in sexual relationships and evaluate effective measures of birth control, including the safety and effectiveness of FDA-approved contraceptives in preventing both STIs/HIV and pregnancy. Students will also evaluate how STIs/HIV and/or pregnancy can impact life goals. Students will identify personal actions that can protect their sexual and reproductive health both now and in the future. The unit will address the requirements outlined in the California Healthy Youth Act (AB 329) and utilize resources from the Be Real. Be Ready. Curriculum, which provides a comprehensive relationship and sexuality curriculum for high school students.

**Skills:**

- Evaluate how growth and development, relationships, and sexual behaviors are affected by internal and external influences HE 9-12.2.2.G
- Demonstrate effective communication skills within healthy dating relationships HE 9-12.4.3.G

- Analyze sources of information and services concerning safety and violence prevention. HE9-12.3.1.S
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1
- Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10

#### **Content:**

- Develop an understanding of sexuality as a normal part of human development.
- Have the knowledge and skills necessary to protect their sexual and reproductive health from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy.
- Have the knowledge and skills they need to develop healthy attitudes concerning sexual development, gender identity, sexual orientation, and safe relationships.
- Recognize different forms of sexual abuse, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and human and sex trafficking, and how to report and access support when needed.
- Learn about affirmative consent to be able to establish clear boundaries in peer relationships and dating relationships.
- Have the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions regarding their sexual safety.
- Learn about students' legal rights to access local resources for sexual and reproductive health care.

#### **Essential Questions:**

1. How can we develop positive attitudes about our bodies, identities, and relationships as we grow and change?
2. How does understanding sexuality as a normal part of growing up help us make healthy choices?
3. What information and skills do we need to make smart decisions about our sexual health now and in the future?
4. What are the most important things we need to know to protect ourselves from sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy?
5. What resources can I access to support my sexual health both on and off campus?
6. How can media literacy foster a realistic and healthy sexual identity?

#### **Sample Unit Assignments:**

Students will reflect upon the information they have received about sexuality and understand what influences their beliefs about sex and sexuality.

Through individual reflection and journaling, small group brainstorm, and whole class discussion, students will evaluate the information they have received about sex and sexuality from family, friends, school, media, TV, religion, community, or culture. With norms established about valuing differences and multiple perspectives, as well as establishing there are not any "right" or "wrong" answers, students compile the information they have received from the world around them on topics related to human sexuality and the following topics:

- Values, Beliefs, and Norms: What did your parent(s)/caregiver(s) teach you about sex? What did they not teach you about sex? What beliefs about sex, dating, and relationships does your family have? What have you learned from the media about sex?
- Sexual Orientation: What sexual orientations have you heard of? What have you heard about these? How are people of different orientations portrayed in media (music, movies, TV)? Are there different rules or laws for people depending on their sexual orientation? What are those rules/laws? Why do you think these exist?
- Gender Roles: What do we learn about gender? How do we learn about gender? Are there different roles for men and women? What are they? What do you think about them?
- Communication & Relationships: What types of relationships are healthy? What type of communication does a person need to be in a healthy relationship? How do people start relationships? How do people end relationships? Are these healthy or unhealthy ways of starting/ending relationships? What kind of qualities make a "good" partner?
- Body Image and Body Parts: What different ideas do we have about body parts? How do we feel about our bodies? How does the image of our bodies affect us? According to TV, movies, and music, what types of bodies or body parts are valued or considered beautiful/desirable?

**Sample Summative Assessment:**

Students will use a form of written or visual media to create a public service announcement that reflects what they learned about the importance of valuing multiple perspectives while developing and maintaining a healthy sexual identity.

**Unit Title: *Unit 5 Your Future, Your Choices: Let's Talk about Substances* 3 weeks****Unit Summary:**

Students will analyze the impact of personal choices on their own health and the health of others and identify the social and legal implications of substance misuse and use. Students will be able to describe the health benefits of abstaining from using the various substances studied and identify healthy alternatives to substance use. Students will use interpersonal communication skills to demonstrate their ability to refuse these substances in order to enhance their health and reduce health risks. The goal of this unit is to normalize seeking out information and discussing the effects of substances on the body and brain alongside the risks to contrast the messaging that students may receive from media & peers that substance use is purely fun and normal for teenagers. The unit will include self-reflection on how their perceptions about various substances have changed throughout and which tactics will help them as individuals make healthier decisions around substance use when the opportunity presents itself.

