

Decision Making

The **BIG** Idea

- When I need to make a decision, how can I make the best one available to me?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: How We Make Decisions (5 minutes)
- II. Opportunity Costs and the 3Cs (35 minutes)
- III. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:

- Student Handbook page 13, Decision Making 101
- Student Handbook page 14, Choices and Consequences (Scenarios)
- Student Handbook page 15, Choices and Consequences (Questions)

FACILITATOR RESOURCES:

- Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW
- Facilitator Resource 2, Choices and Consequences Example
- Facilitator Resource 3, Choices and Consequences Example Answer Key

- Extra copies of **Student Handbook page 15, Choices and Consequences (Questions)**

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Recognize that there's often more than one choice in a given situation, each with its own consequences.
- Recognize the usefulness of listing the pros and cons to determine the viability of a given choice.
- Given a problem to solve, use the 3Cs model of decision making to list choices and the pros and cons of at least one of the choices.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students examine the decision-making process from several angles. 1) How do people make decisions? 2) What's the "opportunity cost" of the path not taken? and 3) How can the 3 C's decision model (identify a challenge, determine choices, and weigh consequences) help them make choices?

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write today's vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Facilitator Resource 2, Choices and Consequences Example**
 - **Student Handbook page 13, Decision Making 101**
 - **Student Handbook page 14, Choices and Consequences (Scenarios)**
- Copy the four decision-making strategies, labeled a, b, c, and d in **Activity I, Item 2**, onto the board or chart paper for reference in **Activities I and III**.
- You may want to make extra copies of **Student Handbook page 15, Choices and Consequences (Questions)** for those students who finish early and want to try a second scenario.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Middle school students often make decisions with little examination of possible consequences. This isn't done intentionally to aggravate adults; early adolescents are "concrete in their perspective-taking" and react mostly to immediate concerns. Older teens develop an ability to think abstractly, which permits them "to entertain hypothetical situations" (Balter, Lawrence). Young adolescents need adult guidance in making decisions that will impact their futures.

"Opportunity cost," as it is used in this lesson, is a term borrowed from economists, part of an "economic way of thinking" described by the National Council for Economic Education. For every

choice that's made, there's the rejected alternative, the "opportunity cost." (It may be easier for students to understand this if they think of it as the "missed opportunity.") For example, a student may decide not to go to college because he'd rather earn money as soon as he graduates from high school. His "opportunity cost" is the higher salaries he could earn with a college degree. It's not necessary that students master this concept; what's needed is practice in posing multiple alternatives and linking current behavior to a later consequence. We've selected "opportunity cost" as a way to think about decision-making strategies without blame and judgment for less-than-ideal choices.

VOCABULARY

Opportunity cost: Your second choice; what you gave up so you could have your first choice.

Consequence: Result; outcome.

Pro: A plus; an argument in favor of doing something.

Con: A minus; an argument against doing something.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DO NOW:

(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards.)

Question:

1. What was the most important decision you ever made? Explain your decision and how you made it.

[Give the students three minutes to answer this question. Call on students to volunteer their answers. Then continue the **Warm Up** as written.]

In **Activity II, Opportunity Costs and the 3Cs**, you may choose to have students work in pairs when analyzing the **Choices and Consequences (Scenarios)**.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: How We Make Decisions (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Hello, everyone. Last week, we talked about setting goals and making a plan to reach them. We identified high school graduation as our goal and identified one study habit to improve by the end of the month. Raise your hand if you made some improvement with your study habit this week. [Have one or two students share what they did. Ask if they had any challenges doing that step and what they did to overcome it. Then ask one or two volunteers who struggled to improve their study habit, what problem or roadblock they faced.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Next week, we'll do a formal check in to evaluate the progress you are making. Today we are going to talk about how to make smart choices when you're faced with challenging and important decisions. First, let's see how you usually approach a big decision. Read these four decision-making techniques to yourself. Then I'll read them aloud, and you raise your hand to choose the one that best describes you. Ready? "When I have a big decision to make, I ...
 - a) Ask my friends or parents what to do.
 - b) Get lots of information, then weigh the pros and cons of each choice.
 - c) Go with my gut feeling.
 - d) Put off the decision until the last minute, and then choose fast without thinking.

II. Opportunity Costs and the Three Cs (35 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The truth is—most people use all of those decision-making strategies some of the time. Pizza topping? Go with your gut—whatever strikes you. What do you wear on the first day of school? Some may ask a friend. But for some decisions, it's good to have a more thoughtful strategy in mind. If you weigh all your options carefully, you can find the choice that's best for you.

Did you ever hear someone talk about a "missed opportunity?" (Show of hands.) It's the thing you don't get to do because you chose to do something else. People who study economics even have a name for the missed opportunity, your second choice, the thing you decide not to do. It's called an **opportunity cost**.

2. [Refer students to **Student Handbook page 13, Decision Making 101**.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: If you decide you want pizza for dinner, your opportunity cost is the hamburger you could have had instead. Notice there's no real consequence if you make the "wrong" choice in this example. In the second example, if you decide to spend your evening playing video games, your opportunity cost is time to do homework. Any possible consequences here? [Allow students to respond.]

The key to making good decisions is to be aware of all your choices and the consequences for each.

3. [Assign pairs. In the pairs, have students come up with one situation where the consequences of a decision are important, and one where they aren't. Give them two minutes.]
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For the big decisions, you can use the 3C strategy. [Refer students to the list at the bottom of **Student Handbook page 13, Decision Making 101.**]

STEP 1: CHALLENGE

Name the problem. What decision do you have to make?

STEP 2: CHOICES

List all the possible choices.

