



Five Ways to Make a Decision: Consensus Building, Compromise, and Community Building

Middle School Food and Agricultural Literacy Curriculum

Precepts

- B. Relationships
 - B2. Interact and work with others
 - B5. Participate effectively as a team member
- H. Social Growth
 - H2. Present self appropriately in various settings
- M. Communications
 - M4. Communicates appropriately with co-workers and supervisors

National Standards

- CS.01.01.06.b. Assign project parts equitably among team members to achieve a given task.
- CS.01.02.01.b. Determine human relation skills characteristic of people who exhibit compassion, empathy, unselfishness, trustworthiness, reliability, and being friendly.
- CS.03.02.01.a. Analyze the steps in the decision-making process.
- NL-ENG.K-12.12 – Applying Language Skills

Student Learning Objectives

- As a result of this unit the student will...
- Apply foundational and life skills learned through agriculture in the school and community setting.
- As a result of this lesson, the student will ...
- Demonstrate compromise, consensus, and community building concepts for carrying out different tasks, assignments, and projects.

Content Outline

Objective 1. Demonstrate compromise, consensus, and community building concepts for carrying out different tasks, assignments, and projects.

Time

Instruction time for this lesson: 45 minutes.

Resources

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F.P. (2006). *Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills – Ninth Edition*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Tools, Equipment and Supplies

Note to Teacher: Classroom setup will help make this lesson. Have five groups formed with the tables and chairs and have a table in the middle of the room with the candy sitting on it.
Transparencies/Projector
Writing Surface
MS.IAS.3.2.TM.A – one per teacher
MS.IAS.3.2.TM.B – one per teacher
MS.IAS.3.2.TM.C – one per teacher
MS.IAS.3.2.AS.A – one per student
MS.IAS.3.2.AS.B – one of each for student group
Playing Cards (arranged under chairs)
Bag of Candy

Key Terms

The following terms are presented in this lesson and appear in **bold italics**:

Authority

Expert Member

Majority Vote

Committees

Consensus

I. Defining Each Decision-Making Method

- A. **Authority**: The person in a position of power makes the decision alone.
- B. **Expert Member**: A member with **expert** knowledge makes the decision for the group.
- C. **Majority Vote**: The decision of the majority prevails.
- D. **Committees**: A small group of members is chosen to make the decision for the group.
- E. **Consensus**: Everyone discusses and compromises until a decision is agreed on by each member of the group.

**Middle School Food and Agricultural Literacy Curriculum****Five Ways to Make a Decision:
Consensus Building, Compromise, and
Community Building****II. Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Decision-Making Method****A. Authority**

1. Can be useful for quick administrative decisions.
2. Leads to little commitment and group interaction. Decision may be a poor one.

B. Expert Member

1. Good when one person's expertise far exceeds the group's knowledge.
2. It is difficult to choose the **expert** and it can lead to low commitment along with resentment and jealousy.

C. Majority Vote

1. Can be useful when there is little time and the group must decide.
2. Leaves an alienated minority and can damage group effectiveness.

D. Committees

1. Good option when everyone cannot meet. Useful for simple routine decisions.
2. Does not utilize the resources of all group members and can lead to controversy.

E. Consensus

1. Produces an innovative, creative, and high-quality decision where everyone is committed.
2. Takes a great deal of time, requires effective team members, and is not the ideal choice for high pressure/emergency decisions.

Interest Approach

As students walk into the room, have the chairs and tables cleared and a bag of popular candy sitting on the table with a note that says, "Do not eat or touch this candy. In five minutes we will, as a group, decide which ONE of you will get the candy."

Alternative option: If you do not have or want to purchase a bag of candy, you could offer five extra credit points, a single candy bar, or some other relevant reward that is unique to your class. Or have students think about a time they were in a group and had to make a decision. From here they could write about the situation, explain what happened, how it was handled and what they would have done differently, and why. Students could then take turns sharing with the class.

Welcome! The bag of candy in the middle of the room can be yours. When I say SWEET TOOTH, you will have five minutes to decide as a group who gets the candy. At the end of the five minutes you will notice the lights blinking. This is your signal to let me know whom you have decided the candy will go to. What questions are there? SWEET TOOTH!

As students begin convincing each other, look for examples of how students chose to attack this decision. Did they quickly move to voting or did they choose another method? Look for students who had no say or did not become involved, students who took over the process and any groups that formed.

After five minutes, blink the lights and have students announce their results.

The time has come. Who will the candy (or other reward) go to? Congratulations!!!

Give the winning student with the reward. Celebrate the process.

