

the.Medic

Prescription Drug Abuse Series
“Myth Busting” Script and Curriculum
Segment 1

the.Medic
is a feature of

the.News

**A daily news broadcast for High School and Middle School students
now under development by MacNeil/Lehrer Productions**

**This series has been prepared in collaboration with
the National Association of School Nurses**

**Prescription Drug Abuse Series
“Myth Busting” Script and Curriculum
Segment 1**

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Spring, 2008

Dear Educator,

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy reported this past January that more teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug other than marijuana. According to the report, more than 2.1 million teenagers abused prescription drugs in 2006.

MacNeil/Lehrer Productions is developing *the.News*, an in-school news broadcast for high school and middle school students and teachers that will emphasize 21st Century learning objectives. *the.News* will include a regular health awareness feature called *the.Medic*.

As part of our development process we have created a prototype *the.Medic* series that focuses on teenage prescription drug abuse. The series includes five videos, each roughly four minutes long. Four reports are for students, the fifth for parents. The videos are accompanied by lesson plans with curriculum appropriate for middle and high school students in the subject areas of science and language arts. The segments are:

- Segment 1 “Myth Busting”
- Segment 2 “Science of Addiction”
- Segment 3 “Changes for Life”
- Segment 4 “Media Literacy”
- Segment 5 “What Parents Should Know”

The curriculum and video features have been informed by *the.News* instructional design that can be found on the website www.macneil-lehrer.com/thenews. The curriculum includes content-based standards, discussion questions, student activities, vocabulary and primary reference sources. This material is presented as options to fit teachers’ instructional needs.

This series was produced in collaboration with the National Association of School Nurses (www.nasn.org), which is also developing prototype school assemblies on teenage drug abuse. Funding was provided by PriCara™, Division of Ortho-McNeil-Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

For further information and questions about this material contact Lisa Denny at ldenny@newshour.org.

Sincerely,


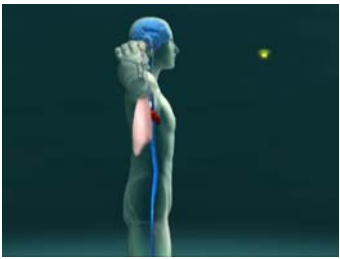
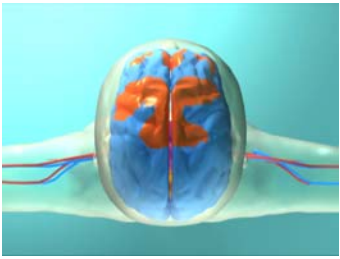



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“Myth Busting” Script
Segment One

	TIME	SHOT / TITLE	DESCRIPTION
1.	00:00		ANIMATED OPEN
2.	00:12	On camera	<p>NEVES ON CAMERA:</p> <p>HEY, I'M ANTONIO NEVES FROM THE.NEWS</p> <p>DO YOU THINK IT'S OK TO TAKE A PILL THAT A DOCTOR HAS PRESCRIBED FOR SOMEONE ELSE? ACCORDING TO A 2008 GOVERNMENT REPORT ABOUT ONE THIRD OF TEENS DO.</p> <p>NOW FOR THE RECORD THE ANSWER IS NO. DOCTORS TELL US THAT IT CAN BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO TAKE A PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE WITHOUT A DOCTOR'S ORDERS.</p> <p>IT'S ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS THAT SO MANY PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED THAT TEENS LEARN TO SEPARATE THE FACTS ABOUT PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICINES FROM THE MYTHS.</p>
3.	00:37	On camera	<p>Gabriella:</p> <p>I felt really bad, like I felt mad at myself for letting this happen, letting myself get addicted to drugs</p>
4.	00:45	On camera	<p>Kyle:</p> <p>I had this mentality that the rules didn't apply to me, that I was different.</p>
5.	00:51	On camera	<p>Hayley:</p> <p>I'm still paying the price for that.</p>
6.	00:53	On camera	<p>Tim:</p> <p>All the trouble I've been through, It's not... it's just not worth it, you know.</p>

7.	00:58	Gabriella, Kyle, Tim, and Hayley	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>GABRIELLA, KYLE, HAYLEY AND TIM ALL BECAME ADDICTED TO PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICINES WHILE IN HIGH SCHOOL. THEY MISUNDERSTOOD THE RISKS OF ABUSING PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES.</p>
8.	01:07	Hospital pharmacy	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>AT THIS HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS PREPARE PRESCRIPTIONS....THE MEDICINES DOCTORS SPECIFICALLY ORDER FOR THEIR PATIENTS. PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ARE POWERFUL...AND DANGEROUS IF USED IMPROPERLY.</p>
9.	01:19	On camera	<p>ON CAMERA: MAHRO ERSHADI, PHARMACIST</p> <p>So physicians need to be overseeing the medication that the patient is taking.</p>
10.	01:24	Hospital pharmacy with Mahro Ershadi	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>MAHRO ERSHADI SUPERVISES THE PHARMACY AT A MAJOR HOSPITAL IN A WASHINGTON D.C. SUBURB. SHE SAYS THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DRUGS THAT REQUIRE A PRESCRIPTION AND MEDICINES ANYBODY CAN BUY WITHOUT A DOCTOR'S APPROVAL.</p>
11.	01:36	On camera	<p>ON CAMERA: MAHRO ERSHADI</p> <p>Over the counter medications really are not as strong as prescription drugs.</p>