**Skills:**

- Explain how decisions regarding health behaviors have consequences for oneself and others. HE 9-12.5.2.P
- Explain the impact of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use on brain chemistry, brain function, and behavior. HE 9-12.1.2.A
- Evaluate strategies for managing the impact of internal and external influences on alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. HE 9-12.2.1.A
- Demonstrate assertive communication skills to resist pressure to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. HE 9-12.4.1.A
- Explain healthy alternatives to alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use HE9-12.5.2.A
- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning. CCSS.ELA.RI.9-10.8
- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. CCSS.ELA.W.9-10.1
- Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10

**Content:**

- Understand the connections between mental health, stress, and substance use, and identify what works for them to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Learn about teen brain development, and explain why substance use is especially risky during the teen years.
- Explore factual information about drug use, including opioids, nicotine, tobacco, cannabis, alcohol, and other substances such as stimulants and psychedelics. Evaluate the information, ask questions, and learn where to get help if necessary.
- Explore harm reduction strategies while understanding that the safest choice for teens is not to use substances at all.
- Explore the ways in which the media and societal messaging influence teens.
- Identify healthy alternatives to substance use, treatment options, and school and community resources.
- Understand the connections between mental health, stress, and substance use and alternates to stress and anxiety reduction.

**Essential Questions:**

1. Why is substance use especially risky during the teen years?
2. What are the connections between mental health, stress, and substance use?
3. What are other ways teens can cope with stress and anxiety?
4. How do society and the media impact the use of substances?
5. What is the safest way to navigate substances as a teen?
6. How can media literacy foster a realistic and healthy view of substance use/ misuse?

### **Sample Unit Assignment:**

Students will develop media literacy skills to be able to determine what is reliable vs unreliable information about substances with the goal of being able to reduce harm when considering engaging in potentially risky behavior.

Students will discuss the potential benefits and risks of social media and learn about a way to evaluate the information they come across using the CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose) rubric. Many people use the CRAAP Test to evaluate their sources. Now, let's break down the acronym.

- **Currency:** Is it the most recent information available on the topic? How current or up-to-date is this information?
- **Relevance:** Is this the information you need to complete your assignment?
- **Authority:** Who is the author? What are their credentials? Why should you listen to them about this subject?
- **Accuracy:** Is the information supported by evidence? Is it biased? Can you verify it in another source? Is it error-free?
- **Purpose:** Does the author/website have a goal or agenda? Is the information fact (rests on evidence) or opinion (rests on personal belief)

### **Sample Summative Assessment**

Students will evaluate a scenario and outline harm reduction strategies appropriate to the circumstances. Sample scenario: Morgan is a 17-year-old 11th-grade high school student. Morgan is an insightful, verbal, and personable student-athlete and musician who does well in school. Morgan aspires to attend a four-year college and dreams of becoming a successful financial manager. Morgan admits to using alcohol, marijuana, and occasionally cocaine when at parties with peers on the weekends. Morgan explains the choice to use substances comes from working hard in school and extracurriculars. Morgan also describes observing parents' social gatherings that include substances. "Work hard, play hard" is a common phrase heard from peers and adults within Morgan's social circles.

### **Recommended Texts and Resources:**

[California Healthy Youth Act](#)  
[California Health Education Framework](#)  
[California Health Education Standards](#)  
[Foundations of Mental Health Curriculum](#)

PsychHub Videos:

- [Anxiety](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [Supporting Teen Mental Health](#)
- [Teen Mental Health: Diverse Communities](#)

Stanford's [Reach Lab](#)

[Safety First: A Comprehensive, Harm-Reduction-Based, Drug Intervention Curriculum](#)  
[Let's Talk about Substance Use/Misuse Lessons](#)

**Board Approval Date: 1/14/2025**

**UC "G" elective Approval Date: 2/25/2025**

**Revised:**