STEP 3: CONSEQUENCES

Think about what will happen if you make each choice. List the pros (the good possibilities) and the cons (the bad possibilities).

5. [Display **Facilitator Resource 2, Choices and Consequences Example** on the overhead projector. As a class, work through this example, recording the students' responses on the overhead projector. Then instruct the students to turn to **Student Handbook page 14, Choices and Consequences (Scenarios)**. Explain that these scenarios describe something that might happen to someone their age. The person in the story has already made one decision. The group is to decide what that decision was, and figure out some ideas for what the person in the story could do next. They should consider every possibility, even if some seem silly at first. Explain that this worksheet is a way to practice using the 3C strategy so that it becomes second nature. When they are faced with a difficult situation, they may only have a few seconds to make their decision. And when faced with a huge decision—like where to go to college—writing things down can really help clarify their ideas.]

6. [Have students work in groups to answer the questions for one of the scenarios. You may wish to teach a strategy to encourage full participation as students list pros and cons. For example, have group members go around the table and take turns speaking, or take turns recording their answers on a common piece of paper.]

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. [When groups have finished, process the activity by asking the following questions:
 - Was it helpful to list the choices, pros, and cons? Why or why not?
 - What kinds of decisions would the challenge/choices/consequences strategy work best for?]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Next week when we see each other you'll have a chance to use the 3 Cs in a real-life decision that each of you will face very soon: picking your classes next year for high school.

DO NOW

Setting Goals 2: Decision Making

Directions: You will have three minutes to read the question below and write your response.

1. What was the most important decision you have ever made? Explain your decision and how you made it.



Choices and Consequences Example

Example: You stay after class talking to your fourth period social studies teacher about making up an assignment you missed. The bell rings before you get to your fifth period class. You try to slip in quietly and sit down, but the teacher starts making a huge deal about how late you are. Everybody is watching.

1. What choice has this person already made?

2. What's the opportunity cost of this choice? (What choice can this person no longer make?)

3. Write the **CHALLENGE** facing this person now.

4. List as many **CHOICES** as you can.

5. Choose one of the choices listed above and list the **CONSEQUENCES (Pros and Cons)** in the boxes below.

CHOICE: _____

CONSEQUENCES:

Pros	Cons



Choices and Consequences Example Answer Key

Example: You stay after class talking to your fourth period social studies teacher about making up an assignment you missed. The bell rings before you get to your fifth period class. You try to slip in quietly and sit down, but the teacher starts making a huge deal about how late you are. Everybody is watching.

1. What choice has this person already made?

To stay and talk to the social studies teacher, to arrive in class with no late pass.

2. What's the opportunity cost of this choice? (What choice can this person no longer make?)

Chance to be on time.

3. Write the **CHALLENGE** facing this person now.

Making the teacher understand what happened, sitting down and getting to work.

4. List as many **CHOICES** as you can.

- *Apologize.*
- *Apologize now and explain what happened later.*
- *Go to the office and get a late pass.*
- *Get angry and try to defend my point of view.*

5. Choose one of the choices listed above and list the **CONSEQUENCES (Pros and Cons)** in the boxes below.

CHOICE: *Apologize.*

CONSEQUENCES:

Pros	Cons
<i>Teacher will get off my case, and class can get to work.</i>	<i>Teacher won't realize it wasn't my fault.</i>

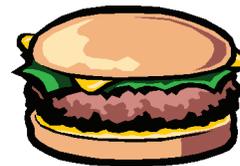
Decision Making 101

When you make a choice, you have to give something up. The second-best choice is called “the opportunity cost.” The opportunity cost is the thing you gave up so you could have your first choice.



Your choice

Your opportunity cost



Your choice

Your opportunity cost



Decision-Making Strategy:

1. CHALLENGE (State the problem.)
2. CHOICES (List all possible solutions.)
3. CONSEQUENCES (State the pros and cons of each choice.)

Choices and Consequences (Scenarios)

In each scenario, a choice has already been made. Pick one scenario and answer the questions on **Student Handbook page 15, Choices and Consequences (Questions)**.



1. You are standing by your locker talking with a few of your friends. You are about to head to your last class for the day when one of your friends suggests that you all cut class to go to the mall. You know your science teacher is reviewing for a big test at the end of the week, but you figure you can always worry about that later. You grab your backpack and slip out the side door with your friends.



2. For two years, you've been part of a mentoring program. You are assigned to an adult "Big Sister," and every other Saturday you get together and go see a movie, play laser tag, or go out to lunch. Lately, you've been wanting to spend more time with your friends on the weekend. This Saturday, you don't wake up until 10:30, too late to be at your Big Sister's house by 11:00 (when you said you'd be there).



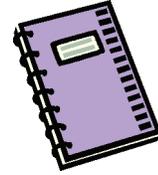
3. You and your mom have been fighting a lot. She just found out you've been talking on the computer to kids she doesn't know, and she's furious. You say a bunch of mean things, go into your room, and slam the door.



4. Your math teacher hands back a test you took last week. When you see your grade, you can't believe your eyes. A 55! You have no idea what you were doing the night before the test, but you're pretty sure it wasn't studying. You're starting to get worried that you're going to fail.

Choices and Consequences (Questions)

Scenario # _____



1. What choice has this person already made?

2. What's the opportunity cost of this choice? (What choice can this person no longer make?)

3. Write the **CHALLENGE** facing this person now.

4. List as many **CHOICES** as you can.

5. Choose one of the choices listed above and list the **CONSEQUENCES (Pros and Cons)** in the boxes below.

CHOICE: _____

CONSEQUENCES:

Pros	Cons