12.	01:39 01:56	 <p>Volkow walking down hall</p>	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>WHEN ORDERING MEDICINES DOCTORS MAKE SURE EACH PRESCRIPTION HAS THE CORRECT DOSAGE... OR RIGHT AMOUNT... TO MEET A PATIENT’S SPECIFIC NEEDS AND PHYSICAL CONDITION...</p> <p>DOCTORS DETERMINE HOW LONG A PATIENT SHOULD TAKE A DRUG AND ALSO CONSIDER OTHER FACTORS LIKE A PATIENT’S AGE, WEIGHT AND GENDER.</p> <p>TAKING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION IS NOT ONLY ILLEGAL.....NORA VOLKOW, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE, SAYS IT’S VERY RISKY.</p>
13.	02:03 02:23	On camera	<p>ON CAMERA: NORA VOLKOW, NIDA:</p> <p>So when one gets the same medications without a physician overseeing them and without really having an idea how to take them that can become problematic. Doctors prescribe them under very specific conditions whereas when people start to abuse them they use it very, very differently.</p>
14.	02:25		<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>SOME OF THE MOST DANGEROUS PRESCRIPTIONS ARE FOR PAIN - THEY’RE CALLED OPIOIDS. THAT’S BECAUSE THEY TARGET OPIATE RECEPTORS IN THE BRAIN.</p>
15.	02:32		<p>Nora Volkow:</p> <p>And the opiate receptors normally are in our brain to actually regulate pain. And this is exactly why these drugs, when improperly used, can lead to drug addiction.</p>

16.	02:42		<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>THE BRAIN ALSO CONTROLS BREATHING... AND THE DRUGS CAN INTERFERE WITH THE RESPIRATORY CENTER IN THE BRAINSTEM...SHUTTING DOWN BREATHING...AND LEADING TO SUDDEN DEATH.</p>
17.	02:51	Hayley and Antonio	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>HAYLEY NORWOOD IS A RECOVERING ADDICT. SHE DIDN'T THINK PAIN MEDICINES WERE DANGEROUS BECAUSE SHE FOUND THEM IN FAMILY AND FRIENDS' MEDICINE CABINETS AND BECAUSE THEY WERE PRESCRIBED FOR OTHERS BY A DOCTOR.</p>
18.	03:02	On camera	<p>Hayley:</p> <p>I knew what was... what it was supposed to do whereas something like ecstasy I would have no idea.</p>
19.	03:10	Susan Foster	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>SUSAN FOSTER OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY WARNS THAT IS SIMPLY A MYTH.</p>
20.	03:17	On camera	<p>Susan Foster, CASA:</p> <p>So they might say these are safe... you know, what's your problem... my mother takes these or my father takes them. The real fact is that those drugs may be safe when prescribed for a particular condition for a particular person, they are not safe if they are taken when you don't have a prescription yourself</p>
21.	03:35	<p>Pictures of prescription pain pills</p> <p>Pictures of adolescents at school</p>	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>MYTHS ABOUT PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICINES MAKE IT HARD FOR MANY PEOPLE...INCLUDING MANY TEENAGERS...TO UNDERSTAND THE DAMAGE THESE DRUGS CAN CAUSE. HERE ARE SOME FACTS:</p>

22.	03:44		<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>DOCTORS AND SCIENTISTS AGREE THAT ABUSING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IS AS DANGEROUS AS OTHER ILLEGAL DRUGS.</p> <p>THEY CAN LEAD TO ADDICTION ...A VERY HARD TO CURE DISEASE OF THE BRAIN WHERE YOUR BODY CRAVES MORE AND MORE OF THE DRUG.</p> <p>EVEN ONE USE CAN BE DANGEROUS.</p>
23.	04:01	Close up of pills with pan	<p>VOICE OVER:</p> <p>GOVERNMENT STUDIES SAY ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF TEENAGERS ABUSE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.</p>
24.	04:04 04:11	Hayley at home Hayley on camera	<p>Hayley</p> <p>I was actually really surprised to find out that not everybody was and I really kind of liked those kids. Kids that were involved in something... that weren't... and they had their group of friends, and they were... happy and they didn't use. And they were like "cool, no thanks."</p>
25.	04:22	On camera	<p>NEVES ON CAMERA:</p> <p>HALEY HAS BEEN OFF OF DRUGS FOR TWO YEARS NOW. BUT SHE SAYS SHE IS STILL A RECOVERING ADDICT...AND ALWAYS WILL BE.</p> <p>FOR THE DOT NEWS I'M ANTONIO NEVES.</p>

If you wish to stop the video at any time, refer to the running time listed on the printed script. Each segment begins at 00:00 and the time is displayed in the lower corner of your video player.

“Myth Busting” Science Curriculum Segment One

This lesson has been designed to support *the.News* video “Myth Busting.” The video can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/themedic/story.php?id=3057&package_id=636.

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Content Areas: Science/Media Literacy

Vocabulary:

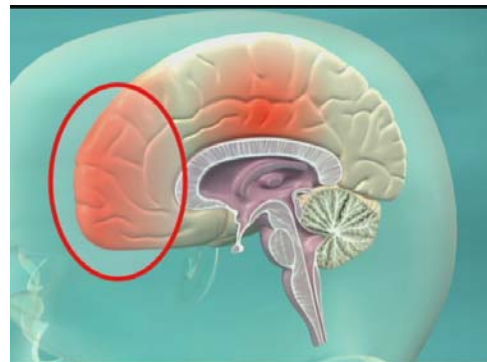
Addiction: A chronic, relapsing brain disease characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences, and by neuro-chemical and molecular changes in the brain.

Cerebellum: The cerebellum is involved in the coordination of voluntary motor movement, balance and equilibrium, and muscle tone.

Corpus Callosum: A broad, thick band (largest connective pathway) in a human brain consisting of more than 200 million nerve fibers that connect the left and right sides (hemispheres) of the brain. Each hemisphere of the brain has dominant functions: the left hemisphere functions in language, mathematics and logic; the right hemisphere functions in special abilities, face recognition, visual imagery and music.

Endorphins: Small, protein molecules produced by cells in the nervous system and other parts of the body. Their important role is to work with sedative receptors in the brain, spinal cord, and other nerve endings that are known to relieve common pain.

Frontal Lobe: Part of the human brain (can be seen in adjacent graphic) associated with reasoning, planning, parts of speech, movement, emotions, problem solving and decision making; controls emotional response, expressive language, and memory for habits and motor activities.



