

Making decisions

Overview

There are many ways to make a decision. This activity supports students by raising their awareness of different decision making strategies that can be used and the importance of working together.

Learning intentions

- Students understand different strategies for making decisions and coming to agreement.

Resources

- 'Decision making strategies hand out

Instructions

- Divide into smaller groups (up to 5 students) and give each group one of the strategies from the handout (depending on the number of groups, some could do two or more strategies).
- Ask the students to read the description of the strategy before discussing and suggesting:
 - at least one advantage of the strategy
 - a situation when it would be appropriate to use that strategy
 - a situation when a different strategy might be needed
 - what skills are required, for example, listening to others, willingness to consider others' perspectives, problem solving.
- Allow about 15 minutes before asking each smaller group to share an outline of their strategy and explain the advantages and situations when it could be useful.
- The whole group can then discuss which strategies might be useful for team decisions, for example,
 - deciding between two different proposals for a student led activity (for example, a colour-run for the school or music performance at lunch)
 - deciding who will take minutes of a team meeting.

Debriefing questions

The following questions may help the group to consider other decision making scenarios, the importance of negotiating and inclusive decision making.

- Which strategies are more likely to help the team come to a 'fair' agreement?
- How can we make sure everyone has a say and contributes to decisions?

Concluding comments

In some situations, a majority of 'votes' may be used to make a decision, and while this can achieve a quick result, it may not always be fair and respectful of others or achieve the best result.

It's important that as a team, we listen to the views and experience of others and ensure we have as much information as possible, to make our decisions. This may also include speaking with others outside of the team to find out their views, before we get to the decision making process.

Decision making strategies

The 'one person' decision

- An autocratic decision made by an individual or small group in a position of authority.
- Decisions can be made quickly and simply.

Voting

- An efficient and democratic method of reaching a shared decision.
- Can be done by secret ballots or with raised hands.
- Votes are tallied and the greatest number of votes decides on the action.

Consensus

- A decision made only when everyone agrees
- All views are sought and considered
- The group tries to understand all points of view and take them into account

Brainstorming

- All ideas are welcome and must be written down.
- The ideas are not judged at the time of recording
- Combine and improve ideas. The task is to find a solution
- Quantity is essential to broaden the possibility of finding an answer

The 4:2:1 technique

Each person writes their top 4 ideas, then form pairs and reach agreement on 4 ideas. Pairs combine into groups of 4 and work together to reach agreement on 2 ideas. These groups pair with another group of 4 and work together to agree on 1 idea.

Agree/ disagree/ unclear

3 headers are put on the wall: 'Agree', 'Disagree' and 'Unclear'. Each person writes 3 ideas and places them under 'Agree'. The group discusses and can move items from the 'Agree' header to other headers. Discuss: What is unclear? What are the agreed good ideas?

XYZ method

Each person writes 3 post-it notes: X is a short term solution, Y is a long term solution and Z is an, 'out of the box' idea which may not be feasible. Post all the notes up on a wall and use one of the other strategies to prioritise them.