

Florida Trend's

NEXT

2026-27

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES GUIDE

Ideas for Teachers and Guidance Counselors

INCLUDES RELATED FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS



LEVEL 1: CHARACTER CREATION

ACTIVITY 1

Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills

ACTIVITY 2

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LEVEL 2: COLLEGE CAMPAIGN

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ACTIVITY 9

It's Not a Sim: Getting a Real Job

LEVEL 5: SIDE QUESTS

ACTIVITY 10

Refilling Your Heart

This is Joann Cassio's tenth year creating activities for the Classroom Activity Guide. Teaching was Joann's profession for many years; it was also her passion. She has taught everything from accounting to U.S. government and economics to English 4. Joann's bachelor's degree is in Business Education and she has a master's degree in Curriculum, Instruction and Technology. She loves to read and stay current with educational trends. She retired after 40 years in the classroom!

Follow reading
 and discussion of
 "Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills"
 on page 10



ACTIVITY 1

Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills

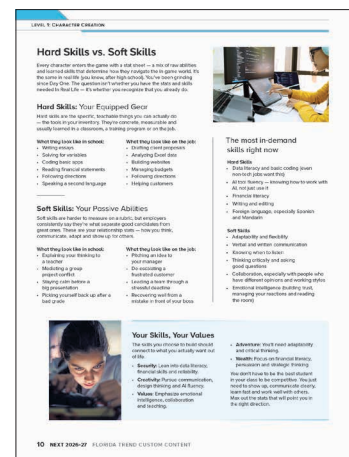
TEACHER TRANSCRIPT:

Teacher: "Read the NEXT article "Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills". Which of these skills mentioned in the article do you think you possess?"

Teacher: "Every career or profession requires both specific hard and soft skills. What is the career or profession you are currently dreaming of for your future?"

Teacher: Review orally and post the following directions on the board:

1. Research using the internet your chosen career and find the hard and soft skills required.
2. Using a chart like the one I have handed out to each of you, begin to fill out at least 3 hard and 3 soft skills for this career or profession.
3. In the remaining section of the chart, briefly explain why these types of skills are important and essential to have in the chosen career/ profession.
4. In the space provided below the chart include a few sentences explaining if you already possess any of these skills and in what way do you show that you possess these skills. Explain briefly how you would tackle learning the hard skills required and learn and/or improve on the soft skills required.
5. When you have completed the written part of the activity, glue/tape it to a piece of construction paper.



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12.C.1: Communicating Through Writing

Standard 3 ELA.12.C.3: Following Conventions

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT magazine article "Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills"

Internet access

Laptop/desktop with MS Word

Data projector/Smartboard

Print the chart provided; give one to each student

Printer/paper

Construction paper/glue/tape

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT magazine article "Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills"

Laptop/desktop with MS Word

Internet access

Hand out of chart to be used for this activity

Construction paper/glue/tape

Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills

Career or Profession: _____ **Student's Name:** _____

Hard Skills Required for the career/profession	Why are these hard skills important to have in this career/profession

Soft Skills Required for the career/profession	Why are these soft skills important to have in this career/profession

Which of the hard and soft skills previously discussed do you currently feel that you have and give examples for each.

[illegible]



ACTIVITY 2

High School Walkthrough: Junior Year

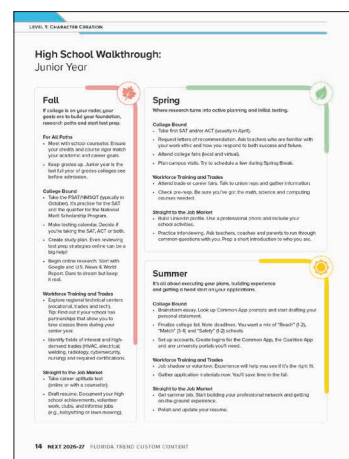
TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: “The NEXT article, “High School Walkthrough: Junior Year”, is full of information about the considerations concerning your future going into your senior year. Waiting for your senior year is not the best answer to many questions about your future.”

Teacher: “Today, we will take an inventory and answer a few essential questions which may help you focus on the needs during your junior year in preparation for senior year.”

Teacher: Display instructions and questions for students to refer to as they work. Ask students to answer the questions displayed. Include the question.