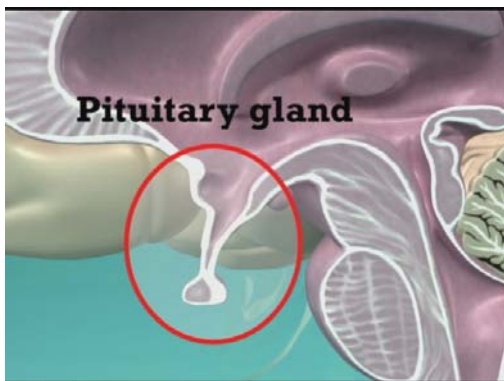
Occipital Lobe: Part of the human brain associated with many aspects of vision perception and processing.

Opiate Receptors: Within the limbic system, brainstem and spinal cord, there are places on certain nerve cells that recognize opioids. When stimulated by opioids, these sites -- called opiate receptors -- trigger responses in the brain and body.

Opiate Receptor System: (Also known as a brain reward system) A brain circuit that, when activated, reinforces behaviors. The circuit includes dopamine-containing neurons. The activation of this circuit causes feelings of pleasure.

Opioids: Commonly prescribed medications used to treat moderate to severe pain. Opioids attach to opioid receptors, where they can change the way a person experiences pain.

Parietal Lobe: Part of the human brain associated with perception of stimuli related to touch, pressure, temperature, and pain; functions in integration of different senses that allows for understanding a single concept.



Pituitary Gland: A small, pea-sized gland (can be seen in adjacent graphic) located at the base of the brain that functions as "The Master Gland." It sends signals to the thyroid gland, adrenal glands, ovaries and testes, directing them to produce many hormones that have dramatic effects on metabolism, blood pressure, sexuality, reproduction, and other vital body functions.

Prefrontal Cortex: Part of the Frontal Lobe associated with problem solving, emotion and complex thought. This is the last part of the brain to develop (does not finish developing until mid 20s).

Prescription Drug Misuse (Abuse): Taking a medication in a manner other than that prescribed or for a different condition than that for which the medication is prescribed.

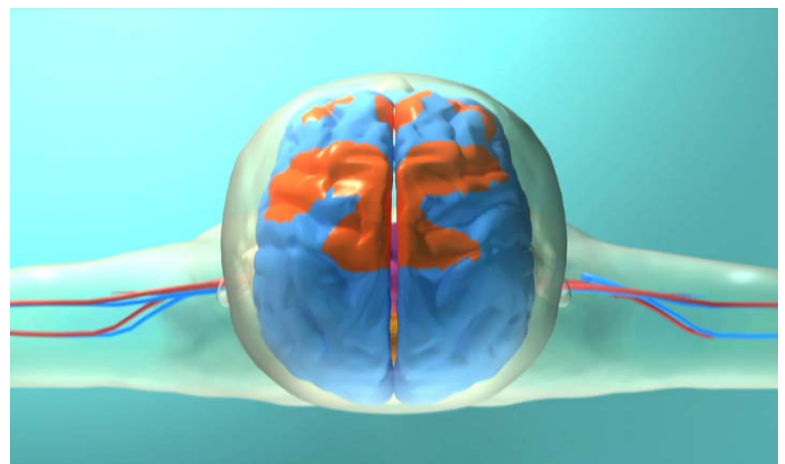
Respiratory Breathing Centers in the Brain: A group of nerve cells in the brain that control the rhythm of breathing in response to changes in levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood and cerebrospinal fluid. Barbiturates, anesthetics, tranquilizing agents and morphine are central nervous system depressants that can depress the respiratory center, causing breathing to slow or stop.

Temporal Lobe: Part of the human brain associated with perception and recognition of auditory stimuli, memory and speech.

* Definitions obtained from various sources; see resources starred (*) at the end of this curriculum.

Materials:

- *the.Medic* segment on Myth Busting
- Internet access to reputable Web



sites, such as National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) – www.drugabuse.gov and NIDA for Teens: The Science Behind Drug Abuse – www.teens.drugabuse.gov

- Graphic organizers (pg. 15-16)
- Poster board (1 poster per group)
- Black and colored markers
- Other drawing tools, as needed.

Background: “The study of science-related personal and societal challenges is an important endeavor for science education at the middle level” (National Research Council, 1996, page 167). During the adolescent years, students develop a greater awareness and knowledge of products in their society and begin to realize that some of these products can involve risks to personal health. Helping students develop an understanding of risks and benefits to personal health is an important goal for science and health teachers and professionals.

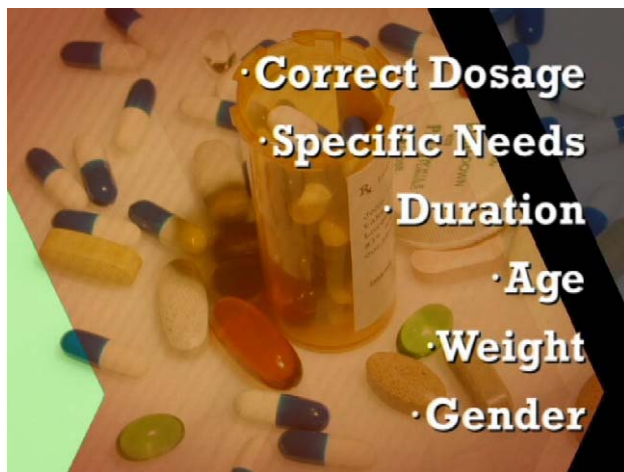
The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported an increase in the non-medical use (abuse) of prescription drugs among people ages 12 and older in the United States. The abuse of certain prescription drugs, such as opioids, central nervous system depressants, and stimulants, can alter the brain’s activity and lead to addiction. (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2005 and 2007)

Addiction alters areas of the brain that are critical to decision-making, learning and memory, and control of behavior. It is similar to other

diseases in that it disrupts normal functioning of organs or systems, has harmful consequences, is preventable and treatable, and if left untreated, can last throughout a lifetime.

