



Take the Lead

Lesson 4:

What Were You Thinking?

Grade level: 6-8

Learning objectives:

Participants will learn:

- how personal beliefs influence decision making
- the five methods of decision making
- to develop decision making skills through team activities

Codes for TEKS:

Language Arts

Codes for 40

Developmental Assets:

Planning and decision making
Interpersonal skills
Resistance skills
Peaceful conflict resolution

National Education Standards:

Language Arts

Life Skills Model:

Decision making
Problem solving
Teamwork
Communication
Conflict Resolution

Time required:

60 minutes

Equipment/materials:

Chalkboard or newsprint
Chalk or markers
Pencils
Collapsible tent poles (can use hula hoops or 10-foot pieces of foam pipe insulation)
Cardstock paper
Tape
Marbles

Handouts/Support Materials:

Earthquake

*If one does not know to which port one is sailing,
no wind is favorable.*

– Seneca

*Most of the important things in the world have been
accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there
seemed to be no hope at all.*

– Dale Carnegie

Making sound decisions is an important characteristic of effective leadership. Leaders must understand and use the best methods of decision making to help groups achieve their goals.

What are some things that influence how we make decisions?

Allow participants to discuss.

Some things that influence our decisions are our upbringing, values, morals, and outside influences such as peers, family, church, school, media, etc. These influences may be positive or negative.

There are some decisions that each of us makes individually. What are some examples of things you decide for yourself every day?

Possible answers: What to wear. How to fix our hair. What our attitude will be. The amount of effort we give to our homework, etc.

There are some decisions that need to be made by a group in order to find the best solution to the problem. Can you think of different ways in which groups go about making decisions?

Allow young people to answer.

There are five basic methods of decision making.

1. **Unanimous decision making** requires everyone to agree on a given course of action. When is this method used in our society? It is commonly used by juries in criminal trials in the United States.
2. **Majority decision making** requires support from more than 50 percent of the members of the group. It can create a group of “losers” in the process.

3. **Consensus decision making** tries to avoid “winners” and “losers.” Consensus requires that a majority approve a given course of action, but that the minority agree to go along with the course of action. In other words, if the minority opposes the course of action, consensus requires that changes be made to remove objectionable features.
4. **Plurality decision making** happens when the largest block in a group decides, even if it falls short of a majority. There may be three or more options and the vote may be split so that the option chosen doesn't have the majority of votes. Here's an example: There are 25 people in the group. Ten vote for option A, seven vote for option B and eight vote for option C. With a group of 25, the majority would be at least 13, but in plurality decision making, option A would win because it got the most votes.
5. **Dictatorship** is where one individual determines the course of action for the group and no one else has any input into the decision.

Plurality and dictatorship are less desirable kinds of decision making because they do not involve everyone. So, not everyone will be committed to the course of action chosen, and that can be a big obstacle later on. Have you ever been involved with a group that used plurality or dictatorship decision making? How did that type of leadership make you feel?

Allow participants to answer.

There are no perfect decision-making methods, but which of the other three methods do you think would work best—unanimous, majority or consensus?

Allow participants to answer.

There is no right answer to this question. The best method depends on the group dynamics, the leader's style of leading, the situation or task the group is working on, and other factors.

Today we are going to do some activities that will test your group decision-making skills

Activity 1: Earthquake!

This activity will challenge young people to work together and make decisions based on the scenario presented.

Instructions:

1. Divide the group into teams of seven to ten members. Have each group sit in a close circle or around a table. Give each person a copy of the Earthquake handout and a pencil.
2. Read the Earthquake scenario to the group:
A devastating earthquake has occurred. Your group is trapped in a three-story school. Fortunately, everyone was able to get to a central area on the first floor. The success of the group depends on how well decisions are made and the order in which various tasks are accomplished. You are to review the Earthquake handout and rank the list of tasks in order of highest priority (give it a number 1) to lowest priority (number 11). You have 5 minutes to make your ranking in column A entitled "Your Rank." You must work alone without any interaction with your team members. After the 5 minutes are up you will be given further instructions.
3. After 5 minutes, give the next instructions:
Each of you ranked the tasks in the order you think is best. Now discuss this as a team and come up with a team ranking for the eleven tasks. You have 20 minutes to do your team ranking. Write your team ranking in column D.
4. After 20 minutes, have each team reveal its team ranking from column D to the whole group. Record each team's decision on a chalkboard or newsprint. Compare the similarities of the teams' decisions. Were any just alike?
5. Reveal the Expert Rank and have participants write it in columns B and E. Expert Rank is:
 - Attempt to remove the rubble from the entrance to the first floor – 10
 - Put all your food together and ration it over the next few days – 9
 - Light the candles so you can see and rescuers will be able to locate you – 11
 - Locate and secure a water supply – 4
 - Discuss long-term survival strategies as a group – 6
 - Pound on the pipes with the steel wrench – 8
 - Assign someone to monitor the radio and listen for updates – 3
 - Check for injuries and administer first-aid – 2
 - Shut off all utilities – 1

- Develop day and night signaling techniques and begin signaling immediately – 5
 - Purify the water source – 7
6. Have participants figure the difference between column A and column B by subtracting the smaller number from the larger number and record it in column C. Also figure the difference between column D and column E and record it in Column F. From this, participants can see how far their individual and team rankings were from the expert ranking.
 7. The last step is to add the numbers in column C and write the total in the score in the “individual score” box. Also add the numbers in column F and write the total in the “team score” box.
 8. The lower the scores, the better the tasks were ranked.