As you head to your seat, think about what you liked and did not like about the process of deciding.

Process the experience with the following suggested questions:

What did you like about the process?

What did you not like about the process?

Were you happy with the decision?

What were the challenges or barriers to making the final decision?

Would the process used to decide on the candy be an effective way to decide an important decision?

How would you change what you did or the process to make a better decision?

Making decisions as a group can be very challenging, but it is something almost everyone has to do pretty often. If everyone disagrees, how do you make a decision? What if everyone agrees but one person? When an emergency comes up and you have to make a quick decision how do you do that? What if no one knows what he or she wants or they don't care what the solution is? The process is taking forever and no one agrees – what now?

All these situations are tough. Learning how to make group decisions is a skill that will help you the



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rest of your life. Let's dive into five different ways to make a decision.

Post the following review in the room, or use **MS.IAS.3.2.TM.A** as a point of reference of what will be covered.

Today you'll learn:

The five ways to make decisions: **Authority, Expert Member, Majority Vote, Committees, or Consensus**

Place the five decision-making strategies on a writing surface or use MS.IAS.3.2.TM.A.

Summary of Content and Teaching Strategies

Objective 1. Demonstrate compromise, consensus, and community building concepts for carrying out different tasks, assignments, and projects.

You are going to be faced with decisions your whole life. Sometimes choosing the best method of making a decision makes the process much easier. Sometimes we don't all need to share our point of view, but sometimes it is a must.

Today we will explore five different ways to approach any decision that needs to be made.

I. Learning the five different ways to make a decision: Motion e-Moment®

Students will use the Motion e-Moment to discuss the five ways to make decisions. The Motion Moment challenges students to utilize or create hand or body movements that represent a concept. This type of activity is great for those who learn best by moving. Now students will create a motion that will help them remember each of the five ways to make decisions.

Stand Up. Who will share with us the five ways you can make decisions? Have students share the five types of decision-making strategies.

They should be posted from the preview of the lesson.

That is exactly right. They are: **Authority, Expert Member, Majority Vote, Committees** and

Consensus. Let's define what each method is and create a corresponding motion to help us remember them.

Have the five methods on the board, on a poster, or use **MS.IAS.3.2.TM.B** to display content. Capture brief notes as students share or appoint a scribe to do that for the group.

First is **Authority**. Who will share what they think making decisions by **authority** means?

Elicit responses.

Right, **Authority** is when someone with power makes the decision for the whole group without discussing it. Who will create a motion for **Authority**?

Choose a volunteer to share a motion. Have the entire class practice the motion. Great Motion!

Next is **Expert Member**. Who will share what they think this method involves?

Elicit responses.

Exactly, this is when an **expert** is chosen because they know a lot about the decision that has to be made. Who will create a motion for **Expert Member**?

Choose a volunteer to share a motion. Have the entire class practice the motion. Great Motion!

Third is **Majority Vote**. What is a **majority vote** and how does it make a decision?

Elicit responses.

This is the method we hear about the most more than likely. You are right, this is where people bring up something to decide, people share their opinions and then vote on what they want. The majority, or one more than half the people at the meeting, decides on the topic.

Choose a volunteer to share a motion. Have the entire class practice the motion. Thank You!

Fourth is **Committees**. Who can describe what a committee is and how they make decisions?

Elicit Responses.

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Exactly right. A committee is a minority of people chosen to research and make the decision on their own.

Choose a volunteer to share a motion. Have the entire class practice the motion. Thanks!

Finally is **Consensus**. This is a somewhat tricky word. Who will take a shot at what **consensus** is? *Elicit Responses.* **Consensus** is when a group puts a great deal of time and effort into finding a solution that everyone agrees with. It requires a great deal of compromise and community building.

Now we have a motion for each way to make a decision. Let's do them all together. Go through each motion with the class.

Just knowing the five different ways to make decisions isn't enough. The most important thing is knowing when a certain method is best for what you are doing.

II. Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Decision-Making Method**Utilize MS.IAS.3.2.TM.C**

Each of the decision-making methods has a purpose. Many times people think that decisions made by **authority** are bad and decisions by **consensus** are good. That isn't always the case. Each method has both advantages and disadvantages. You will work in small **expert** groups to think of the good and bad of each method.

Break into five groups. One method you could use is have playing cards taped under students' desks prior to the class that create five groups. Another method is to have students form their own groups. Or have groups pre-assigned on the method sheet you will pass out. Have **MS.IAS.3.2.AS.B** printed off and cut up into the five different methods so that each group will get an advantage/disadvantage chart for one decision making method.