National Science Education Standards
Science in Personal and Social Perspectives (5-8)

- Personal Health
 - Safe living involves the development and use of safety precautions and the recognition of risk in personal decisions
 - Alcohol and other drugs are often abused substances. Such drugs change how the body functions and can lead to addiction
- Risks and Benefits
 - Risks are associated with personal hazards such as smoking, dieting and drinking
 - Important personal and social decisions are made based on perceptions of benefits and risks



Often teenagers are offered inaccurate information by uninformed peers or faulty points of view in media messages about the use/abuse of prescription drugs which lead to the development of misconceptions that influence their decisions and behaviors. Misconceptions about prescription drug use/abuse are addressed in the video segment of *the.Medic* on “Myth Busting.” Three of these misconceptions are:

- **Myth #1:** Prescription medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are much safer than illegal drugs
- **Myth #2:** Prescription pain relievers are not addictive
- **Myth #3:** Using medicines without a prescription, only once in a while, is okay

Through interviews and reports, the segment offers important facts and information including:

- Prescription drugs are powerful and can be dangerous if used improperly
- Prescription drug doses are determined by a patient's specific condition and take into consideration age, weight and gender.
- Buying and selling prescription drugs for other than their prescribed purpose is illegal.
- Opiates are especially dangerous because they travel through the body and target receptors in the brain which can lead to drug addiction.
- Because the brain controls breathing, drugs can interfere with the respiratory center in the brainstem and lead to death.
- Drug addiction is a disease where the body craves more and more of a drug.
- Use of all drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, is unhealthy behavior.
- People with drug dependency started out thinking they had it 'under control.'
- Misusing prescription drugs without a prescription can have dangerous consequences.

Objectives

Following the viewing of "Myth Busting" and their involvement in the instructional activities that follow, students will:

Scientific Literacy

- Describe how misconceptions about the use/abuse of prescription drugs can influence their personal and social decisions
- Describe ways that prescription drugs are used and abused
- Describe four misconceptions about prescription drug use
- Demonstrate a way to provide accurate information to others about prescription drug use

Communication Technology Literacy

- Access and use information from a variety of resources
- Evaluate and analyze information
- Understand, manage, and create effective communication
- Demonstrate sound reasoning
- Develop, implement, and communicate ideas to others
- Demonstrate teamwork and work productively with others

Overview: Often teens are given inaccurate information about the use of

National Science Education Standards

➤ Personal and Community Health (9-12)

- An individual's mood and behavior may be modified by substances. The modification may be beneficial or detrimental depending on the motives, type of substance, duration of use, pattern of use, level of influence, and short- and long-term effects.
- Students should understand that drugs can result in physical dependence and can increase the risk of injury, accidents and death.

prescription drugs for purposes other than they were intended. In this activity, students will design ways to offer accurate information related to some of the myths surrounding the use/abuse of prescription drugs and share the accurate information with students in their class and their school.

Students will analyze the information about the use/abuse of prescription drugs and the misconceptions often held by teenagers offered in the video segment: “Myth Busting” (Script on p.2). They will access and use information from this and other reputable sources to create a graphic that ‘debunks’ one of the misconceptions highlighted in the video. They will share the graphic with other members of the class and display them for all students in the school to view.

Activity: Myth Busters

Engagement: Have students view the video segment “Myth Busting.” They should use the graphic organizer #1 “Information about Prescription Drug Use/Abuse” (p.15) to compile information from the video segment, “Myth Busting.” They should access information from the video and record it on the chart. Have students share information through discussion. Replay the video segment or provide a text version of the segment, if necessary for students to complete the graphic.

Exploration: Identify the three misconceptions that are highlighted in the video segment.

- **Myth #1:** Prescription medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are much safer than illegal drugs.
- **Myth #2:** Using medicines without a prescription, only once in a while, is okay.
- **Myth #3:** Prescription pain relievers are not addictive.

Learning Skills linked to Information and Communication Technology Literacy K-12
(Literacy for the 21st Century
www.21stcenturyskills.org)

1. Assign groups of 3-4 students to one of the three misconceptions. There may be more than one group of students working with each misconception.
2. Tell students they will be compiling accurate information to “debunk” their misconception then designing a poster-type visual to display accurate information using words and pictures or diagrams. Students should analyze the misconception, access accurate information and record their information on the data page “Information about our Misconception” (p.16).

Students may need to access information about their misconception by interviewing a pharmacist, nurse, or doctor, or by researching reputable sources of information on the Internet, from library materials or other available resources.

Students should make a draft of their visual, share and discuss their ideas with the teacher and then create their poster to convey their messages.

- Following the design and development of posters, groups that worked on the same misconception should get together to collaborate on a creative presentation of their misconception to the other members of the class.

Encourage students to include ways to prevent the spread of misconceptions about prescription drug use/abuse among teenagers. Ask them to think about and identify one or more actions that can be taken to deal with the problem.

They may choose to role play, use puppets or other props, simulate interviews or news broadcasts or simply tell about and show their work.

Explanation: Students should demonstrate their understanding of the misconception and the information related to the misconception they are presenting. Students should describe one or more ways to deal with the problem and eliminate misconceptions about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs.

Learning Skills linked to ICT Literacy for Science

- Access and manage information using a variety of resources
- Evaluate and analyze information
- Understand, manage, and create effective communication: orally, written, and using multimedia
- Exercise sound reasoning
- Frame, analyze, and solve problems
- Develop, implement, and communicate ideas to others
- Demonstrate teamwork and work productively with others
- Locate resources

Assessment: Through their presentations and posters, students will describe and demonstrate ways that the three misconceptions about the use/abuse of prescription drugs can lead to poor decisions, health risks and addiction.

They will describe and demonstrate ways to provide accurate information about prescription drug use.

Students will demonstrate that they have done the following:

- Access and use information from a variety of resources
- Analyze and evaluate information
- Manage data and information and create effective communication
- Demonstrate sound reasoning
- Develop, implement and communicate ideas to others
- Demonstrate teamwork and work productively with others



Extensions: Students should display their posters in a common area – library, entryway, hallway, cafeteria or other area where all students in the school can view them.

Students may wish to research new questions that arose during the discussion or questions they still have about drug use/misuse and/or addiction.

