

Prioritization and Decision Making

Students will recognize the importance of seeking information before making a decision.

Materials:

- Red, white and blue poker chips
- Clear plastic bag
- Chart paper and markers
- Handout with Seven Steps to Decision Making,

Description of Activity:

Show student a clear plastic bag filled with red, blue, and white poker chips.

Ask for two volunteers to participate in the demonstration.

Explain the rules:

Participant may use only one hand. (Bag will be held open for student)

In 60 seconds the student will take out as many poker chips as possible.

After the first participant completes his/her turn, change the information slightly.

“I forgot to mention that the white chips are worth \$10; the red \$50; and blue \$100.”

After participant number two completes his/her turn, sort and add chips. Record on board.

Have students multiply their total in dollars.

Participant number two will have the largest amount in dollars but not necessarily the largest number of chips.

Ask: **What made the difference between the total money collected by Student 1 versus Student 2?**

(A little knowledge about a decision can alter how one approaches a situation. The knowledge can improve the outcome.)

Ask: **How does this analogy relate to real-world decisions? ... How does it relate to career goals?**

Introduce *Seven Steps to Decision-Making* (print handout page 3)

Discuss the seven steps to decision making.

Optional Activity with Scenarios:

Group students into four teams. Give each team one of the decision-making scenarios. Each team will use the seven-step decision-making process to work through their designated decision-making scenario.

Each group will illustrate their decision and its outcome on a sheet of chart paper.

Each group will present their decision and results to the class.

Brainstorm as a class and record on the board:

- Kinds of information needed to make a decision about educational choices
- Kinds of information needed to make a decision about career choices

Each student will identify a problem and work through the seven-step decision-making process.

Evaluation: Students will use the seven steps of decision-making to make a decision.

Seven Steps of Decision Making

1. Define your problem
2. Gather information and resources
3. List options
4. Weigh and compare options
5. Make a decision
6. Make a plan of action
7. Evaluate the decision

Decision making starts with vision. In order to set personal, study or career goals, take some time to think about the knowledge you have of yourself and visualize what you want your life to look like.

Think about where you would like to live. Would moving to another city or even a state be an option? Do you want a family? What kind of work would you like? What would you do for leisure? What kind of lifestyle would you want? The process of answering these questions can help you to develop your own personal vision. Once you have that vision, you have the raw materials that can be turned into short-term and long-term goals. The steps to making a decision can help you with many types of career-related decisions. You can use the steps to determine:

- Which occupation field/cluster to enter
- Which training/educational program to take
- Whether you would like to own your own business
- Whether or not you want to go directly to work or graduate school immediately after college
- Which major is right for you
- Whether to change jobs

Knowing what you want from life will help you to set:

- Career objectives
- Personal objectives
- Community objectives
- Lifelong learning objectives
- Goals

Start with the “big picture” and then consider how your objectives will help you reach your vision. You can then make decisions and plan short and long-term goals.

Decision-Making Points to Remember

1. You can always change your mind about a decision you've made.
2. There is probably no one right choice; and few decisions are totally wrong.
3. Deciding is a process, not a static, one-time event. We are constantly re-evaluating in light of new information. A decision may not have had the consequences you expected so you can start the process over again.
4. When it comes to a career decision, remember you are not choosing for a lifetime; in all probability, you will have several jobs during your working life. Choose for now and don't worry whether you'll enjoy it 20 years from now. The workplace is constantly changing and you will need to change with it.
5. There's a big difference between decision and outcome. You can make a good decision based on the information at hand and still have a bad outcome. The decision is within your control, but the outcome is not. All decisions have the element of chance or risk.
6. Think of the worst outcome. Could you live with that? If you could live with the worst, then anything else does not seem that bad.
7. Indecision is a decision not to decide. There are probably risks involved in not deciding, in not taking action.
8. Try to avoid "either/or" thinking; usually there are more than two options. Be imaginative and creative.
9. You may want to consult others for information but eventually you must make up your own mind. Sometimes it may be a good idea to consult more than one source so that your information is not biased.
10. Listen to your inner voice; trust your intuition. What feels right? If you are making a decision that can have long time consequences, take your time. Don't rush and make an impulsive decision.

Decision-Making Scenarios

Scenario 1

Football season starts this weekend and Steve is excited about the Cowboy's first game. He has already purchased his ticket and has made plans to meet his friends there. He's always been a big Cowboys fan, and the Pokes are playing the CSU Rams, their long-time rival. It should be the best game of the season. On the night before the game, Steve's girlfriend receives a phone call from her best friend who told her she'd be in Cheyenne for the day. (Cheyenne is 45 miles from Laramie.) Steve's girlfriend has not seen this friend in years because she lives on the east coast. Saturday is the only day she will be able to see her friend. Steve's girlfriend has asked him to come with her to Cheyenne to meet her friend. She realizes Steve has made plans to go to the game but feel that he will have an opportunity to attend many more games this year. Steve's girlfriend wants to let him make the final decision. What should he do?

Scenario 2

Marie is a sophomore at UW. She has earned passing grades in all of her school courses except LIFE 1010. She withdrew from it during her first semester at UW because she was in danger of failing. Now she is taking it again, but she is struggling again. Just today she found out that her best friend is taking an easier science course without a lab. She can't add that course now because the drop/add deadline has passed. The withdraw deadline is in two weeks. If she withdraws again, then her Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) status may be affected to the point where she has only one more try to take the course and pass. What should she do?

Scenario 3

You are in the marching band and you enjoy it. One of your courses has offered a chance to tour a lab in Denver for select students. You were selected to participate in the trip, and it directly relates to your major. However, if you miss the football game, your band director informed you that you won't be eligible to attend the possible Bowl game that may take place in December. You really want to go on that trip. What do you do?