1. What are your future career goals and aspirations?
2. Does this require a 4-year college degree, a 2-year degree, state or trade school certification, or will you enter the workforce immediately after graduation. Explain for example: education requires a 4-year degree
3. What higher education or trade schools are you currently researching? Explain why you have chosen these schools or colleges.
4. List both your hard skills (which would be any skill that you have learned through school or training) and soft skills (these are personal skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership).
5. Do these skills match the career you have anticipated or workforce skills? Explain
6. What skills should you concentrate on to improve what you already have? Explain addressing both hard and soft skills.
7. Use the internet to access one of the free career aptitude tests. Try one of these CareerOneStop Skills Matcher or the Princeton Review Career Quiz. Report briefly on the results of one of these tests.
8. Will you be able to get a job during the summer months that will give you a better understanding of the potential career you have chosen or the workforce employment you anticipate? Explain.
9. Proofread your work, print and submit.



Strand ELA.11. R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.11. R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.11.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.11: Communicating in Writing

Standard 3 ELA.11. C.3: Following Conventions

Standard 4 ELA.11. C.4: Researching

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT article “High School Walkthrough: Junior Year”

Laptop/desktop with MS Word

Whiteboard or smartboard

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT article “High School Walkthrough: Junior Year”

Laptop/desktop with MS Word

Printer/paper

Follow reading
 and discussion of
 “High School Walkthrough:
 Senior Year”
on page 16



ACTIVITY 3

High School Walkthrough: Senior Year

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: “After reading the NEXT article “High School Walkthrough: Senior Year” think about your personal goals for senior year and the timeline for reaching those goals.”

Teacher: “At this point all of you will have different goals. Some will be looking to apply for college admission or will be thinking of attending a trade school or going directly into the workforce. It can all feel like a jumble of things to do, but organization and clear thinking are key.

Teacher: “Let’s look at the first few months of school only at this point. I am handing out a copy that you will use to organize goals, tasks and times. This chart includes the months September through December only. Depending upon your individual future plans, each month will require a different task. Be as realistic as possible with dates and keep this to go back and review. When the task is complete go back to this form and enter a checkmark in the last box and take a huge sigh of relief. This is not a plan that you MUST stick to, but it will help as a reminder of what you need to do to avoid that last minute panic. Use the information in the NEXT article to help but remember we all have different goals and plans. This is YOUR plan!”

Teacher: “Let’s take a minute to review the information and determine if there are any questions.”

FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12. R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12. C.1:

Communicating Through Writing

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT article, “High School Walkthrough: Senior Year”

Laptop/desktop with MS Word

Internet access

Data projector/Smartboard

Print copies for each student of goal setting document

Printer/paper

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT article, “High School Walkthrough: Senior Year”

Laptop/desktop with MS Word

Internet access

One copy of goal setting document

Printer/paper

High School Walkthrough: Senior Year

Student's Name: _____

Overall goal statement:

In September I will...	Date I plan to complete this task	Date I completed this task	Checkmark completion

In October I will...	Date I plan to complete this task	Date I completed this task	Checkmark completion

In November I will...	Date I plan to complete this task	Date I completed this task	Checkmark completion

In December I will...	Date I plan to complete this task	Date I completed this task	Checkmark completion

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU DID IT!



ACTIVITY 4

The Homeworld Advantage

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: Read the NEXT article, “The Homeworld Advantage”. The exciting thing about the state of Florida higher education system is that there are so many options to consider. These options should be carefully considered when the time comes to begin the process of applying to higher education institutions.”

Teacher: “This activity will give you an opportunity to compare not only the programs of your choice but the schools offering such programs that will fulfill your needs.”

Teacher: Display instructions on the board:

1. Decide on a course of study that you are interested in pursuing.
2. Research two Florida colleges/universities that you have interest in finding out more about.
3. Create a chart using a spreadsheet to show the comparisons of two school choices.
4. Include such things as the:
 - a. Course of study (ex. civil engineering, education, marketing)
 - b. The name of the school you are interested in applying to (ex. FSU, FGCU, UM)
 - c. Tuition (including room and board or will you commute?)
 - d. Financial aid available which might include Bright Futures Scholarship program or Florida Pre-Paid College Plan or loans/grants
 - e. Compare the courses you would have to take in both schools
 - f. Are the courses the same or are there courses in one school you feel would be a better fit for your potential career choice
 - g. What are the demographics of the areas of both schools? This will affect daily social life, safety and activities on campus
 - h. Add anything else that you feel is important for your consideration.
 - i. Write a brief reflection about which school you feel is a better fit for you to pursue your higher education and why.
 - j. When finished print your document and display on the assigned bulletin board.



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12.C.1: Communicating Through Writing

ELA.12.C.1.5: Improve writing by considering feedback from adults, peers, and/or online editing tools, revising to enhance purpose, clarity, structure and style.