Extensions for High School: Students can address a fourth misconception about the use/abuse of prescription drugs that “everybody is doing it” by conducting informal interviews of peers asking their perceptions of the extent of prescription drug use/abuse by classmates. They should compare interview results with data on youth use of substances to discover that “everyone” is not abusing prescription drugs.

Assign group research projects on the type and extent of harm done due to the abuse of prescription drugs among youth. Have students collect data, make graphs and develop statistics related to their findings.

Resources:

- Campbell, N.A. Biology. Redwood City, CA: The Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Co, Inc., 1990. *
- Center for Neuro Skills (Largely a site dedicated to brain injuries but with some useful information on the parts/functions of the brain), www.neuroskills.com/brain.shtml. *
- Jensen, Eric. Brain-based learning. San Diego, CA: The Brain Store, 2000. *
- Literacy for the 21st Century, Information and Communication Technology Literacy K-12. Tucson, AZ: Partnership for 21st Century Skills, www.21stcenturyskills.org. *
- Lopez, Dr. Ralph I. The Teen Health Book: A Parents’ Guide to Adolescent Health and Well-Being, New York: WW Norton, 2002.
- Medline Plus, <http://medlineplus.gov/> (health information from the world's largest medical library, the National Library of Medicine).*
- National Cancer Institute. US National Institutes of Health, www.cancer.gov. *
- National Institute on Drug Abuse. Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction, NIDA Pub. No.07-5605. April, 2007, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/scienceofaddiction/>. *
- National Institute on Drug Abuse. NIDA for Teens: The Science Behind Drug Abuse, www.teens.drugabuse.gov. *
- National Institute on Drug Abuse. Prescription Drug Abuse, Topics in Brief. March, 2008, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/pdf/tib/prescription.pdf>. *

- National Institute on Drug Abuse. Prescription Drugs: Abuse and Addiction. NIDA Pub. No. 05-4881, Revised August, 2005, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/RRPrescription.pdf>. *
- National Research Council. National Science Education Standards, Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1996. *
- Neuroscience for Kids, <http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/split.html>. *

Activity Designer:

Elizabeth Hammerman, Ed. D.

Curriculum Consultant and Author, Workshop Presenter for Phi Delta Kappa, Intl., member of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Graphic Organizer #1: Information about Prescription Drug Use/Abuse

Individuals or Questions	Main Ideas or Summaries of Information
Pharmacist	
What factors are considered when Doctors prescribe medicines	
Why is unprescribed pain medication especially dangerous? Dr. Nora Volkow, NIDA	
What are three myths about prescription drugs?	
Gabiella's, Hayley's, Kyle's, or Tim's Message about addiction	
Summary: Dr. Nora Volkow, NIDA	

Data Page: Information about our Misconception

Misconception: _____

Team Members: _____

Summary of Information:

Draft of Visual:

“Myth Busting” Language Arts Curriculum Segment One

This lesson has been designed to support *the.News* video “Myth Busting.” The video can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/thenews/themedic/story.php?id=3057&package_id=636.

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Content Areas: Language Arts/Media Literacy

Key Concept: Exposing the truth behind the myths through storytelling techniques.

Key Vocabulary:

Duration: The length of time something continues or exists

Problematic: Posing a problem; difficult to solve

Myth: An unproved or false collective belief that is used to justify a social institution

Misconception: A mistaken thought, idea or notion; a misunderstanding

Over-the-counter: Sold legally without a doctor's prescription

*Definitions from www.dictionary.com

Background: In recent years, there has been an increase in prescription drug abuse among teens. Many contributing factors have led to this trend including Internet availability, but many teens are obtaining these drugs in their own parents’ and friends’ medicine cabinets and other easy-to-access places. Because of a lack of awareness and education, many myths have arisen surrounding prescription painkillers and other medications and their health effects and dangers.

The first video segment of *the.Medic* series seeks to present some of these myths and debunk them in order to keep teens better informed and better prepared to make the right choices when it comes to prescription drugs (Complete script of the video is included in this curriculum on p.2).

This language arts lesson plan draws upon students’ experiences with myths and storytelling techniques in order to educate them on these topics, as well as to inspire them to think critically about the role the media plays in creating and dispelling myths about teen drug abuse. It also encourages students to communicate their ideas effectively in various forms as a way of spreading awareness on these topics.

Materials:

- Computers with internet access

- Assessment (p.25)
- Handout #1 (Myth vs. Truth Chart - p.26)
- Handout #2 (Skit/Story Brainstorming Sheet - pg. 27-28)
- Handout #3 (Cover Letter Brainstorming Sheet - pg. 29-30)
- Handout #4 (Editorial Organizer - p.31)
- “Myths and Misconceptions” and “Facts not Myths” Handouts (pg. 32-33)
- DVD player and DVDs (optional—see #2)

Procedure:

(time frame: 3-5 class periods, depending on how much is done for homework)

1. Begin with a discussion of myths, using the following questions as a guide:
 - What are the various definitions of the word “myth”? Guide students toward the definition of myth as *“an unfounded or false notion”* (Merriam-Webster) or *“an unproved or false collective belief”* (Dictionary.com)
 - What kinds of myths do you encounter in your life, culture, society, etc? (ex: stereotypes)
What kinds of myths are perpetuated by the media? (ex: body image)
 - What is the effect of these myths?
What purpose do these false beliefs serve and what kinds of misunderstandings and conflicts do they create?
2. (Pre-viewing) Some of the most destructive myths in teen culture center around drug use and abuse and, just like other myths, can be perpetuated by the media. Before having students watch *the.Medic* segment on prescription drug abuse, complete the following activities:

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 10 - Understands the characteristics and components of the media

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Knows characteristics of a large range of media
- Understands influences on the construction of media messages and images

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Understands that media messages have economic, political, social and aesthetic purposes
- Understands how different media are structured to present a particular subject or point of view
- Understands aspects of the construction of media messages and products

Middle School:

- Make a chart on a piece of paper with two columns. Reflect for a moment on what you have seen/heard about drugs in the media. This could include in movies and TV shows, on the news, in commercials, etc. Describe this in the left side of your chart. On the right side, describe what you think you know about the reality of drugs (*In order to encourage honesty, you may want to tell students that they will not be required to share this information*).
- What similarities and differences do you see between the left side and the right side of your chart?

