

Activity 1.2.3 Decision Making

Purpose

Making a decision is sometimes as easy as flipping a coin. Other decisions are very difficult to make because there are complex circumstances or potential for negative consequences.

When you make a quick decision, you may not even realize steps in the decision-making process are taking place. For example, when did you decide to get up this morning? Why did you get up at the time you chose? What alternatives existed? What criteria played a role in deciding to get up at the time you did? Finally, what was the outcome of that decision? Were you on time for school as a result of that decision?

In reality, every decision requires multiple steps. First, you must recognize the decision and identify your choices or options. Second, the options must be evaluated according to some criteria. Criteria may include personal values, financial impacts, or potential to solve a problem. Third, you must choose the most appropriate option and act upon it. Finally, you should evaluate the outcome to determine if you selected the right course of action. This evaluative process is often missing in everyday decision-making, but offers the most potential for growth and learning.

As you manage a year-long project, you will face many decisions along the way. How will you prioritize and plan your time and resources?

Materials

Per pair of students:

- Computer with Internet access

Per student:

- Pencil
- *Agriscience Notebook*

Procedure

As a high school student, you are responsible for choosing what path to follow after graduation. Will you find a full-time job and begin your professional career? Will you attend a two-year or four-year college? What will your major be? Where will you live? How will you pay for higher education? Perhaps those decisions have already been made, or maybe you are still trying to decide.

Part One – Identifying a Problem and Solutions

1. Identify one decision you have not made yet regarding your future plans.
2. Describe the decision you need to address in the first row of Table 1 on the student worksheet.
3. Brainstorm two or three potential solutions and record in the far left column in the matrix.

Part Two – Analyzing Solutions

1. Identify four criteria or priorities you need to consider when making your decision and record them in the four column headings. Criteria may include:
 - potential to solve the problem
 - health factors
 - accessibility
 - employment outlook for the training

- lowest cost
- academic offerings
- long-term potential in the career area
- other factors

4. Assign criteria weightings. Which criteria is most important to address? That criteria should have the highest value. The four criteria weightings should add up to a total of 10.
5. Now, rate or rank each solution for each criteria on a scale of 1-5 (one being the lowest value or worst rank; a five would infer the highest value or best rank).
6. Multiply the rankings by the criteria weighting to find the value of each criteria.
7. Total each row by adding the scores together. Record the total in the Option Score column. The solution with the most points is the best solution, mathematically speaking.

Part Three – After the Decision

1. If you decide to pursue the solution ranked highest in Part Two, what action items or steps do you need to take? In Table 2, make a list of three things you need to complete in order to pursue the path chosen in Part Two.
8. After taking action, you should also evaluate your decision. Ideally, you would do this multiple times. Your decision could affect you six months, one year, three years, and/or ten years after graduation. What questions would you ask in order to determine if your decision was the right decision? Questions might relate to the priorities used in Part One. List three questions you would use to assess the outcome of your decision in Table 3.

Conclusion

1. How are criteria used in making a decision?
The criteria help you approach the decision in a manner that helps you weigh all your options.
9. How do you determine which criteria is most important to address in the decision-making process?
Criteria importance is weighed by your values.
10. How would you evaluate a decision after carrying out the plan?
I would look at the end results of my decision and if it matches my goals.
11. Why is a systematic approach to decision-making important when managing a project?

Helps you break down the big picture into smaller steps so you do not get as overwhelmed about the decision.

Name: _____

Activity 1.2.3 Student Worksheet

Table 1. Decision Matrix

Decision:	College vs. Career				
Solutions/Options	Criteria				Option Score (Sum of option points for all four criteria).
	1. Accessibility Weight: 2	2. Cost Weight: 3	3. Goals Weight: 1	4. Academic Weight: 4	
1. West Virginia University	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	= _____
2. Community College while working	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	= _____
3. Just working	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	$\frac{\quad}{\quad} \times \frac{\quad}{\quad} = \frac{\quad}{\quad}$ rank x weight = pts	= _____
Comments:					

Table 2. Action Items

List three things you need to do in order to pursue the solution you chose in Part Two.
1. College tour/look at admission requirements and program offerings that match my goals
2. Look at cost of college vs. cost of no college and just working
3. Look at jobs for career interest with no college

Table 3. Evaluation Questions

What three questions might help you evaluate the effectiveness of your decision and action items?
1. What are my long term goals?
2. Is there a career for me without going to college that will meet my goals?
3. Would college help me meet my goals in the long run?