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT article “The Homeworld Advantage”

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Internet access

Whiteboard or Smartboard

Printer/paper

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT article “The Homeworld Advantage”

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Internet access

Printer/paper



ACTIVITY 5

Boss Battle: The Personal Statement

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: “Read the NEXT article, “Boss Battle: The Personal Statement”. If you are planning to complete the Common App there is a requirement to write an essay. You are given prompts as suggested topics or you can write something more personal. In any case, it is important to understand that the purpose of the essay is to show admission committee members that you are more than your grades and SAT and ACT scores, but you have an amazing personality and will be a perfect fit for admission. Remember first impressions are important in any situation, and this is your opportunity to make a memorable first impression on the members of an admission committee.”

Teacher: “College admissions officers must read hundreds of essays. The essay must hook them quickly and early; they score or rate the essay with a quick qualitative score noting whether it adds positive, neutral, or negative value to your profile; if your file moves to an admissions committee, it might be read aloud by someone who feels you are a good fit for admission.”

Teacher: Display this information on the board:

1. This is what admissions officers are looking for in your essay:
2. Authenticity showing who you are unfiltered.
3. Self-reflection on what the lesson learned was after experiencing this event.
4. Voice and tone mean that your writing should reflect your age and background and not that of an adult.
5. Clarity and focus refer to writing a narrative that centers on a small, meaningful event rather than a life history.
6. Think of a topic you would like to write about and write an essay as if it were to be included in the Common App.
7. Use the information provided to determine if you have met the criteria the admission officers are looking for in an essay.
8. Proofread and make any corrections in spelling, grammar and punctuation.
9. Ask a classmate to read it and listen to what they think about your essay.
10. Print and submit.



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12. C.1: Communicating Through Writing

Standard 3 ELA.12. C.3: Following Conventions

ELA.12. C.3.1: Follow the rules of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization and spelling appropriate to grade level.

Strand ELA.12.V: Vocabulary

Standard 1 ELA.12. V.1: Finding Meaning

ELA.12. V.1.1: Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing

TEACHER NEEDS:

NEXT article “Boss Battle: The Personal Statement”

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Printer/printer paper

STUDENT NEEDS:

NEXT article “Boss Battle: The Personal Statement”

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Printer/printer paper

Follow reading
and discussion of
“Checkpoint”
on page 34

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ACTIVITY 6

Checkpoint

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: “Silently read the NEXT magazine article, “Checkpoint”. Think to yourself how you would react if you received a college rejection letter and what actions would you feel were necessary.”

Teacher: Hand a copy of the sample college rejection letter to each student.

Teacher: “Read the letter I have handed out. This is a typical letter you might receive from a college notifying you that you did not get into their school. Follow the instructions on the board answering and addressing all situations.”

Teacher: “When complete, print and submit.”

Teacher: Review and post the following instructions for students to reference while working. Students should use MS Word to complete the assignment:

1. Research and determine the job or task of a college admission committee including how final selections are made.
2. What does a rejection from a college mean or what doesn’t it mean to you.
3. What are your thoughts on a rejection letter building resilience and character for a successful career?
4. Explain the feelings and emotions you might have after reading the letter.
5. Discuss two famous people who have been successful and received a rejection letter from their first-choice college/university.
6. Put together a list of what actions can be considered and taken at this point, i.e., community college, gap year and why you chose these actions.



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12.C.1: Communicating Through Writing

ELA.12.C.1.2: Write complex narratives using appropriate techniques to establish multiple perspectives and convey universal themes.

TEACHER NEEDS

- NEXT magazine article, “Checkpoint”
- Whiteboard or Smartboard
- Laptop/computer with MS Word
- One copy of college rejection letter for each student

STUDENT NEEDS

- NEXT magazine article, “Checkpoint”
- Laptop/computer with MS Word
- Access to Internet
- Copy of college rejection letter

March 1, 2027

Ann Butler
1121 Cedar Bridge Road
Anytown, USA 23456

Dear Ms. Butler,

We hope this message finds you well. We would like to thank you for your application to our esteemed institution. We appreciate and acknowledge your interest in pursuing your academic goals at our school.

I regret to inform you that after careful and thorough consideration, we are unable to offer you admission to our institution. The decision-making process is exceptionally challenging as we received a number of applications. Your application, unfortunately, did not align with our highly competitive selection criteria.

We understand this news may be disappointing particularly considering your strong academic achievements and notable accomplishments. Please remember that college admissions are a highly competitive process and difficult decisions must be made to ensure the best fit for our school.

Please be assured that this decision is not a reflection of your worth or potential. While you were not selected this time, we encourage you to pursue your academic goals with determination and consider alternative institutions where your unique talents and aspirations will thrive.