- In what ways can media be a positive influence on teens when it comes to their choices about drugs and specifically prescription drugs? In what ways can it be a negative influence?
- Also focus students specifically on the kinds of *images* that would be included in the items on their charts. For example, what images do various media use to portray drug abuse and what images come to mind when they think of their own observations of drug abuse? In what ways are these similar and different? Why?

High School:

- Students are aware of how much the media influences them and affects the way society views them. As a class, brainstorm movies and television shows that portray teen drug use. What myths or misconceptions can these media sources lead to when it comes to drug use among teens? How does this apply to prescription drugs? How do these myths and misconceptions affect behavior? Why are they detrimental?
 - Focus students specifically on the kinds of *images* that would be included in the items on their charts. For example, what images do various media use to portray drug abuse and what images come to mind when they think of their own observations of drug abuse? In what ways are these similar and different? Why? (You may refer students to the script on p.2)
3. Myths run rampant about prescription drug abuse because it is only now being recognized as a common problem among teens. Introduce *the.Medic* segment on prescription drug abuse and have students watch the segment (www.macneil-lehrer.com/thenews/themedic).

As students watch the video segment, they should take notes on the various myths that are presented and the ways in which those myths are proven wrong. They can fill in the “myth” and the “truth” of the situation, as communicated in the video, in the first two columns of the “Myth vs. Truth” chart (HANDOUT #1 - p.26).

4. After they watch the video, students should read back over their notes and consider this question: Why do teenagers buy into these myths? What common beliefs, misconceptions, behaviors, habits, etc. contribute to the existence of these myths in teen

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 8 - Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Plays a variety of roles in group discussions
- Listens in order to understand topic, purpose, and perspective in spoken texts
- Makes oral presentations to the class

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Asks questions as a way to broaden and enrich classroom discussions
- Uses a variety of strategies to enhance listening comprehension
- Makes formal presentations to the class
- Understands how style and content of spoken language varies in different contexts and how this influences interpretation of these texts

culture? Students should write down their ideas on this (based on observations, information from the video, personal experience) in the last column in preparation for a discussion.

5. Have a general discussion of the video segment, using the following ideas as a guide:
 - What new information did you learn from the video segment?
 - What questions do you have?
 - Summarize the myths presented in the video and how/why they are incorrect.
 - What is your opinion on how these myths become common beliefs among teenagers? Have you encountered these myths in your own life, in school, at home, among friends, etc.?
 - Refer to the “Myths & Misconceptions” and “Facts Not Myths” sheets included with this segment (pg. 32-33). These can be projected on an overhead or distributed as handouts. Have students read the statistics and make connections to their own misconceptions and what new information they have gained.

6. Ask students what IMAGES stood out to them from the video. What pictures were left lingering in their minds after watching? Focus specifically on the animation part of the segment (showing the way in which the drugs impact the human body). If it seems necessary, watch that part again. Have students focus on the impact of this image. How does it compare/contrast to the kinds of images you discussed earlier in class? What is the impact of an image like this versus the kinds of images of drug abuse that students are used to seeing?



As an extension of this discussion, students could draw their own images and discuss them in comparison to the images from the segment, and from other media that portrays drug abuse. What images come to mind when they think of drug abuse? What images could be used effectively to convey the dangers of prescription drug abuse? Students should consider the information they have gained from the video and translate it into their own image (on paper or, if available, through use of computer animation), then share with the class and compare the different ways in which images can work to convey a message.

7. Introduce the group activity assignment OR individual assignment.

Peer Group Activity: Each peer group will create a skit based around one or two of the common myths related to prescription drug abuse in teens. The purpose of the skit will be to educate their peers about the dangers of prescription drug abuse, based on the information

students have learned from the video and other resources. The skits can focus on situations in which “characters” learn some new information, have an experience that makes them see prescription drug abuse for what it is, or have to deal with the problem of prescription drug abuse by getting help.

Students will also collaboratively write a letter of proposal to an organization, club, or school where they would like to perform their skit (for example, their own school or another middle/high school, a community outreach center, a youth group, etc.)

Individual Activity: Each student will write a brief story that is based around one or two of the common myths related to prescription drug abuse in teens. The purpose of the story will be to educate their peers about the dangers of prescription drug abuse, based on the information students have learned from the video and other resources. The stories can focus on situations in which “characters” learn some new information, have an experience that makes them see prescription drug abuse for what it is, or have to deal with the problem of prescription drug abuse by getting help.

The audience for the story will be other young people who may not be as informed about the problem of prescription drug abuse and its dangers. Each student will also write a cover letter for the story, addressing it to an organization, club or school (such as a principal or school nurse) where they would like students to read their story.

8. As an in-class reading, homework or research assignment, students should read additional materials on prescription drug abuse (see “Resources” at the end of the lesson plan). You can provide them with handouts, links and/or have them do their own research to gather information. This may require a discussion of what entails a valid internet source. If students are doing outside research, they should be sure to document all sources since they might be referring to them in their cover letter.

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 7 - Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts
- Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts
- Uses new information to adjust and expand personal knowledge base
- Draws conclusions and makes inferences based on explicit and implicit information in texts

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts
- Summarizes and paraphrases complex, implicit hierarchic structures in informational texts, including the relationships among the concepts and details in those structures
- Uses text features and elements to support inferences and generalizations about information

Students should take notes, using the questions below as a guide and especially focusing on myths/concepts that they would like to address in their skit/story.

Reading Questions:

- What is the thesis or argument of this article?
 - What evidence does the writer use to support the argument?
 - Who is the audience for this article? How do you know?
 - What myths can the information in this article address?
9. After reading more materials and/or conducting more research on prescription drug abuse, students should complete brainstorming sheets (HANDOUTS #2 and #3 - pg. 27-30), either as a group or individually, depending on which activity they will be completing. They should then gather their ideas in order to write the script/story. Students should also use the “Myths & Misconceptions” and “Facts Not Myths” handouts to inform their script/story (pg. 32-33).
 10. When the script/story is finished, students should compose a letter to their intended audience, referring back to the brainstorming sheets.

