

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

Advisor's Guide to personal growth and leadership development

Lesson Number: **RNH.1.2**

Thinking Critically and Making Decisions

Purpose:

This lesson will encourage students to think critically about the decisions they face and how those decisions relate to their goals and aspirations.

Directions:

One of the most important skills we can teach young people is how to think critically and make good decisions. Today they will learn a methodical approach to making important decisions and what their basic decision making styles are.

1. Impress on students that, while no one makes the best decision every time, the degree of success they attain will be in large measure a sum result of the decisions they make.
2. Ask students to think about difficult situations in which they have found themselves. Cover the following questions:
 - a. Do you know of anyone who has made poor choices that have ended up hurting them? (Do not ask them to name names. However, if there has been a specific instance that was public knowledge in your community consider discussing it.)
 - b. What is a goal? How is it different from a dream?
 - c. Do you have your goals written down?
 - d. What are some of your goals?
3. Indicate that today they will study decision making and learn how the choices that they make now will affect them in the future. Begin with defining decision making using RNH.1.2.AS.A.

Quick Reference:

Time Required:

50 minutes

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define decision making.
2. Understand how decisions they make today might impact the choices available to them in the future.
3. Define the scientific method of problem solving.
4. Apply the scientific method of problem solving to their lives.

Materials:

- ✓ Writing surface
- ✓ RNH.1.2.AS.A – one per facilitator
- ✓ RNH.1.2.AS.B – one per facilitator
- ✓ RNH.1.2.AS.C – one per student
- ✓ RNH.1.2.AS.D – one per facilitator
- ✓ RNH.1.2.AS.E – one per facilitator
- ✓ RNH.1.2.AS.F – one per student





4. Tell students that they are making decisions all the time.
 - a. What time to get up?
 - b. What to wear?
 - c. With whom to spend time?
 - d. What classes to enroll in?
 - e. And many more.
5. Based on the definition provided, ask students if they can guess what some of the most common mistakes in decision making might be. Write answers on writing surface.
6. Distribute RNH.1.2.AS.C and have students fill out answers as you cover RNH.1.2.AS.B material.
7. As you cover these items, give examples of decisions that have been made in your chapter or school where one of the mistakes identified was made. This will add meaning to the discussion and help students understand how the material applies to their lives.
8. Review the common decision-making mistakes and ask the students how they could avoid them.
9. Ask students if they are familiar with the phrase, “scientific method.” If so ask a volunteer to give a definition.
10. Proceed to tell students that you’re going to share with them a practical, logical approach to problem solving that they can use to make decisions in their lives.
11. Indicate that this approach is called “the scientific method of problem solving” developed by scientists Newton and Galileo. Walk students through the seven steps of the scientific method using RNH.1.2.AS.E.
12. As you walk through the steps, apply each to a decision that is being made or was recently made in your chapter or school.
13. Distribute RNH.1.2.AS.F to each student and have them walk through a decision or problem they need to make using the problem-solving steps. If students cannot think of any problems or decisions, pose an example for them about an SAE or issue going on at school.



Connection Questions:

1. What are some factors that affect individuals in making wrong decisions?
2. List two ways that you can apply the decision making method to decisions you make with your peers.
3. How can you assure yourself that you make the best decisions and choices in life?

LifeKnowledge Connections:

Precept(s) Addressed:

Vision

C4. Adapt to opportunities and obstacles.

Character

D5. Practice self-discipline.

Continuous Improvement

F3. Use innovative problem-solving strategies.

LK Lesson Suggestion:



HS.25 – Applying Critical Thinking

AHS.31 – Using Evaluation and Reflection

AHS.34 – Strategic Thinking and Planning

AHS.35 – Leading Others in Strategic Thinking



Decision Making

Decision making is the process of selecting a course of action to address a need or solve a problem.

It includes identifying the need or problem, considering alternatives, and evaluating how well each alternative meets the need or solves the problem.

The final steps are making the decision and choosing the best solution from among the alternatives.



Mistakes in Decision Making

- Existence of problem is denied
- Problem isn't well defined or understood
- Solution is targeted at a symptom rather than the underlying problem
- Goals and objectives aren't clearly defined
- Possible alternatives are not carefully considered/evaluated opinions; emotions and self-interests interfere with objective
- Individuals or groups jump to unwarranted conclusions
- Individuals or groups are afraid to make mistakes and therefore don't make many decisions



Name: _____

Date: _____

Decision Making

1. List five common mistakes in decision making.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. List five abilities that will help you avoid decision-making mistakes.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. The seven steps to problem solving are listed below. Number them to indicate which step should be taken first, second, and so on.