We appreciate your understanding and sincerely hope that you will find the right path to pursue your academic and career goals. We wish you every success as you embark on this next chapter of your educational journey. If you have any questions or require further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,
Carol Hummingbird
Admissions Director



ACTIVITY 7

Craft Your Future

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

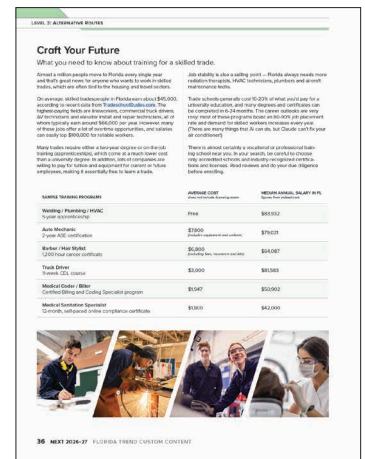
Teacher: "After reading the NEXT article, "Craft Your Future", think about your learning style, is it hands-on, is it listening to subject related lectures in a classroom setting. Maybe you have never thought about this before, but each of us learns differently. That can make a difference in your future career. Just like solving problems and putting things together to make them work might be an attraction that you are looking for in a future career."

Teacher: "Answer this question, if you could start working in a full-time job within a year's time, what would that career look like? Would it be a dental assistant, construction technologies, marine or auto mechanics, or pharmacy technician? These career trades and many others are offered at almost all trade schools in Florida. The next question then is what the advantage to you would personally be to research and possibly choose going to a trade school over a 2- or 4-year college."

Teacher: "This activity will give you the opportunity to compare the educational requirements and the cost of both trade schools and traditional college, as well as the job outlook and the median salary of your career choice."

Teacher: Display and review the activity instructions on the board:

1. Create a PowerPoint presentation that will be presented to a group of high school juniors about the education of a trade school education, requirements, and more vs. a traditional college.
2. The information you provide should be general information. The choice of careers will be up to you. Include the following comparisons:
 - a. Describe the career choices you will use for this activity
 - b. Average length of time to complete a program
 - c. Cost of trade school vs. traditional college
 - d. Skills (hands-on or classroom)
 - e. Debt incurred
 - f. Earning timeline
 - g. Average baseline earnings (HINT: use the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
 - h. Potential for growth in any area
 - i. Future career outlook (list at least 4 careers and research whether a specific job or industry will grow, stay the same, or shrink over the next 5 -10 years)



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading informational text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12.C.1: Communicating Through Writing

Standard 5 ELA.12.C.5: Creating and Collaborating

ELA.12.C.5.1: Design and evaluate digital presentations for effectiveness.

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT magazine article "Craft Your Future"

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Whiteboard or Smartboard

Internet access

PowerPoint

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT magazine article "Craft Your Future"

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Internet access

PowerPoint



ACTIVITY 8

Spending and Saving Responsibly

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: “Let’s look at the article in NEXT magazine, “Spending and Saving Responsibly”. Specifically look at the section entitled “The Method”. This is the suggested way to budget your money efficiently, but in some cases it will not be realistic.”

Teacher: Divide class into pairs. “You and your partner will be writing a script to use for a podcast. The topic will be explaining spending and saving responsibly. Your information should include the importance of budgeting your money regardless of stage in life but specifically it is essential when starting out on your own.”

Teacher: Display on board:

1. The podcast script should define and address what is gross income, net income and why these two amounts may be different.
2. Define fixed expenses and give examples.
3. Define variable expenses and offer examples.
4. Talk about the importance of savings and why one should save.

Teacher: “I will take the part of a listener. This means that I may have a question (different situation for each group) for you to answer about an unscheduled event or an emergency that happened and how should I handle such a financial situation.”

Teacher: “When you receive the listener question, include it in the script along with the answer.”

Teacher: “Print the script and submit.”

HINT: Unexpected events or emergencies might include: pet illness, personal illness and no health insurance, flat tire or auto repair, toothache or the need for new eyeglasses, and reduced hours at work.



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12. C.1: Communicating Through Writing

ELA.12.C.1.2: Write complex narratives using appropriate techniques to establish multiple perspectives and convey universal themes.