You will find a playing card under your desk. When I say DECIDE, find the three other people with the same numbered card as you and send one representative to get your task card. You will return to your group and spend five minutes discussing the advantages and disadvantages of your specific decision method. Be ready to share your answers after five minutes. DECIDE!

Monitor students' responses and make sure they are staying on track and fully understand the method. Let them know when there is one minute remaining. Have a copy of **MS.IAS.3.2.AS.A** printed for each student to take notes as the groups share their information. Place those sheets on the groups' desks as they work on their method.

Time is up. Each of you now has a sheet with all of the methods listed. You will use this sheet to take notes as your peers share their information. Who will share the advantages and disadvantages of their method first? If you are not sharing, remember this is your time to capture all their great ideas.

Have each group share one at a time. The following advantages/disadvantages should be shared. Capture the thoughts using **MS.IAS.3.2.AS.A** or select a scribe to capture ideas on the board. Bring up any major topics not covered.

• Authority

- Advantages
 - Good for simple routine decisions
 - It is fast and easy for members
 - Great when people look to the leader to make the call
- Disadvantages
 - One person doesn't always know enough about the topic
 - Resentment and disagreement may follow
 - People aren't committed to the decision made

• Expert Member

- Advantages
 - Good for a situation where one person is a clear expert
 - It is a decision that everyone needs to help make
 - Not much time
- Disadvantages
 - Difficult to choose who the expert is
 - People aren't committed and sometimes angry or jealous
 - The team misses out on everyone's ideas



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- **Majority Vote**

- Advantages
 - A good way for everyone to share their opinion
 - Works well when the whole team isn't needed to do what is decided
 - When time is limited, this method reaches a decision quickly
- Disadvantages
 - There is usually an isolated minority
 - Everyone is not committed
 - Can hurt future community building

- **Committee**

- Advantages
 - Good when everyone can't meet to make a decision
 - Allows people who want to work on the issue to volunteer
 - Helps get things done when there isn't enough time to decide everything as a group.
- Disadvantages
 - Does not utilize the knowledge of the whole team
 - Leaves some people out
 - May cause arguments when the committee makes a decision

- **Consensus**

- Advantages
 - Produces a high quality decision – usually
 - Involves everyone in the process
 - Builds relationships and community
- Disadvantages
 - Takes a great deal of time and effort
 - Requires experienced mature team members
 - Time pressure must be minimal

Great Job! As you can see, there is a time and place for each of the methods of decision-making. Making decisions can be a very tough process. Choosing the right decision-making method is half the battle. The other half is effective communication by each team member.

Review/Summary

Great job breaking apart and really studying these decision-making methods! Let's quickly go over the methods. I will state a fact and you make the motion that corresponds to the matching method. Be careful, some hints could have more than one answer.

This method works well if you don't have much time to make a decision.

Check for students' motions, which could include **Authority, Expert Member, or Committee.**

If you have a group of people who really want to work on a certain issue, this would work best.

Check for the motion for **Committees.**

This method does reach a solution, but a small group of people could be upset and still like their idea better.

Check for the motion for **Majority**

If something minor has to be done that people aren't worried about, this method would work best.

Check for the motion for **Authority**

When an entire team has to work together to accomplish a big task, this long and tough method leads to everyone on board.

Check for the motion for **Consensus**

Meetings are a part of your life. You will find yourself in groups of people that are charged with making decisions in school, in an FFA Chapter, in college, and especially as a career professional someday.



Application

Extended classroom activity:

To extend this lesson, choose one relevant topic that is affecting the students' community and charge them with the task of making a decision. Encourage students to start by choosing the appropriate method of decision-making, and then work through that method ending with a decision. Following the process, students reflect on the process by journaling and then sharing with small groups their opinions and/or observations.

FFA activity:

Have students prepare a small skit to present at the next FFA chapter meeting teaching the members present about different ways to make decisions. The members present could then look at their agenda and decide the best way to approach each item.

SAE activity:

An important skill in any field of agriculture is working on a team to make a decision. Students could find an opportunity to be a part of a professional meeting that relates to their SAE and reflect on the experience. It may be a staff meeting at the grocery store, a Forestry Department board meeting, or a Farm Bureau committee meeting. Following the experience, students should collect their thoughts in their SAE journals or record books.

Reference MS.IAS.3.1, which discusses effective communication if you did that lesson prior to this one.

Evaluation

To evaluate students' understanding you have the option of collecting each student's advantage/disadvantage chart or utilizing **MS.IAS.3.2.Assess.A**

Answers to Evaluation

For the Advantage/Disadvantage Chart, refer to the content outline in the curriculum.