Depending on time/class structure, students could engage in Peer Workshops to get feedback on their scripts/stories and/or cover letters.

11. If students completed the group activity, they should spend time practicing/memorizing their script, and then perform the skit for the class. If they completed the individual story assignment, students can read all or part of their story to the class or in small groups.
12. As a follow-up activity, have students gather the information and ideas they have worked with and individually write an opinion piece for their school or community newspaper or a school-approved news website.

McRel Learning Objectives: Standard 1 - Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

Level III (Grades 6-8)

- Uses a variety of prewriting strategies
- Evaluates own and others’ writing
- Uses content, style, and structure appropriate for specific audiences and purposes
- Writes narrative accounts, such as short stories
- Writes business letters, such as letters of request and response

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

- Uses a variety of prewriting strategies
- Evaluates own and others’ writing
- Uses strategies to address writing to different audiences
- Uses strategies to adapt writing for different purposes
- Writes fictional, biographical, autobiographical and observational narrative compositions
- Writes persuasive compositions that address problems/solutions or cause/effects
- Uses appropriate strategies to write personal and business correspondence

What is the role and responsibility of journalists in our society? Journalist Antonio Neves channeled an important message to a teen audience through his passion for journalism. How can journalistic pieces, like *the.News* segment, play an important role in conveying important, truthful information and dispelling myths surrounding drug abuse and other problems in society?

Students can look at examples of editorial pieces from their local or school newspaper and use them as a guide for formatting their own piece, by identifying the writer's argument and how s/he supports that argument. Students should use the Editorial Organizer (HANDOUT #4 - p.31) to organize ideas and outline the piece before writing it.

13. As an extension or for extra credit, students can actually send their letters and scripts/stories to their intended audiences and/or submit their opinion pieces to their local or school newspaper.

Assessment: Students' knowledge and skills can be assessed based on the attached rubric (p.25). Students can also do peer assessments, especially when sharing their skits/stories and op-eds with the rest of the class.

Resources:

- Above the Influence, National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com>. (The most recent campaign, which encourages kids to be "above the influence" of drugs. Includes various interactive resources, first-hand accounts, Q&As, and other information, including information specific to prescription drugs. A good place to see teen-produced video segments, as well as PSAs related to drug abuse to gather ideas for the students' own advertisements).
- American School Counselor Association, <http://www.schoolcounselor.org/>.
- Generation Rx, The Partnership for a Drug-Free America. Retrieved April 2008, http://www.drugfree.org/Portal/About/NewsReleases/Generation_Rx_Teens_Abusing_Rx_and_OTC_Medications. (Discusses a 2005 national study that documents teen abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs).
- Harmon, Amy. "Young, Assured and Playing Pharmacist to Friends" The New York Times, November 16, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/16/health/16patient.html>, Retrieved April 2008. (Reveals the various ways in which young adults are engaging in prescription drug abuse, where they get the medications and how, and what is contributing to the growing trend of prescription drug addiction. *Please note: this article profiles individuals in their early to mid-twenties and may be more appropriate for high school students than middle school*).
- National Association of School Nurses, <http://www.nasn.org>.

- National Association of School Psychologists, <http://www.nasponline.org/>.
- National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), NIH, Infofacts, Retrieved April 2008, <http://www.nida.nih.gov/Infofacts/PainMed.html>. (A list of factual information on prescription painkillers and other prescription medications, including descriptions of commonly abused medications, how they work, and what effects they can have).
- National Science Teachers Association, <http://www.nsta.org/>.
- Parents: The Anti-Drug, The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, Retrieved April 2008, http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/prescription_drugs.asp. (Includes a variety of information about prescription and over-the-counter drugs, how children obtain them, personal stories from teens, etc.).
- Prescription Drugs Find Place in Teen Culture, USA Today, Retrieved April 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2006-06-12-teens-pharm-drugs_x.htm. (Discusses the growing phenomenon of prescription drug abuse, why it has become a trend, and how it is being dealt with. Includes true stories of teens who have experienced addiction).

Activity Designer:

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Assessment

Students should be assessed on the following criteria:

- Depth and breadth of knowledge gained from *the.Medic* video segment as well as outside sources, as conveyed in the skit/story as well as the cover letter
- Use of literary devices, such as characterization, dialogue, etc., in the skit/story
- Clarity of the presentation of a myth, and the revelation of the truth behind the myth
- Awareness of audience and use of strategies to appeal to that audience, in both the skit/story and the cover letter
- Use of proper grammatical/mechanical structure and tools to convey ideas clearly
- Use of proper letter format
- Effectiveness of presentation to the class (whether in the form of the skit, or reading aloud from the story)

Handout #1
Myth vs. Truth

As you watch the video segment, take notes in the first two columns below. After watching the segment, consider from your own ideas, observations and experiences *why* these myths exist and write down your opinion in the last column.

Myth	Truth	Analysis: Why do you think people buy into this myth?

Handout #2a
Group Activity Brainstorming Sheet (SKIT)

Your group's task is to write and perform a fictional skit (approx. 5 minutes) that does the following:

1. Establishes one or two of the common myths surrounding prescription drug abuse in teens
2. Demonstrates a situation that illustrates the misconceptions and educates the viewers on the truth about prescription drugs
3. Creates characters that interact as a way of conveying these ideas
4. Appeals to your targeted audience

Use the questions below to brainstorm for your skit:

- What myth(s) did you learn about in class that you would like to address?

- What is a situation that you have observed or that you can imagine that would involve the misconception of this myth?

- Who will be the various characters in your skit? List them by their (fictional) names and what role they will play in the situation.

- How will your skit reveal the truth behind the abuse of prescription drugs? How will it educate the viewers and dispel any misconceptions that they have about prescription drugs?

- What about your skit will appeal to your audience?

