

Objective: Students understand that making good decisions requires moving through several stages and they use this insight to think about their own decision making processes.

Resources Needed for this Activity:

- None

Assignment(s):

Assignment	Standard(s)	Points	Assigned	Due
Student Assets	CS.PS.01 Identify problems and locate information that may lead to solutions.	5	4/25/17	4/27/17

Opening: 10 minutes – The advisor asks each student to spend a few moments thinking of a big decision they made at some point in the past. The advisor suggests that students consider decisions they have made about school, extracurricular activities, and their home lives. The objective of this brief opening activity is to get students thinking about the act of making a decision.

Several students are asked to share their big decisions. The advisor asks the students who share a decision to also briefly comment on how they made that decision or how they make other decisions. For example: Did they go somewhere special to make it? Did they sit down or were they active? Did they talk to anyone about it?

Activity: 15 minutes – Students are told that becoming college and career ready requires making many decisions, from choosing the courses you take to choosing the postsecondary institution you will attend.

The advisor tells the students that people who study how to make good decisions have determined that a way to make good decisions is to make them in stages rather than deciding quickly.

The following text is put on the board/screen:

Five Phases of Decision Making

The Clarification Phase

The Brainstorming Phase

The Evaluation Phase

The Decision Phase

The Double Checking Phase

Making reference to the board/screen, the advisor explains that we can break decision making into five phases. The advisor explains each phase using the following text:

1. The Clarification Phase: The decision maker clearly articulates the larger goal that he or she is trying to reach by making the decision. For example, if the student is trying to decide which courses to take next semester, he or she might frame the decision as: “I am trying to choose classes that will prepare me to get into and succeed at college.” This step helps to ensure that the decision maker is really clear about the larger objective that he or she is trying to achieve.

2. The Brainstorming Phase: The decision maker brainstorms options for achieving that goal, such as “I could take a college-level class,” or “I could take elective classes in the subject I think I want to study in college.”
3. The Evaluation Phase: The decision maker lists the pros and cons of each potential option.
4. The Decision Phase: The decision maker chooses the option they think will best help them reach their goal.
5. The Double Checking Phase: The decision maker reflects on the potential consequences of the option they have chosen to be sure it is the right course of action. If they decide that it is, they proceed with that option. If it is not, they go back to the pro/con lists they came up with during the Evaluation Phase and think about the consequences of other options to come up with a better one.

A few students are asked to share their thoughts on the benefits of making decisions through such a phased approach. The advisor makes sure that the idea surfaces that if a phased approach is not used two things can occur:

- (A) Good options may not be identified as the decision maker chooses the first option that comes to mind or that seems easiest
- (B) The consequences of the decision may not be identified until it is too late

Closure: 5 minutes – Students are asked to think about the frequency with which they use a phased decision making process like the one above. To do that, they respond to the following prompt: “If you have 10 key decisions to make in a year, for how many of those decisions do you think you would use a process like the one described above:

- A. 1 of the 10 decisions
- B. 3 of the 10 decisions
- C. 5 of the 10 decisions
- D. 8 of the 10 decisions
- E. 10 of the 10 decisions

Students raise their hands (or use another method) to identify which of the above options fits them best. A few students are asked to share why and when they would use a formal decision making process. The advisor should be sure that through the conversation the idea is articulated that some smaller decisions do not require the phased process but that it is important to use such a process to make decisions that are complex or will have long-lasting effects.

Students are asked to try using this process sometime over the coming week. During the next advisory session, students will practice this phased decision making process.

*For example, see Miller, D. C., & Byrnes, J. P. (2001). To Achieve or Not to Achieve: A Self-Regulation Perspective on Adolescents' Academic Decision Making. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 93*(4), 677-685.