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 5 ELA.12.C.5: Creating and Collaborating

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT article “Spending and Saving Responsibly”

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Whiteboard or smartboard

Index cards with a different unexpected event or emergency on each card to hand out to each group (see HINT at end of lesson)

Printer/paper

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT article “Spending and Saving Responsibly”

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Printer/paper

Follow reading
 and discussion of
 “It’s Not a Sim:
 Getting a Real Job”
 on page 50



ACTIVITY 9

It’s Not a Sim: Getting a Real Job

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: “The NEXT article, “It’s Not a Sim: Getting a Real Job” does a good job explaining how to put a resume together and about potential questions that might be asked at an interview. But let’s take this one step further and add a well written cover letter to the process.”

Teacher: “What is a cover letter? It is an introduction to a potential employer telling them who you are. It is a one-page document that tells your work history (if any) as well as your hard and soft skills. The cover letter should also talk about your personal interest in the job which you are applying for. It can be considered the first impression you make on a potential employer; and we all know that we can never make a second first impression.”

Teacher: Post this on the board and review the instructions as written:

1. Use Indeed.com, Monster.com, Ziprecruiter.com and find a job listing that you are interested in applying for. Look for the description of the job and take note of any required skills. Write down the important words that you can use in your cover letter.
2. If they are looking for someone who is a critical thinker or displays creativity, works well with a team, is punctual, and friendly. Write a cover letter using the words in the job listing, not just randomly, but discuss briefly what makes you a critical thinker or what team have you been a member or leader of.
3. The next step is to use a free resume template (MS Word or Canva) and create a resume that you will use for the job listing you chose previously for the cover letter. Use the information in the NEXT article concerning what to include when writing a resume.
4. Proofread the cover letter and the resume. Ask a classmate to read them as well for spelling or grammatical errors to be fixed. When this is completed, print the cover letter and resume and submit it.

FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12.R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12.R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 1 ELA.12.C.1: Communicating Through Writing

ELA.12.C.1.5: Improve writing by considering feedback from adults, peers, and/or online editing tools, revising to enhance purposes, clarity, structure and style.

Standard 3 ELA.12.C.3: Following Conventions

ELA.12.C.3.1: Follow the rules of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization and spelling appropriate to grade level.

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT article “It’s Not a Sim: Getting a Real Job”

Laptop/computer with MS Word or Canva

Internet access

Whiteboard or Smartboard

Printer and printer paper

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT article It’s Not a Sim: Getting a Real Job”

Laptop/computer with MS Word or Canva

Internet access

Printer and printer paper



ACTIVITY 10

Refilling Your Heart

TEACHER TRANSCRIPT

Teacher: "Read the NEXT article, "Refilling Your Heart"."

Teacher: Start a brief discussion by asking if students think there is potential for them to feel anxiety and stress during their senior year. What kinds of things might cause this stress and anxiety? Ask students what they would do to ease stress and anxiety as they move through their senior year?

Teacher: Use index cards or small pieces of paper to write one of these coping strategies on each index card: deep breathing, exercise, mindfulness, healthy eating, quality sleep, social connection, set boundaries, take breaks, yoga and stretching, and meditation.

Teacher: "There are many ways to ease and regulate anxiety and stress. This activity will give you a chance to research some of these techniques, demonstrate to the class the technique if possible and explain why it will help to ease and moderate stress and anxiety."

Teacher: Divide the class so at least two students are working together on this activity. When you have completed this, allow each group to randomly choose one of the index cards. This will be their topic to research.

Teacher: Display the following on the board:

1. Research the coping mechanism you and your partner have chosen
2. Define the strategy
3. Explain why this technique will help with easing stress and anxiety this school year
4. If appropriate demonstrate the technique
5. Be sure to note all resources from which you have taken information from and submit these in APA format to teacher on an index card or piece of paper
6. Use whatever medium you and your partner agree upon which will leave your classmates with a lasting impression to possibly put your mechanism into practice. (PowerPoint, MS Word, video/audio, skit)
 (HINT: if possible, ask classmates to join you in one of the practices)



FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

Strand ELA.12. R: Reading

Standard 2 ELA.12. R.2: Reading Informational Text

Strand ELA.12.C: Communication

Standard 2 ELA.12. C.2: Communicating Orally

ELA.12. C.2.1: Present information orally, with logical organization, coherent focus, and credible evidence while employing rhetorical devices where appropriate.

Standard 4 ELA.12. C.4: Researching

ELA.12. C.4: Conduct research on a topical issue to answer a question and synthesize information from a variety of sources.

TEACHER NEEDS

NEXT magazine article "Refilling Your Heart"

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Internet access

Whiteboard or Smartboard

Index cards with a coping strategy for each pair of students to use for activity

STUDENT NEEDS

NEXT magazine article "Refilling Your Heart"

Laptop/computer with MS Word

Internet access

Index card which tells you what coping strategy to research and present