Handout #2b
Story Brainstorming Sheet

Your task is to write a short fictional story (approx. 2-3 pages) that does the following:

1. Establishes one or two of the common myths surrounding prescription drug abuse in teens
2. Demonstrates a situation that illustrates the misconceptions and educates the viewers on the truth about prescription drugs
3. Creates characters that interact as a way of conveying these ideas
4. Appeals to your targeted audience

Use the questions below to brainstorm for your story:

- What myth(s) did you learn about in class that you would like to address?

- What is a situation that you have observed or that you can imagine that would involve the misconception of this myth?

- Who will be the various characters in your story? List them by their (fictional) names and what role they will play in the situation.

- How will your story reveal the truth behind the abuse of prescription drugs? How will it educate the readers and dispel any misconceptions that they have about prescription drugs?

- What about your skit will appeal to your audience?

Handout #3a
Cover Letter Brainstorming Sheet

As a group, compose a cover letter for your script. Imagine you are sending the script to a school principal or nurse, organization, club, etc. and you want to convince the administration of that venue that they should let your group come and perform your skit as a way of raising awareness about prescription drug abuse.

Use the questions below to brainstorm for your letter:

- To whom will you send your letter? Why is this the appropriate audience for your letter?

- What information do you need to include in your letter to make sure your audience understands the seriousness of the issue you are addressing? To which sources (provided in class and/or read/researched for homework) will you refer to establish your knowledge on the topic?

- What will you want to tell them about your skit and its purpose? How will you convince them to allow you to come and perform your skit?

Handout #3b
Cover Letter Brainstorming Sheet

Compose a cover letter for your story. Imagine you are sending the story to your targeted venue (a school, organization, club, etc.) and you want to convince the administration of that venue that they should use your story as a way of raising awareness about prescription drug abuse.

Use the questions below to brainstorm for your letter:

- To whom will you send your letter? Why is this the appropriate audience for your letter?

- What information do you need to include in your letter to make sure your audience understands the seriousness of the issue you are addressing? To which sources (provided in class and/or read/researched for homework) will you refer to establish your knowledge on the topic?

- What will you want to tell them about your story and its purpose before they read it? How will you convince them to use your story as a learning tool in their venue?

Handout #4 Editorial Organizer

Use this worksheet to organize your ideas for your editorial prior to writing it. Use ideas from the video segment, the handouts “Myths & Misconceptions” and “Facts Not Myths” as well as other resources and discussions with your classmates from previous activities.

1. What do you see being done in your school and/or community to educate young people about prescription drug abuse? Is it effective? Why or why not?
2. What is your opinion on the ways in which your school and/or community could better educate the younger population about prescription drug abuse? What do you recommend for them to do? Be specific!
3. Why would your ideas be useful in preventing prescription drug abuse in teens? Why is it important that this prevention occurs?
4. What specific evidence can you use from *the.Medic* segment and other resources as a way of establishing your authority on the subject and of better making your point?

the.Medic: On Prescription Drugs
Segment One: Myth Busters

Myths & Misconceptions

- “Two in five teens (40 percent or 9.4 million) agree that Rx medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are “much safer” to use than illegal drugs.”

Partnership for a Drug-Free America. (2006, May). *The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Teens in grades 7 through 12, 2005 (PATs)*. Retrieved November 28, 2007, from [http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full Teen Report](http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full_Teen_Report)

- “Nearly one-third of teens (31 percent or 7.3 million) believe there’s “nothing wrong” with using Rx medicines without a prescription ‘once in a while.’”

Partnership for a Drug-Free America. (2006, May). *The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Teens in grades 7 through 12, 2005 (PATs)*. Retrieved November 28, 2007, from [http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full Teen Report](http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full_Teen_Report)

- “Nearly 3 out of 10 teens (29 percent or 6.8 million) believe prescription pain relievers – even if not prescribed by a doctor – are not addictive”

Partnership for a Drug-Free America. (2006, May). *The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Teens in grades 7 through 12, 2005 (PATs)*. Retrieved November 28, 2007, from [http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full Teen Report](http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full_Teen_Report)

Facts Not Myths

- “From 2002 to 2006, the rate of current use of marijuana among young adults aged 18 to 25 declined from 17.3 to 16.3 percent. [Participants questioned about usage in the month prior to survey and results showed that] Past month nonmedical use of prescription-type drugs among young adults increased from 5.4 percent in 2002 to 6.4 percent in 2006. This was primarily due to an increase in the rate of pain reliever use, which was 4.1 percent in 2002 and 4.9 percent in 2006. However, nonmedical use of tranquilizers also increased over the 5-year period (from 1.6 to 2.0 percent).”

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2007). *Results from the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings* (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-32, DHHS Publication No. SMA 07-4293) Rockville, MD.
<http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k6nsduh/2k6Results.pdf>

- “Nearly one in five teens (19 percent, or 4.5 million) has tried taking prescription medication to get high and one in 10 teens (10 percent, or 2.4 million) report abusing cough medicine to get high. Those numbers are on par with, or higher than, the abuse of illicit drugs such as cocaine or crack (10 percent), methamphetamines (8 percent), Ecstasy (8 percent) and heroin (5 percent).”

Partnership for a Drug-Free America. (2006, May). *The Partnership Attitude Tracking Study: Teens in grades 7 through 12, 2005 (PATS)*. Retrieved November 28, 2007, from [http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full Teen Report](http://www.drugfree.org/Files/Full_Teen_Report)

- “OxyContin use was first measured in 2002. The 2007 figures for all three grades [eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders] are slightly higher than they were in 2002, but the trend lines have been somewhat erratic. For the three grades combined, there was no change in annual prevalence in the past year. Annual prevalence rates in 2007 for OxyContin use are 1.8 percent, 3.9 percent, and 5.3 percent. In other words, at least one in every twenty high school seniors has at least tried this powerful narcotic drug in the past year.”

Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G. & Schulenberg, J. E. (December 11, 2007). "Overall, illicit drug use by American teens continues gradual decline in 2007." University of Michigan News Service: Ann Arbor, MI. [Online]. Available: www.monitoringthefuture.org ; accessed 12/13/07.