Discussion questions:

- By a show of hands, whose individual score was lower than the team score?
- How did your team go about deciding how to rank the tasks?
- What decision-making method was used—unanimous, majority, consensus, plurality or dictatorship?
- Did everyone in your group agree on the final team decision?
- Did any team member dominate the group discussion?
- Did every team member give an opinion? If not, why?
- Did personal experiences or beliefs influence your input to the team discussion? If so, what was it?
- What could have been done differently in each group to make the decision-making process work better?

Activity 2: The Magic Stick

In this activity groups work together to lower the magic stick to the ground while following the rules of the game.

Instructions:

1. With a large group (15 to 20 people), have participants stand in two equal lines facing each other and use a collapsible tent pole or a 10-foot piece of foam pipe insulation. (If you use hula hoops, divide into groups of six and have them stand in a circle.)
2. Have young people bend their elbows and hold their hands as if making a pistol, with index fingers pointed and thumbs sticking up.

3. Young people should move close together so that their fingers are in line.
4. Place the tent pole (or hula hoop) on the young people's index fingers. Explain that their job is to lower the tent pole to the ground and lay it down while staying in constant contact with the pole at all times. They can't grip the pole with their thumbs.
5. If any team member removes a finger from the pole, start over from the beginning.
6. Almost every time you do this activity, the pole will rise at first instead of going down because the participants are coming up to meet the pole instead of letting the pole come to them. Make a point of starting over several times to force the group to communicate with each other to figure out a strategy for lowering the pole. You may have to encourage them to talk if they are not planning a strategy.
7. The key to solving this task is for the group to select one person to be the leader and talk everyone through the activity instead of everyone trying to talk. This activity drives home the importance of listening and following directions!

Discussion questions:

- Why did the pole go up when we first tried this activity?
- How did the inability of the group to accomplish the task at the beginning affect the group's communication and teamwork?
- What strategies did your group use to help you accomplish the task?
- What kept your group from accomplishing the task?
- How does this activity relate to our role as leaders? As followers?

Activity 3: Don't Lose Your Marbles

The object of this activity is for teams to work together to determine the best strategy for accomplishing the task.

Preparation:

1. Mark spots on the floor that will be targets for each team's marbles. You'll need one target per team. Mark the target by taping off a 4-inch x 4-inch square or by drawing a 4-inch x 4-inch square on paper and taping it to the floor.
2. Have a chair or stool for each team—one that is safe for young people to stand on.

Instructions:

- Divide the group into teams of six to eight members.
- Give each person one piece of paper—cardstock works best—and two pieces of tape.
- Give each team five marbles.
- Each team is to build a marble shoot using the paper and tape and then send the five marbles through the shoot to the target landing area.
- The marble shoot must start at 6 feet above the floor and it can not touch the floor or the target landing area.
- As a team, decide how you will assemble your marble shoot and transport your five marbles to the target landing area.
- If a marble rolls out of the landing area, you must start over with that marble.
- The task is complete when all marbles are in the landing area.

Discussion questions:

- How did you create your marble shoot?
- Did the shoot work the first time or did you have to adapt it?
- How did the team decide on the design?
- What conflicts came up within the team? How were they resolved?
- What decision-making method was used—unanimous, majority, consensus, plurality or dictatorship?
- Did any team member dominate the group discussion?
- Did every team member give an opinion? If not, why?
- Did personal experiences or beliefs influence your input to the team discussion? If so, what was it?
- What could have been done differently to make the decision-making process work better?

Extended activity: Computer Decision-Making Games

If there are computers with Internet access, participants can go to the Web site below and practice decision making with games that relate to real life. One is The Lemonade Stall, in which players begin with \$20.00 to purchase supplies for a lemonade stand and set the price for each cup. They keep track of expenses and income to see how their decisions worked out. Another game is The Virtual Farm. This game requires participants to make decisions in running a virtual farm.

<http://www.careersoft.co.uk/weblinks/resource/96/9652.htm>

Earthquake!

A YOUR RANK	B EXPERT RANK	C Difference of A&B		D TEAM RANK	E EXPERT RANK	F Difference of D&E
			Attempt to remove the rubble from the entrance to the first floor			
			Put all your food together and ration it over the next few days			
			Light the candles so you can see and rescuers will be able to locate you			
			Locate and secure a water supply			
			Discuss long-term survival strategies as a group			
			Pound on the pipes with the steel wrench			
			Assign someone to monitor the radio and listen for updates			
			Check for injuries and administer first-aid			
			Shut off all utilities			
			Develop day and night signaling techniques and begin signaling immediately			
			Purify the water source			
Individual Score				Team Score		

