

Making Healthy Choices for Life Changes

Grade Level

none listed on the word document

Theme

The artist in his or her environment

Curriculum Framework Emphasis

Health

Social Studies

Art

Common Curriculum Goals

Demonstrate accessing information and interpersonal communication skills while understanding the components of mental, social and emotional health.

Make decisions that enhance or establish healthy relationships, or affect positive life changes.

Objectives

Recognize the characteristics of effective and ineffective decision-making.

Understand that people make choices and that those choices have direct and indirect consequences.

Understand that making decisions is an integral part of life.

Identify and practice various decision-making strategies.

Materials

Betty LaDuke Video.

Several "What If" questions to present to students, either written by the teacher or from other sources. (see The Daily Dilemma website under resources)

Samples of Betty LaDuke's artwork.

Handout: Super Seven Steps to Making Decisions

Vocabulary

decision

regret

choice

character

consequences

dilemma

values

alternatives

Activities

This series of lessons focuses on the importance of making choices and decisions and their impact on personal and social health.

Part A: (30 - 45 minutes)

1. Read the following situation aloud to students:

Dane is stopped by the principal on the school grounds on his first day of middle school. The principal tells him that kids are not allowed to ride their skateboards to school. Dane picks up his skateboard and asks the principal why kids cannot ride skateboards to school. He is told that skateboards can cause injuries and that the school cannot be responsible for kids getting hurt on school grounds.

Also, the principal explains, there is no place for kids to store skateboards during the day and so many kids have boards that it would cause a big problem in the classrooms. Dane is frustrated and angry. He has practiced many hours to learn to ride his skateboard so well, and it makes his trip to and from school much shorter than walking.

2. Ask students to suggest ways that Dane might respond to this situation. Record the students' ideas on the chalkboard.

Sample responses may include:

- Leave his skateboard at home from now on and walk to school.
- Ride his skateboard to school regardless of the rule.
- Ride his skateboard to school, hide it in the bushes near the school, and pick it up again for the ride home.
- Talk to his parents about what the principal said.
- Think about ways to change the rule.

3. Pose the following questions to the class for discussion: Does Dane have a choice about how he can respond to this situation? What do you think would be a "good" choice that Dane might make? Why? What would be a "poor" choice that Dane might make? Why?
4. After the discussion, explain that Dane is a real person and this was a real problem that he faced. You may want to share with students how Dane actually did solve this problem.

Dane decided that he wanted to challenge the rule and try to get it changed. He interviewed students and teachers to get their opinions and recorded the responses. He evaluated the percentage of adults and kids who were in favor of riding skateboards to school versus those opposed. He talked to teachers and other staff at the school about why it was a problem to store the boards at school, and to determine if there was a space where kids could put skateboards while at school.

He then wrote a letter to the principal listing the specific reasons that he thought kids should be able to ride their skateboards to school. Included in the letter were other opinions from teachers and kids about allowing kids to ride their skateboards.

In the letter, he offered not only arguments, but solutions to the problems. In response to lack of skateboard storage at school, Dane had arranged with the custodian to open an unoccupied room in the morning and again in the afternoon so kids would have a room in which to store the skateboards so that they wouldn't crowd the classrooms.

He drafted a form that a student could have signed by their parent giving them permission to ride a skateboard to and from school, and releasing the school from any liability if the student happened to be injured as a result of riding the skateboard.

Finally, Dane made an appointment with the principal, presented his research and his letter and was met with a surprising response: the school rule was changed with Dane's proposed solutions in place!

Did Dane's choice of how to solve the problem affect a positive change?

5. Ask students to raise their hand if they have ever made a poor choice, or done something "stupid"? What were the reasons for making that choice? Was it worth it? (What were the consequences of that choice?) Do you think you'll ever make a bad decision or choice again in your life?
6. Explain that making decisions is a skill that they can learn. This unit will focus on making decisions and choices, evaluating the consequences of those choices, and that making choices leads to change.

Part B: (45 - 60 minutes)

1. Remind students that this unit focuses on making choices to affect change.
2. Introduce Betty LaDuke, an Oregon artist who has lived in Ashland for many years.

Relate a brief biography of Betty LaDuke, and show some examples of her artwork. Ask kids to recognize that this artist grew up in the Bronx in New York City, she has lived and studied her artwork all over the world, and lives right here in Oregon.