- _____ Select a workable solution
- _____ Implement your chosen solution
- _____ Evaluate the results
- _____ Recognize the problem
- _____ Gather information
- _____ Evaluate your alternatives
- _____ Determine your alternatives



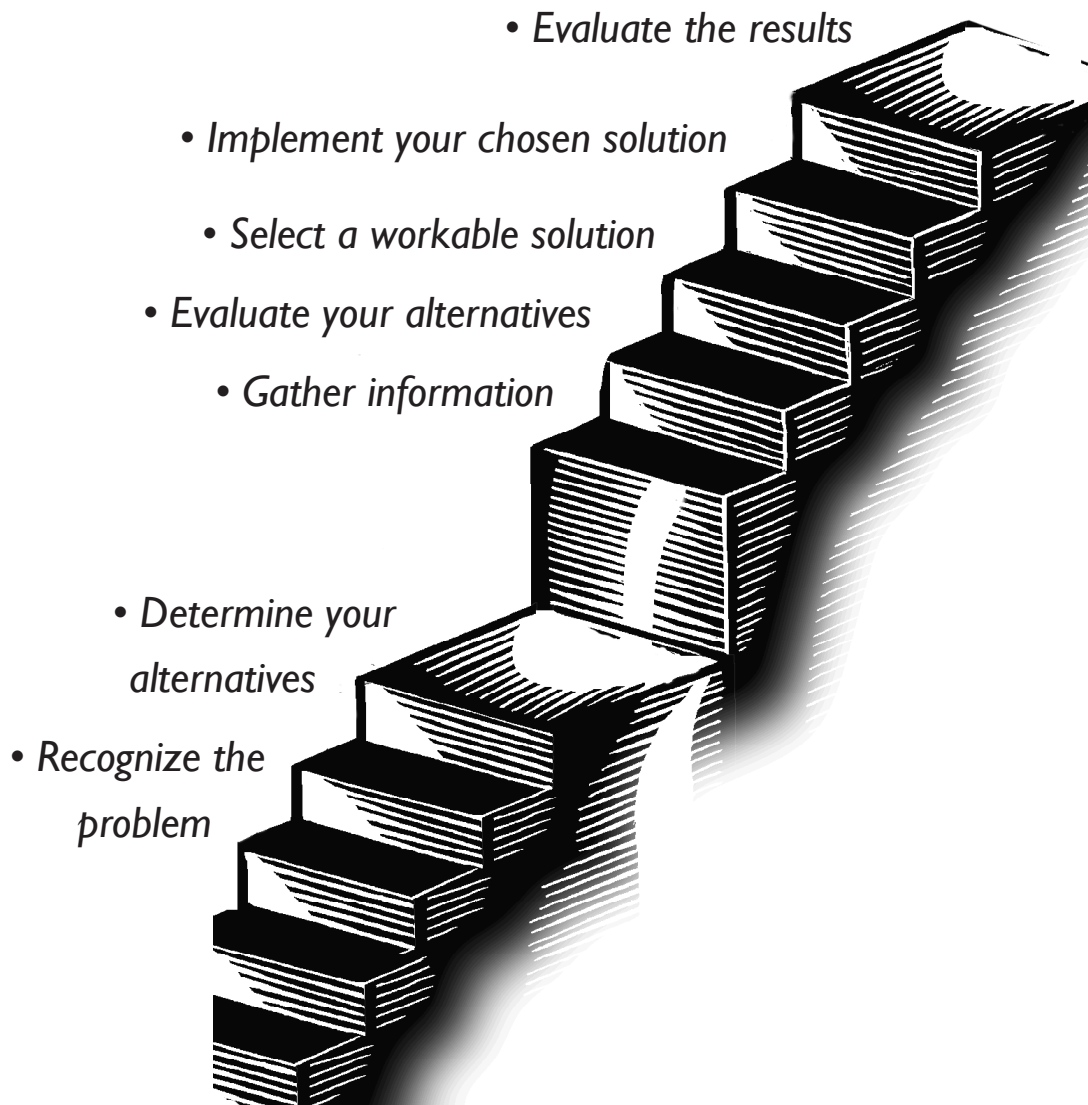
Decision-Making Skills

- Recognize problem situations
- Clearly distinguish the problem from the problem situation
- Clearly define goals and/or objectives
- Develop creative, imaginative solutions to problems
- Gather information related to the possible solutions
- Be open-minded toward possible solutions offered by others; carefully evaluate information by accepting or rejecting possible solutions
- Work with others to solve problems
- Avoid jumping to unwarranted conclusions
- Accept the fact that you may make mistakes
- Put aside opinions, feelings, emotions, and self-interests that may interfere with objective thinking
- Understand and use a systematic approach to solving problems and making decisions

(As identified by Lloyd J. Phipps in *Handbook on Agricultural Education in the Public Schools*)



Scientific Method of Problem Solving



By following these steps, we are more likely to make better choices.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Applying the Scientific Method of Problem Solving

Apply the following steps to a problem you're trying to solve in your life. It can be school-related but doesn't have to be. If you need more space, use another sheet of paper.

1. What is the problem you are attempting to solve? What goal are you trying to meet?

2. What are your alternative solutions? List them.

3. Gather information on your alternative solutions.

4. Evaluate the alternative solutions by listing the advantages and disadvantages of each.



Applying the Scientific Method of Problem Solving

5. Select a workable solution.

6. Implement your solution.

7. Evaluate your results.