For **MS.IAS.3.2.Assess.A** use the following answers:

1. E – Consensus

Possible reasons include:

The entire chapter was going to work together to make the teacher appreciation breakfast work so it was important to have team commitment.

The decision would be better if everyone came to consensus.

It was an important decision.

By coming to consensus the relationships and community would grow.

2. B – Expert

Possible reasons include:

John is the only one in the chapter who knows how to build websites.

John is really good at creating websites and everyone trusts him.

John knows all the different formats to create the website.

No one really understands the technical language.

3. A – Authority

Possible reasons include:

Deciding where the next meeting will be held is not a huge decision.

Members don't really want to deal with it. They expect the president to have that done.

4. C – Majority Vote

Possible reasons include:

Only a small group was going to actually build the fair booth exhibit.

Members of the group have opinions, but no one is extremely tied to their own idea.

There is not a great deal of time to discuss the theme of the booth because of a guest speaker at the meeting.

5. D – Committee

Possible reasons include:

A group of four people really enjoy working at the concession stand.

The same four people have always worked the concession and planned the food.

Many members at the meeting can't help because they are involved in the sport.



Five Decision-Making Methods

- **Authority**
- **Expert Member**
- **Majority Vote**
- **Committee**
- **Consensus**



Defining Each Decision-Making Method

Authority: *The person in a position of power makes the decision alone.*

Expert Member: *A member with expert knowledge makes the decision for the group.*

Majority Vote: *The decision of the majority prevails.*

Committees: *A small group of members is chosen to make the decision for the group.*

Consensus: *Everyone discusses and compromises until each member of the group agrees on a decision.*



Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Decision-Making Method

Authority

- Can be useful for quick administrative decisions.
- Leads to little commitment and group interaction.
- Decision may not be as good as it could have been if discussed.

Expert Member

- Good when one person's expertise far exceeds the group's knowledge.
- It is difficult to choose the *expert* and it can lead to low commitment along with resentment and jealousy.

Majority Vote

- Can be useful when there is little time and the group must decide.
- Leaves an alienated minority and can damage group effectiveness.

Committees

- Good option when everyone cannot meet. Useful for simple, routine decisions.

Does not utilize the resources of all group members and can lead to controversy.

Consensus

- Produces an innovative, creative and high-quality decision where everyone is committed.
- Can take a great deal of time to reach a decision.



Name _____

The Good and the Bad of Each Decision-Making Method

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Authority</i>		
<i>Expert Member</i>		
<i>Majority Vote</i>		
<i>Committee</i>		
<i>Consensus</i>		



Authority

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>

Expert Member

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>

Majority Vote

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>

Committee

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>

Consensus

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>



Name: _____

Read each of the following scenarios and circle the letter of the best decision-making method to use. Beneath each scenario, explain why you chose the specific method.

1. **A group of students is planning to put on the first teacher appreciation banquet. The group is deciding what to serve at the breakfast. All the members of the group will be required to put on the breakfast. If the breakfast does not go well, the school may never give money to this breakfast again. Which decision-making method would you use?**

- a. Authority
- b. Expert Member
- c. Majority Vote
- d. Committee
- e. Consensus

Why did you choose this method? _____

2. **Your FFA Chapter wants to create a website but can't decide which format to use or how to create it. John is the only person who knows much about websites. The chapter tried to discuss it, but nobody understood what John was talking about. People trust John and his ability to work with websites. Which decision-making method would you use?**

- a. Authority
- b. Expert Member
- c. Majority Vote
- d. Committee
- e. Consensus

Why did you choose this method? _____

3. **The place where you normally meet is taken and you have to find a new place to hold the meeting. Sarah, the chapter president, usually sets up the meeting. Which decision-making method would you use?**

- a. Authority
- b. Expert Member
- c. Majority Vote
- d. Committee
- e. Consensus

Why did you choose this method? _____

4. **Each year, your chapter creates the winning fair exhibit. This year there are two ideas for a theme: You Are What You Eat or Agriculture – All Around You. Only a group of students will work on the exhibit. Which decision-making method would you use?**

- a. Authority
- b. Expert Member
- c. Majority Vote
- d. Committee
- e. Consensus

Why did you choose this method? _____

5. **Your chapter has taken over the concession stand for the big football game. You have to choose what to serve and how much to charge. Last year, the same four people always handled the concession stand decisions. Nobody has a strong opinion except the four who worked there before. Which decision-making method would you use?**

- a. Authority
- b. Expert Member
- c. Majority Vote
- d. Committee
- e. Consensus

Why did you choose this method? _____

