



## **An Introduction to *Decisions and Outcomes***

**Decisions and Outcomes** is a critical thinking strategy which helps students identify and evaluate a variety of decisions and their potential short- and long-term consequences. In choosing from alternatives and examining the events which might follow, students are able to deepen their understanding of cause and effect relationships and analyze chains of events.

### **ACTIVITY** (time required: 40-60 minutes)

1. Explain to students that every day things happen based on decisions that we make. Often, we reflect on why something has happened and then think of alternative choices that might have affected the outcome. Different decisions may result in different outcomes.
2. Dr. Arthur Costa states, “The critical attribute of intelligent human beings is not only having information, but also knowing how to act on it.” By a show of hands, how many of you have made a decision that you wish you could change? Did you make your decision before you gathered all the facts or was your decision based on your impulse reaction to the situation?
3. Using a transparency or handout of the Habits of Mind page, share the 16 Habits of Mind with students and launch a discussion. Explain that these Habits were created by Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick and describe some of the ways humans display their intelligence.
4. Ask students to take out a piece of paper and find a partner. Ask, “When faced with a problem for which you do not have an obvious answer, what Habit(s) of Mind could you use to make an intelligent decision?” Tell students that generally when you make decisions you are using more than one Habit of Mind.
5. Give students a few minutes to work with their partners, and then have them come to the board to put a check beside the Habits of Mind they chose. For discussion, ask students to explain the reasons for their choices.
6. Ask students to consider the following question, “What would you do if you found a twenty dollar bill on the floor at the grocery store?” Have students create a list of possible decisions. Ask them to brainstorm possible outcomes for each decision and then chart short and long term advantages and disadvantages.
7. Allow 10-15 minutes for work, then guide students in a discussion using the questions below.
  - What were the advantages and disadvantages for the decisions?
  - What is the relationship between a decision and an outcome?
  - Do we know what will really happen?
  - When should we consider different decisions and outcomes?
  - How does this process relate to personal choices?
  - In what other ways might we use the Decisions and Outcomes Process?
  - Which decisions used Habits of Mind and which did not?
  - As a group, what do they believe is the best decision?
8. Wrap up the discussion by identifying the benefits of considering many decisions and possible outcomes before making a plan.



## **Habits of Mind**

Created by Arthur L. Costa, Ed.D. and Bena Kallick, Ph.D

- **Persisting** ~ *not giving up, sticking to it!*
- **Managing Impulsivity** ~ *thinking before you act*
- **Listening to Others with Understanding** ~ *seeing others' points of view*
- **Thinking Flexibly** ~ *coming up with several ideas*
- **Thinking About Our Thinking (Metacognition)** ~ *thinking about how you think*
- **Striving for Accuracy** ~ *going over your work to make sure it's correct*
- **Questioning and Posing Problems** ~ *asking intelligent questions*
- **Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations** ~ *learning from experience*
- **Communicating using Clear and Specific Words** ~ *in speaking and writing*
- **Using All the Senses** ~ *being alert to what is around you*
- **Creating, Imagining, and Innovating** ~ *trying to think in different ways*
- **Responding with Wonderment and Awe** ~ *being open to new experiences and learning*
- **Taking Responsible Risks** ~ *trying something new*
- **Finding Humor** ~ *seeing the lighter side of things*
- **Thinking Interdependently** ~ *working well with others*
- **Learning Continuously** ~ *resisting the feeling that you know it all*