3. Before you watch the film, ask students to look for and write down choices that Betty LaDuke made in her life, and list the changes that were brought about by those choices.
4. Watch the Betty LaDuke video.
5. Discuss notes that students took regarding the choices that Betty LaDuke made in her life. Make a chart with two columns on chart paper or on the overhead. Title the Chart "Betty LaDuke" and head the left column "Choices" and the right column "Changes." Record choices suggested by the students' notes and discuss and record the changes in her life that were a direct or indirect result of those choices. Discuss students' thoughts about why she made these choices, how the choices changed her life, and did she have to make the choices for change.

Part C: (60 minutes)

1. Post the chart created in the last class. Briefly review the choices that Betty LaDuke made and the changes that those choices brought about in her life.
2. Consider the question, "What are the steps to making a choice such as those that Betty LaDuke made?" Discuss briefly.
3. Students have to make difficult choices every day. Separate students into groups. Assign each group to write down a situation in which a person their age has a difficult decision to make. They should describe the person(s) involved, and explain the problem the student is facing in detail, without offering any sort of solution.
4. Collect student-written dilemmas and distribute each to a different group.
5. Distribute Handout: Super Seven Steps for Making Decisions, and review orally with the class. Discuss each step and give examples when appropriate.

Super Seven Steps for Making Decisions

1. Stop and Think
It is necessary to be calm and to take the time needed to make a clear choice.
2. What is my goal in making this choice?
Be clear about short-term and long-term goals in the decision-making process. Decide which goals are the most important.
3. What are the facts?
What do you know and what do you still need to find out? Get additional information if necessary and make sure your information is factual.
4. What are my options?
Make a list of possible choices you could make. Ask people you trust for ideas to add to the list – they may be able to provide choices you hadn't previously considered.
5. What are the consequences of my actions?
Make a Decision Tree to identify the consequences of the choice.
Decision tree: Draw a tree on a sheet of chart paper. Write the question at the top of the tree in such a way that it may be answered with either a yes or no. Below the question, write yes on one side and no on the other. Under the yes and no, list all the possible consequences of each decision. Consider all the consequences and come to a decision.

Ask yourself these questions to help identify the consequences:

- Who will this decision affect and how?

- Who will it hurt and who will it help?
- Will I feel good about this decision?
- Is this decision ethical?

6. Make the decision

When it is time to make the choice, if you are still unsure, you could do the following:

- Ask for the opinions and advice of people you trust and respect.
- Use the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

7. Was the choice effective?

Over time, evaluate the effectiveness of the choice made. Has the original goal in making the choice been met? Do adjustments need to be made or a different choice selected?

6. Ask groups to select one person from their group to be the scribe. Assign students to read aloud their student-written dilemma in their small group. Have students decide what is the best choice that the person in the dilemma should make, and to take notes on their thinking and group discussion as they consider each step in the decision-making process. Number the steps on a blank sheet of paper for notes.
7. Collect group problem solving notes at the end of the class period.

Part D: (60 minutes)

1. Return collected group problem solving notes and ask them to review the materials.
2. Ask groups to present the dilemma, the solution they decided upon, and the reasons that they felt this was the best decision.
3. Discuss each situation briefly as a class after each presentation.

Part E: Other Curriculum Connections

Reading:

- When Zachary Beaver Came to Town, by Kimberly Willis Holt.
- Bearstone, by Will Hobbs.

Writing:

- Write a narrative paper describing a time when you had a difficult decision to make. Describe the scenario leading to the problem, identify the problem that needed to be solved, state how you solved the problem. Finally, respond to the questions: Would you make the same decision today if faced with the same problem? Why or why not? How did that decision help you to make decisions in the future?

References

Websites

The Daily Dilemma Archive: <http://www.goodcharacter.com/dilemma/archive.html>.

POAH Online: Betty LaDuke: http://www.poahonline.org/bio_laduke.html.

Study Guides and Strategies: Problem Solving and Decision Making: Graphic Overview of Process: <http://www.studygs.net/problem/problemsolvingo.htm>.

Josephson Institute of Ethics: <http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/MED/MED-intro+toc.htm>

eHOW: How to Make Decisions: http://www.ehow.com/how_3838_make-decisions.html/

Vocabulary Definitions

alternative - The choice between two mutually exclusive possibilities.

character - A description of a person's attributes, traits, or abilities; moral or ethical strength.

choice - The act of choosing; selection.

consequence - Something that logically or naturally follows from an action or condition.

decision - The act of reaching a conclusion or making up one's mind.

dilemma: - A situation that requires a choice between options that are or seem equally unfavorable or mutually exclusive.

regret - To feel sorry, disappointed, or distressed about.

values - A principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable.