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ABSTRACT

Early adolescence is a time when students require adult assistance to become accurate and effective decision makers and problem solvers. Because of the fragmented nature of society, the family structure, and the schooling process, schools need to establish a nonthreatening environment in which students can discuss the issues related to growing up. A decision-making course in the middle school can become that program. Results of the first six years of the decision-making course at Elm Place Middle School in Highland Park, Illinois, are described, illustrating a definite positive response on the part of all students. The logistics for designing and implementing such a program in the middle school are discussed. Teaching strategies, projects, and activities are outlined. Sample activities are appended along with sample communications to parents and students. (JD)

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Sherrel Bergmann
Gerald J. Rudman

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A National Education Association Publication

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Chapter 1

The Early Adolescent and Decision Making

This book offers teachers of early adolescents a curriculum and compilation of instructional strategies to assist 11- to 14-year-olds in developing their decision-making skills. Students at this stage of development are experiencing significant physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes, and they need opportunities to learn and practice these skills. For example, they can—

Have a clear, toothy smile in December and braces in February.

Be five feet tall in September and five feet four inches in April.

Believe they never have enough friends.

Worry constantly about acne.

Be continually embarrassed by parents' behavior.

Appear to be running in place while sitting at a desk.

Love adults one minute and despise their authority the next.

Worry about never developing a figure.

Fall in and out of love in 30 seconds.

Keep searching for a self-concept and possibly not find it.

Anyone who has ever lived or worked with or taught an 11- to 14-year-old can confirm the truth, prevalence, and often painfulness of these characteristics for the developing adolescent. Members of this age group are sometimes quite comical, fluctuating like Shakespeare between tragedy and comedy. But the comedy stops when 12-year-olds are asked how it feels to be 12. Many are still children, some are emerging adolescents, most are full of questions.

Within their wide range of questions is a true sense of urgency to answer one very basic question—Who am I? The job of adults is to help these emerging adolescents learn to ask and answer their questions and make accurate decisions.

Students in our society seem to be rich in information, but poor in action. They have a difficult time making "life decisions" based on their classroom experiences. Textbooks do not often provide them with firsthand knowledge of the complexity of the given material. Therefore they need help to see the relevance of all experiences and to develop a sense of identity and a place in the world. In other words, they need experiences that will provide them with confidence, enthusiasm, and an assurance that they can be successful in the real world, experiences that will permit them to move with a sense of adventure from adolescence to adulthood. A decision-making program can offer some of these experiences.

The preadolescents who wrote the book *Listen to Us: Children's Express Report* (9)* revealed many areas of vulnerability when they spoke out on topics ranging from parents to justice; they included their thoughts and feelings on sex, enemies, school, money, business, divorce, and the need for respect.

*Numbers in parentheses appearing in the text refer to the Bibliography beginning on page 63.

Researchers agree that there are elements in society today that can affect the equilibrium of the emerging adolescent (12). These elements have a dramatic impact on the ability of an 11- to 14-year-old to answer that question of greatest importance—Who am I?

In addition to the decisions imposed by their environment, the developmental characteristics normally encountered by early adolescents also require decisions. The most common characteristic of members of this age group is their feeling of differences from each other and within themselves. They feel that their problems are unique, not realizing that their peers may be experiencing the same feelings. They spend many hours and days trying to establish similarities within the differences they perceive. For example, a girl who thinks her hair is not as attractive as that of her peers will brush it continually.

A common problem is shyness, which affects each person differently. In his extensive studies on this topic, Zimbardo found that 54 percent of the seventh and eighth graders tested labeled themselves as shy (27). Further evidence suggests that the traumas of early adolescence generate more shyness for girls than for boys. According to Zimbardo, "It may be that the need to be popular in school and to be considered physically (sexually) attractive by the opposite sex is programmed more forcefully into our teenage girls than boys." (27, p. 15).

The sorting out of these similarities and differences makes early adolescents extremely vulnerable. If their only examples of decision making come from their equally vulnerable peers who have not established positive views of any adult, young people may find a very negative identity. On the other hand, students who learn to be accurate decision makers and problem solvers can become less vulnerable.

A structured decision-making class facilitated by an understanding and organized adult can help early adolescents confront many of their problems, including those resulting from—

1. Peer rejection
2. Family mobility
3. Changes in family structure such as divorce, separation, birth of a sibling, death of a parent or sibling, remarriage of a parent
4. The label of winner or loser on a regular basis
5. Concerns about physical development
6. Dating, "going with" someone, relationships with friends and parents
7. Loss of self-esteem due to academic failure
8. Academic and psychomotor skills
9. Parental expectations versus a realistic assessment of abilities
10. Drugs, alcohol, sex
11. Transition to high school
12. High pressure for academic success.

SELF-CONCEPT AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS

Students who feel secure about themselves and their position within the group or class can address problems, including schoolwork, with greater commitment and expectancy. As Mitchell (17) and Thornburg (25) indicate, the early adolescent generally has a poor self-concept and is constantly trying to find a place in the group.

Self-concept includes the individual's opinions and perceptions about self, as well as feelings of personal worth. While developing an image of the self is a lifelong

process, the crucial years for maintaining a positive self-image are from 11 to 14. In early adolescence the center of self-esteem is physical maturity. During this period peers and teachers become significant others (those who ha e the greatest impact on an individual's self-esteem), with teachers gaining more status than they often perceive. Peers are also significant others, but because of the rapidly changing membership of peer groups, teachers may have a greater impact on an emerging adolescent's views of self (17).

For this reason it is crucial that the teacher have a strong, positive self-image and be consistent in helping students develop their own talents and realistic appraisals of themselves.

Unless the school has a structured decision-making, guidance, advisory, or core program, early adolescents will often share with each other their misinformation about life problems such as drugs, alcohol, running away, sex, vandalism, truancy, divorce, child abuse, suicide, peer relations, and general family problems. While a partial program is better than none, it is important that middle schools strive for a proactive decision-making program rather than the reactive catch-up programs that exist in many schools today.

One of the easiest ways to assure the learning of decision-making skills is to make such learning a goal of the school and of each classroom and to plan a series of structured experiences within the curriculum to facilitate the process. This material can be a separate curriculum or it can be integrated into the ongoing curriculum through individual classroom adaptations or interdisciplinary units. It can be taught whenever the environment enhances the decision-making process; programs can be held out-of-doors, in the city, in the classroom, and in the community.

What, then, are the essential elements of the decision-making curriculum in schools that educate 11- to 14-year olds?

1. At least one caring, competent teacher who allows for interaction in a safe environment.
2. A student attitude survey that gives the adults in a school current information on how it feels to be an 11- to 14-year-old today. The survey should be designed by the teachers in an individual school.
3. A community analysis and use of outside resources to give students information about social issues.
4. Teaching methods and a curriculum that offer a variety of opportunities to solve problems and learn decision-making skills in all classes.
5. A total school commitment to developing a positive self-concept in early adolescents.
6. A classroom environment that is conducive to questions and answers without fear of failure.
7. A variety of materials showing how adults make or have made decisions. Especially valuable are excerpts from historical decisions that have changed the quality of life for students today—for example, the driving age, drug laws, Hiroshima, Sputnik, the Civil Rights Act, abortion, EPA, the invention of the automobile, the draft, ERA.
8. In-service training for teachers to learn and participate in the decision-making, problem-solving process.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Students are faced with ever-increasing pressures to make decisions for themselves in their daily lives and to plan for the future at an earlier age than ever before. Sometimes the pressures are self-induced, the result of their perceptions of the expectations of others. Or the pressures may be imposed on students by parents seeking the best possible life for their children—one better than their own.

Most students do not realize that they make at least 20 routine decisions a day—from deciding to get up and go to school to using their time to include studies, hobbies, recreation, TV watching, and sleep.

Early adolescents do not believe that any conscious thought goes into decision making. Then, once they become aware that it is a conscious act, they are surprised that their values play a part. At this age, they are not aware of their values. Pleasing parents and peer pressure can prevent them from establishing a strong personal identity.

When asked to list some of the big decisions they must make, for the past ten years groups of 25 early adolescents have consistently included the following:

1. Who should my best friend be?
2. What should I do to find a best friend?
3. When I have a best friend, should I tell the friend all my secrets?
4. Should I tell my parents the truth about what I do, think, and feel?
5. Should I listen to my teachers?
6. Should I do my homework? Is it really worth the time?
7. Should I dress like everyone else?
8. Should I live with Mom or Dad after the divorce?
9. Should I accept my new stepparent?
10. Should I try marijuana, alcohol, cigarettes?
11. Should I try out for the team, club, play?
12. Should I cheat to get better grades?
13. How far should I compromise what I believe in to have friends?
14. Should I take risks?
15. Should I earn my own money?
16. What should I do about my pesty little brother or sister?

Students, and many adults, seem unaware that there is a process in making decisions. It consists of eight steps:

1. *Problem Finding:* What is the decision to be made?
2. *Problem Defining:* What are the elements of this decision, the who, what, where, why, how, and how does it feel?
3. *Information Gathering:* What information do I need to make this decision in the parameters I have defined in Step 2?
4. *Information Prioritizing:* What information is of most importance and what is of least importance?
5. *Values Assessment:* What do I believe in and how will my beliefs influence my decision? How do my beliefs compare with those expressed by my family and peers?
6. *Alternatives and Consequences:* What are the possible solutions to this problem? What are the consequences to me of each of these alternatives? What risks are involved in each alternative and consequence?

7. *Action:* What will I actually do about this decision? When and where will I take action?
8. *Evaluation:* Was my action on this decision congruent with my beliefs, the information gathered, and the alternatives given? Would I make the same decision next time? How did my decision affect my life?

Emerging adolescents frequently skip steps 3 through 6 as they learn this process. Consequently, they need to be given concrete experiences in making decisions.

OBJECTIVES FOR A DECISION-MAKING CLASS

The purposes of a decision-making class can best be described in the form of several types of objectives—for the class, for group acceptance, for establishing and improving self-esteem, and for communication skills.

Class Objectives

1. Students will be aware that there is a process in making decisions that includes values, information, and risk-taking.
2. Students will recognize the requirements of skillful decision making: examination and recognition of personal values, knowledge and use of relevant adequate information, and knowledge and use of an effective strategy for converting this information into action.
3. Students will be able to make several decisions while clarifying and identifying the priorities involved.
4. Students will be able to recognize decisions that are made in films, television, and books.
5. Students will become more selective consumers of media.
6. Students will identify with young adolescents making decisions through books, films, and discussions and thereby learn to make their own decisions.
7. Students will learn to make short-term commitments and long-term plans while assessing and valuing each day.
8. Students will learn to accept the decision making of others as an everyday part of life.
9. Students will learn that they can control part of their own destiny.
10. Students will state objectives based on their values.
11. Students will learn to define alternatives.
12. Students will learn to determine the consequences of choosing acceptable and unacceptable alternatives.

Group Acceptance Objectives

1. Students will develop intimacy with peers by discussing subjects that concern them.
2. Students will share thoughts, feelings, ideas, and concerns in small peer discussion groups.
3. Students will learn more from each other than from any other medium used in the class.
4. Students will develop positive listening skills.
5. Students will listen to the ideas of group members without putting them down or making fun of them.

6. Students will give each other uninterrupted time to speak.
7. Students will make grandparents and other adults feel wanted and needed and a part of the decision-making class.
8. Students will empathize with the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and concerns of others.
9. Students will learn to judge values for themselves.
10. Students will understand the values of their peers.
11. Students will learn the skills for entering new groups.

Objectives for Establishing and Improving Self-Esteem

1. Students will learn as much as possible about themselves.
2. Students' self-esteem will be strengthened by the increased knowledge of self.
3. Students will learn to assess their own values and determine the strengths therein.
4. Students will strengthen and support their own individuality and creativity by completing class projects.
5. Students will learn to adapt to a variety of environments by experiencing environments that are different from their own.
6. Students will begin to clearly define their own life space.
7. Students will work and participate more for enjoyment than for grades.
8. Students will learn to explore their own talents and ideas.

Objectives for Communication Skills

1. Students will strengthen their communication skills by participating in class and in class projects.
2. Students will express their feelings and values through class discussion.
3. Students will express their lives and values through photography.
4. Boys and girls will learn positive ways to communicate with each other.
5. Students will learn the skills of role playing as a means of communicating their feelings.
6. Students will learn to establish new lines of communication with adults.
7. Students will learn to establish new lines of communication with people of other cultures.
8 Students will express themselves and their feelings in written form.
9. Students will learn to communicate their feelings to adults in a positive way.

CASE STUDIES

Following are two case studies that illustrate the ways in which these objectives have been met by a decision-making curriculum.

Betty

Fourteen-year-old Betty was a learning-disabled student who was having problems at school and at home. Physically very small compared with other students her age, she had difficulty communicating with her peers and was comfortably lost in the silent part of the classroom. Her problem at home centered around a

divorce and a complicated remarriage. The combination of lack of physical development, changes in her familial structure, and inability to express her feelings and emotions left Betty with a very low level of self-esteem.

When the photographic unit began, Betty was given her assignment. Almost immediately there was a difference in her attitude. She used the camera to photograph all the things she couldn't talk or write about. Through her photographs she broke down walls and projected her needs to show all sides of her personality. Even in her written work she asked her peers to "try to get to know her" for there was more than what they saw.

The extra plus for her was her natural talent as a photographer. Her techniques, sensitivity, and choice of subjects gave her talent an expression she didn't know she had—photographic communication—which she was able to verbalize and write about.

Bill

Bill was a 14-year-old loner, rejected by his peers and with no group association. Because he had no experience with friends, he was shy and withdrawn. He was also short, had a small motor learning disability that affected his handwriting, and was unable to perform the physical skills that were routine for other students.

Since the class was small (15 members), everyone had a chance to talk. As a result, students became curious about each other. Bill was cautious about letting others know about himself, but he opened up slowly. After a while, his peers became interested in some of his ideas, interests, and values, and wanted to know more about him. Socially, this experience was invaluable to Bill. He was accepted for himself and he loved being a part of the group.

SURVEY RESULTS

To determine the effects of a decision-making course on all participants over a six-year period, a survey asked former students what they felt they had gotten from the course and how it had helped them throughout high school. Most of the students gave seven basic responses, summaries of which follow. (While the summaries do not contain quotations, the language in all the responses was similar.)

1. Prior to the decision-making course, the prospect of going to high school was unnerving. Even though they would be going as a group, students held the institution of "high school" in awe. Individually they were afraid of it and reluctant to admit their fears because of peers' opinions. The course, by exposing the jump from middle school to high school as a major change in the young person's environment and bringing these fears into the open, helped reduce individual tension and made the transition easier.
2. The course showed students that they were all in the same situation. The realization that peers were also frightened made the future easier to face and opened the door to dealing with related problems and decisions rather than ignoring or running away from them.
3. An increased all-around awareness resulted from the course. Respondents were cognizant of themselves and their peers to a much greater extent.
4. A dramatic realization of the importance of values in the decision-making process was obvious from the responses. Respondents indicated that more

thought went into making a decision after the course than before. For example, before taking the course, if asked why he/she made a certain decision, a student might not know the reason, but after taking the course he/she would probably be able to give a good reason for making the decision.

5. Through books and films, students identified with certain characters and watched how and why they reacted in specific situations. By being critical of these characters, students could then be critical of themselves and their own actions and decisions.
6. The course contributed greatly to students' feelings of security and self-confidence/self-esteem in dealing with the uncertainties of the future.
7. The course also revealed that at this stage in life (early adolescence), peer acceptance becomes more important and parental influence begins to decrease.

SUMMARY

Early adolescence is a time in their lives when students require adult assistance to become accurate and effective decision makers and problem solvers. Because of the fragmented nature of society, the family structure, and the schooling process, schools need to establish a consistent program with one regular adult facilitator to provide a nonthreatening environment in which students can discuss the issues related to growing up. A decision-making course in the middle school can become that program. Results of the first six years of the decision-making course at Elm Place Middle School in Highland Park, Illinois, show a definite positive response on the part of all students. Chapter 2 offers the logistics for designing and implementing such a program in the middle school.

Chapter 2

Curriculum Design for Decision Making

Whether separate or integrated, a decision-making curriculum for the emerging adolescent must recognize the developmental characteristics and differences of students in this age group and be structured accordingly. Such a curriculum, then, must—

1. Not be competitive in nature.
2. Have an adult leader who is consistent in behavior.
3. Be a safe time and place for students to explore individual ideas as members of a structured peer group.
4. Allow students either to begin or continue to develop their own aspirations.
5. Recognize the drive of early adolescents toward peer similarity while achieving individual differences.
6. Include a sequence of objectives that enable students to—
   a. Gather information
   b. Look at alternatives
   c. Clarify values
   d. Recognize and attempt risk-taking behavior
   e. Develop new proposals for future growth.

Decision making needs to be recognized as priority content in teaching the early adolescent. Whatever form it takes, it can permeate the entire middle school curriculum. In fact, teachers may wish to consider it the basic skill that students learn at this level. Because the process of decision making is developmental, the curriculum must also be developmental, with a definite sequence. Skills must build upon one another or the process will become fragmented.

The decision-making curriculum can be divided into three basic components: (1) values and self-awareness (the student as a decision maker), (2) information gathering and alternatives (the student looks at options), and (3) strategies and risk taking (the student as an action taker).

The curriculum can be implemented in several ways, as—

1. A separate class.
2. A unit in the social studies or language arts program.
3. An interdisciplinary unit taught by all teachers within the school on a regularly scheduled basis.
4. A basic format to part of an advisor/advisee program.
5. A three-year unit that begins in sixth grade and ends in eighth grade in a homeroom or home-base program.
6. A core curriculum.

Ideally, the decision-making course should become the structured curriculum for an advisor/advisee program in a middle school. Almost all the descriptions of middle-level organization found in educational journals today promote the advisory

concept, formerly known as homeroom. A working advisory, however, bears little or no resemblance to the homeroom teacher whose major function is administrative in nature—taking attendance or reading bulletins. Advisory is a key part of a total middle school-level guidance program and is designed to assure every student of one adult who knows her/him well and cares for her/him. In a well-developed program, the advisor is the students' best adult school friend, available to help them through difficult times and to share their little and big successes. The advisor helps personalize the learning process. The advocacy role, then, is one of the major emphases of a successful advisory program.

One of the basic difficulties in implementing an advisory program and, in turn, a decision-making curriculum is that some teachers do not feel comfortable with the "guidance component" of their job or have not had training in decision making and problem solving. Frequently they say, "I'm not a trained counselor, my job is to teach." Other teachers feel comfortable with the advisory concept and will be helpful to the student whether or not the school has a formal program. Still other teachers would like to be more helpful to students but feel they are not accurate decision makers themselves. Often they just lack the basic skills of conducting group discussions or one-on-one conversations. Most teachers at the middle school level do far more guiding and advising than they realize, however, simply by responding to the everyday rollercoaster personality of the early adolescent. These teachers may well be the most consistent adults at a time of life when their students are having problems or trying to learn to make decisions.

Finally, an undeniable component of a successful advisory program and decision-making curriculum is the leadership of the principal. Teachers need to know that administrators agree on the importance of taking time in class to deal with decision-making issues.

IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION-MAKING CURRICULUM

Many middle schools have implemented an advisory program as a regular part of their daily schedule. A typical model is 20 to 30 minutes either at the beginning or the end of each day. Every teacher is an advisor with a class of 15 to 22 students. Without the time and the training, however, teachers cannot be expected to become advisors or to implement a decision-making curriculum.

Training teachers to teach decision making is a task of multifaceted proportions. Ideally, a new school would have a staff of teachers and a principal specifically prepared to work with early adolescents. Realistically, it usually has a staff of teachers with either elementary or secondary preparation and very little training in instructing early adolescents. The staff development program for the decision-making curriculum is therefore is quite unique. It requires more than just the instructional skills of decision making that are described in Chapter 3 of this publication.

Essential to the implementation of such a curriculum, whatever type of schedule or format it takes, is the ability of the adult leaders to recognize their role as a model of decision making. Consequently, the teachers must be comfortable with themselves as adults and willing to participate in the necessary preparations for this program. Adequate time must be devoted to preparing both teachers and curriculum. A staff development plan should include the following elements:

1. A steering committee made up of teachers, counselors, and parents to plan the staff development program and gather the input of the entire staff. Although

all teachers may not teach decision making or be advisors, they should participate in the in-service training sessions so that they may accurately explain to parents and students the content of the program.

2. Exploration of successful advisory programs and decision-making curricula of other middle schools through reading, visits, and professional contacts.
3. Planned in-service programs for the entire staff on such topics as early adolescent development, the rationale for advisory programs and decision-making curricula, and the decision-making process.
4. Awareness of the adult decisions to be made about program implementation.
5. Goals and priorities for what needs to be done—tasks, assignments.
6. Planned parent and student involvement in the program—a survey of students and parents to discover their needs.
7. Communication of the survey results by the steering committee to the entire staff.
8. A brainstorming session for the principal, steering committee, and staff on all the ways to incorporate decision making in the school program(s).
9. An alternative to an advisory program—time for planning and implementation for teachers who wish to teach an interdisciplinary unit on decision making.
10. A three-year plan for implementing decision making in the school via advisory interdisciplinary units or individual classes.
11. In-service programs or retreats to help teachers practice strategies for teaching decision making. Teachers should participate in all the activities as adult decision makers.

The potential for this program depends on its wise use by thoroughly prepared adults. For this reason, school counselors should be integrally involved in the program design, implementation, and evaluation.

Individual subject area teachers may wish to teach decision making by redefining the focus of their current lesson plans. In addition, all teachers should take into account the particular local opportunities for adding decision-making activities to their lesson plans.

While not every school can offer decision making as a separate course or as part of an advisory program, teachers can integrate the strategies listed in Chapter 3 in all subject areas sequentially and as often as possible.

The following pages provide the scope and sequence for an entire course in decision making. This course can be implemented in any number of scheduled formats. After six years of teaching it, the authors believe certain components of the program should be included in every decision-making curriculum. They are not all-inclusive, nor do they exclude the models provided in other middle schools. These essential components include the following:

1. A curriculum that includes the goals and objectives listed in Chapter 1.
2. Curriculum outcomes that are project-oriented. Projects are a very important part of the curriculum because—
   a. Projects give students a safe reason for being together.
   b. Projects allow students to apply class learnings to live situations.
   c. Projects focus attention on a specific goal and part of the decision-making process.
   d. Projects give students an opportunity to see how others outside their school and class make decisions.
   e. Projects create an atmosphere of excitement for learning.

f. Projects allow for creative expression and movement.
g. Projects give concrete experience for abstract ideas.
h. Projects allow students to go to places and meet people they might not ordinarily meet.

3. A text or selection of adolescent literature. Teachers may design their own text by combining several that are available. One text used in many decision-making classes is *Deciding* by Gelatt, Varenhorst, and Richard. Many others available commercially are specially written for this age group. (See Resources for Classroom Activities in Chapter 3.) This model curriculum also recommends the use of several popular adolescent novels that contain evidence of decision making by early adolescents.

One way to teach decision making is to offer the course as an elective. In this model, the course can meet either twice each week or however often elective courses meet in a particular school. At Elm Place Middle School (a suburban school), for example, the course meets from 7:45 to 8:20 A.M. each Monday and Tuesday for the entire school year. Since it is an elective course, only students who want to take it and make the commitment sign up. The class is limited to 15 students in order to give everyone an opportunity to participate. Students are expected and encouraged to participate in discussions. The class also meets one Saturday each month for a special activity. These activities might include the following:

1. Viewing a film and discussing it.
2. A trip to the city (of Chicago) to interview people on the street.
3. Working with high school students to make the transition from middle school to high school smoother.
4. A cooperative project with city students to exchange ideas and make new friends.
5. Discussions with senior citizens.
6. Discussions with college students.
7. Discussions with other adults (sometimes parents).
8. Viewing a sporting event to observe the role of coaches, players, and referees in decision making.

The following is an example of a decision-making class organized for one semester. It could also be scheduled for an entire year.

SAMPLE ONE-SEMESTER PROGRAM

This course is based on a 20- to 25-minute period five days each week. The time frame is flexible, but continuity is necessary for success. The course may be taught by a single teacher or a team of teachers, but whoever conducts it must be consistent as the trusted adult in the class. The Elm Place program has a team of three teachers, each of whom has an assigned group of students. However, the three groups are combined for many trips and activities, and students frequently ask to combine the groups for discussions of topics that affect the entire school. (See Course Description in Appendix B.)

Week I

Day 1. All students share their names and something they learned about themselves during the summer. Then ask them to write (anonymously) about one decision they had to make over the summer.

Day 2. Ask students how well they know the other members of the class. Read the decisions written on Day 1. Ask students to guess who made each decision. Discuss the many different kinds of decisions. Ask students if they feel that they frequently encounter the same kinds of decisions that their peers do. Have them write their definitions of the word "value."

Day 3. Distribute copies of the "Treasure Hunt" (see Appendix A). Explain that this is a sample. After students have read it, have them write on the back of the sheet one thing about themselves that they think no one else knows and they are willing to share.
Introduce the course (see Course Description in Appendix B).

Day 4. Compile a "Treasure Hunt" list for the class from the secrets written on Day 3. Then ask students to complete it by walking around the room and asking each other, "Does this statement fit you?"
Introduce text or chosen class reading materials.

Day 5. Discuss how people develop decision-making skills. How are our decision-making skills different from those of lower animals? Have students list the decisions they make every day.
Assignment: Log the decisions you make over the weekend. Bring the list to class on Monday.

Week II

Day 1. Students present their lists of decisions made over the weekend. Then compile a class list on newsprint or transparency.

Day 2. Continue sharing decision lists.

Day 3. Finish sharing and discussing decision lists. Group decisions into categories--personal, school, family, money, food, entertainment, health.

Day 4. Have students rank order the five most important decisions from their own lists and from the class list and give their reasons.

Day 5. Define "critical decision." Have students list the things they value.
Assignment: Write a story of at least two paragraphs entitled "A Missed Critical Decision." It can be fictitious or true.

Week III

Day 1. Lead discussion to redefine values definitions from Week I, Day 2.
Read stories that students wrote for assignments.

Day 2. Have the class develop a vocabulary list of value words (see Appendix A for sample list—"Values Vocabulary").

Day 3. Ask students to define words on the vocabulary list. Then ask them to choose one word and tell why it is one of their values.

Day 4. Rank order values vocabulary list.

Day 5. Use an exercise similar to "20 Things I Like to Do" (see 23, pp. 30-34). Then ask students to complete and share "I learned . . ." statements (see 23, pp. 163-65).
Assignment: Share your values list with your parents. Have parents rank order these values.

Week IV

Day 1. Have each student write ten responses to "Who Are You?" (see Appendix A).

Day 2. Use trust-building activities such as trust falls or a trust walk. See Resources for Classroom Activities (Rohnke's *Cowstails and Cobras*) and *Adventure Education* in the Bibliography (26).

Day 3. Debrief student feelings about the trust activities. Give every student at least one minute of uninterrupted time to speak.
Do the maze activity (see Appendix A).

Day 4. Debrief the maze activity.

Begin planning for a trip to a city settlement house (see "Field Trips" in Chapter 3; also see "City Survival Activities" in Appendix A).

Day 5. Have students answer evaluation questions: What is a value? How is this class going for you so far? Then have them fill out a values questionnaire (see Appendix A for sample questionnaire).
Assignment: View the film *My Bodyguard*. Hold discussion session afterward. (Note: This film can be shown in three daily segments, followed by brief discussion each time, or it can be a Saturday activity.)

Week V

Day 1. Know thyself. Ask students to write answers to the following questions:
What's important to you?
What's apt to be important to you in 1 year?
What's apt to be important to you in 3 years?
What's apt to be important to you in 5 years?
What's apt to be important to you in 7 years?
What's apt to be important to you in 35 years?

Day 2. Students share their responses to the "know thyself" questions of Day 1. Then have students complete "Unfinished Sentences" (see Appendix A).

Day 3. Discuss sentence completion activity by having students give three-minute presentations about themselves.

Day 4. Continue student presentations on sentence completion.

Day 5. Preview the trip to the city. Ask students what they anticipate the environment, the people, and the activities will be like. Discuss any fears they may have. Find out if any students have had previous experience in the city.

Saturday. Trip to a city settlement house (or a visit to a divergent group of students). (See "Field Trips" in Chapter 3 for a complete description of the settlement house visit.)

Week VI

Day 1. Debrief the Saturday activity. Ask students to relate decisions they saw being made, decisions they made, and values that were evident from their visit. Give them five minutes to write their feelings about the trip. (This can be done in a journal if they are keeping journals in class.) Brainstorm with the class other possible activities; plan an exchange day with the group visited on Saturday.

Day 2. Share with students a handout on 12 problems that early adolescents share. Ask them to prioritize those that they feel require the most critical deci-

sions of someone their age. (Use the list in Chapter 1.)
Continue planning the next Saturday activity.

Day 3. Show a film that portrays "typical American values." If the film is too long, show parts of it for the next three days. (See Chapter 3, p. 30, for a list of sample films.)

Day 4. Distribute magazines written specifically for teens. Have students identify values of American youth as portrayed by the magazines.

Day 5. Distribute newspapers or newsmagazines, and have students identify American values as portrayed by these media.

Week VII

Day 1. Discuss the question: Are youth's values different from societal values as portrayed by the media? If so, how and why?

Day 2. For a quiz give four problems and ask students to write what each person decides to do because of the individual's values (see "Sample Problems" in Appendix A).

Day 3. Discuss the quiz.
Continue planning the Saturday activity. Assign tasks to small groups of students.

Day 4. Have students write personal objectives based on what they feel they want out of life. Have them also write how they will go about achieving these goals.

Day 5. Have students share their writing on personal objectives.
Make final plans for the Saturday activity.

Saturday. Activity planned by students takes place.

Week VIII

Day 1. Introduce *No Promises in the Wind* by Irene Hunt (see "Books" in Chapter 3).

Day 2. Have students read *No Promises in the Wind*.

Day 3. Ask students to write about the following topic: How are we different from adults and from our family members? Then, if they are willing, have students share their writing with other class members.

Day 4. Give students a list of quotations from *No Promises in the Wind* and discuss (see "Books" in Chapter 3).

Day 5. Alternative action search. Give students a problem and ask them to gather the data to solve it. (See Appendix A for "Sample Problems" used in Week VII, Day 2, and also for "Steps in Information Gathering.")

Week IX

Day 1. Lead discussion on how to gather information about alternatives. Introduce the discussion with an example: Bob/Sue has $25 to buy a new pair of jeans. How does he/she gather information about where to shop, where to get the most value for his/her money, etc?

Day 2. Discuss *No Promises in the Wind* and the possible alternatives available to the family. Brainstorm the concept of "alternatives."

Day 3. Exploring unacceptable alternatives. Discuss with students how people sometimes choose the easy way out and refuse to make decisions. For example, it is easier to go along with friends when you are not excited about

doing something than it is to make a decision to do something else.

Day 4. Drug discussion with high school students (see "Drug Information Program" in Chapter 3 for the structuring of this activity).

Day 5. Discuss the high school students' comments. Give each student at least one minute of uninterrupted time to talk.

Saturday. View the film *Ordinary People*. Discuss.

Week X

Day 1. Brainstorm with students the steps in information gathering. Have them make a composite list of resources for information.

Day 2. Give students a problem situation and let them determine resources and steps needed to gather information.

Day 3. Have each student design a case study that requires information, decisions, and problem solving.

Day 4. Students present their case studies in class. Ask them to respond to each other's work by listing the resources needed to solve the problem.

Day 5. Finish *No Promises in the Wind*.

Week XI

This week is dedicated to acquainting students with a number of helpful resources they will need in the next four years. Some of the resource personnel making presentations include high school counselors, community youth director, pediatricians, employment counselors, lawyers, senior citizens, parents, and high school students.

Week XII

Day 1. Have students discuss the resource presentations of Week XI. Introduce the book *The Chocolate War* (see "Books" in Chapter 3).

Day 2. Crucial decisions in the teen years. Have students brainstorm a list of what they consider to be crucial decisions they and their peers have to make.

Day 3. Divide the class into groups of three. Have each group rank order the crucial decisions of Day 2 from most difficult to least difficult.

Day 4. Use "Most Important Decision" exercise (see Appendix A).

Day 5. Share the class list made on Day 2, using listening triads (see 23, pp. 295-98). Every student should have two minutes of uninterrupted time to talk to two others. Listeners must accurately paraphrase what is said.

Week XIII

Day 1. Give students a list of excerpts from *The Chocolate War* for discussion. Discuss peer pressure in decision making. (See "Books" in Chapter 3.)

Day 2. Give students one problem on which to gather decision-making information outside class. Continue discussion of peer pressure in decision making.

Day 3. Use the decision-making game "Pieces of Eight" (see Appendix A).

Day 4. Tie in crucial decisions of class members with those of characters in *The Chocolate War*.

Day 5. Quiz on information gathering.

Saturday. Show the film *Breaking Away* to introduce the concept of risk taking, and discuss.

Week XIV

Day 1. Introduce risk taking in terms of personality. Use the activity "Your Personality" (see Appendix A).
Day 2. Use the activity "Right Now I Feel—"(see Appendix A).
Day 3. Discuss personality and risk taking.
Day 4. Have students try to analyze the kind of risk taker they are. Ask them to decide if risk taking is learned.
Day 5. Plan a trip to the city.
Use the activity "Dilemmas" to discuss risk taking (see Appendix A).

Week XV

Day 1. Continue plans for the trip to the city.
Use the activity "Classroom Personalities," role playing the examples given (see Appendix A).
Day 2. Continue the role play and plans for the trip to the city.
Day 3. Trip to the city (see description of second field trip in Chapter 3). (Note: Elm Place students are excused for the entire day to take this field trip. It can, of course, be a Saturday activity.)
Day 4. Compile data and debrief the trip.
Day 5. Compile data and have students share learnings from the trip.

Week XVI

Introduce the photographic unit (see following pages).

Week XVII

Continue the photographic unit. For special projects, students compile a photographic essay entitled "Out Town" or "Our School." As an alternative to this unit, students could study concerned photographers (for example, Bruce Davidson) and use photo essays that are available in public libraries. They could also use television viewing, studying decisions made in different news shows, sitcoms, and so on.

Week XVIII

Day 1. Ask students: What are "risks"? When do people take risks? Then brainstorm the strategies used in taking risks in this class and in school. Have students list the decisions they feel they will have to make in the next year, the risks involved, and the strategies they will use.
Day 2. List examples of risks taken recently by famous people (for example, the President, governor, members of Congress). What strategies did they use? Compile a class list of strategies.
Day 3. Ask students to share decisions they have to make, helping each other go through the steps in decision making. (See eight steps in decision making listed in Chapter 1.)
Day 4. Continue activities of Day 3.
Day 5. Final exam and "Self-Prediction" activity (see Appendix A). (Note: At Elm Place the teachers keep the self-predictions, planning to mail them to students at the appropriate time.)

Saturday. Graduation from decision making with parents attending. First, return and briefly discuss the final exam. Review steps in decision making. Then present each student with a graduation certificate. (At Elm Place each certificate contains a caricature of the student, which each one greatly prizes.)

This curriculum model, or any other designed by a middle school staff, should be evaluated on a monthly basis for the first year of the program. Teachers need to feel comfortable with the activities and have the flexibility to change the curriculum if the needs of the group dictate. In addition, the principal and/or the steering committee should gather both written and verbal evaluations from teachers and students.

Photography: Using the Camera as a Window and a Mirror

Sometimes students find it difficult to express their values in words. Often they are not conscious of their values and just assume they exist. When they use a camera, the click of the shutter forces them to risk exposing their values to themselves and others.

Students can identify with pictures. Photography makes it easier for them to talk about their values because their words are formulated from their pictures.

Amazingly, students using the camera as a window and a mirror to their lives are new to the field of photography. In most cases they have never used a camera before. However, the advantages of youth include the curiosity to learn and the ability to develop new skills in a short period of time.

Cameras can be obtained from photography stores that sell outdated equipment, flea markets, swap shops, basements, friends, neighbors, or perhaps the Polaroid Corporation. The best source of information is in *Shutterbug Ads* (P.O. Box F, 4073 Washington Avenue, Titusville FL 32780), published monthly.

All cameras should be checked out carefully before use.

The photographic unit in the decision-making course has been so successful that the entire plan is included here. Usually it is given in six weeks, but a ten-day summary follows.

Day 1. Introduction

Objectives:

- To become more aware of the senses
- To understand the difference between looking and seeing
- To increase observational skills

I. Written exercise (a "sensory" exercise)

Sample questions:

— What do you hear if you are in a car when it is raining?
— Describe the odor of gasoline.
— What does hair (anybody's hair) feel like?
— Describe the texture of skin. Feel it.
— How would you describe fear?
— Describe the sensation of placing an ice cube against your lips.
— Does the air have a particular odor before a rainfall? Describe it. After a rainfall?
— What does your hand feel like?
— Describe the taste of salt.
— Describe the flight of a seagull (and other birds).

Day 2. Looking vs. Seeing

I. **Observation exercise**

(Use this as a preliminary exercise before looking at photographs.) Have two students stand facing each other in front of the class. Without explanation, tell them to "look at" each other, to "observe" the other person. After they have looked long enough, have them turn around, back to back, and ask each person to change three things about him/herself without turning around. The other members of the class should be silent. After making the changes, the two students face each other again. Ask each one, in turn, what changes the other made.

Choose two new students for the same exercise. Because they know what to expect, they will really scrutinize each other, making the changes harder to detect.

Next, instead of choosing two more students, choose a group to go out of the room and have the remaining students make changes in the classroom. Upon returning, the group members try to list the changes.

II. Sum up the observation exercise and discuss the following:
- The difference between looking and seeing
- How the photographic unit will help students improve their visual sensitivity
- The importance of looking as a "conscious" act.

Day 3. Reacting to Photographs

Objectives:

- To increase observational skills
- To introduce the idea that photography is a process that requires all one's senses
- To view the photograph as a window; to view the photograph as a mirror
- To encourage the freeing of each individual's imagination and creative process
- To reinforce the idea that each person is a unique individual; therefore no two people will look at a photograph in the same way
- To explore fantasy and imagination through writing and discussion

Creativity is involved in looking at photographs as well as in making them.

I. Introduction

Explain that this segment is not *separate* from other class activities; it is a *continuation*. The unit will be dealing with the same issues, and exploring values, feelings, and relationships, but another dimension—the visual—has been added. In addition to using language, written and spoken, students will use photographs. They will make photographs themselves and look at those that other people have made.

II. Brief review of previous class (established class routine)

III. View of photographs

Place 20 photographs around the room. Ask students to walk around and look at them. Write on the chalkboard, "Photograph as a window; photo-

graph as a mirror.'' Ask students to think about what this means while they are looking at the photographs. Stress that there is no right or wrong way to look at a picture. No two people will see it in the same way; each person will look at it differently. Have each student choose one photograph that he/she relates to, after taking the time to look carefully at each one.

When all students have chosen their pictures, have them stand in front of their choices and look at them carefully for several minutes.

Instruct students to—
— Imagine themselves in the photograph. Where would they be?
— Identify with someone or something in the picture.
— Become the person, place, or thing.
— Describe where the person is going. What is he/she feeling? Where has he/she been?
— Describe what it smells like in the picture. What sounds can they hear?
— Close their eyes and memorize the picture.
— Return to their seats (without the photograph) and ask them to write what they *feel* as this person, place, or thing in the picture. Give them a few minutes to write.

After they finish writing, pass out the same photographs to students.

Ask them the following:
— Do you see anything new in the picture that you did not see before?
— Is this pi..ure just as you remembered it?
— Is there anything different about it?
— Write what you feel looking at it for a second time.

Then have each student show the photograph that he/she selected, and read or talk about what he/she wrote.

Ask students:
— Why did you select this photograph?
— Was it easy or hard to ''become this person or thing in the picture''?

Ask students to respond to each photograph.

Days 4 and 5. Introduction to Cameras and Materials

Materials: Polaroid, other cameras, film, flash cubes, demonstration pictures mounted on boards

Objective:

- To acquaint students, through demonstration, with basic camera operation and to introduce the materials they will be using

I. Introduce cameras

Distribute cameras (without film)—one for every two people.

Demonstrate to students the most important features to remember:
— Exposure button
— Distance ring (5 ft.—flash)
— Lighten-darken control

Also point out:
— Setting (e.g., for Kodak Instamatics keep setting on ''3000'')

— Timer
— Shutter lock
— Flash socket

Let students look through cameras and get the feel of them.

II. Film

First demonstrate by loading the camera, step by step.
Make tests to show lighting differences by placing a student in various parts of the room:

1. Dark area—two tests: flash "light" and "dark"
2. Dark area—two tests: without flash "light" and "dark"
3. Near window—two tests: flash "light" and "dark"
4. Near window—two tests: without flash "light" and "dark"

Pass around teacher-made photographs (from a Polaroid camera) that further demonstrate various lighting situations. These pictures should be mounted on boards and displayed during the first few lessons so that students can refer to them if they have lighting problems.

Distribute film and have students load the cameras.

III. Camera operation exercises

Working in twos, have students photograph each other, experimenting with flash and "natural light."
Have one person "model," and other class members photograph him/her in different views (experimenting with light).

IV. Reminders

Have students return cameras at the end of each class.

Tell students not to touch any chemicals on the film (if they do, be sure to wash their hands).

Assignment #1
Objectives:

- To enable students to share a personal experience with others
- To show the diverse ways many people view the same object or person
- To examine the ways one views his/her home environment

Without using photographs of family members, make four photographs that you think reveal important aspects of your family life.

Select your subject matter carefully. Be sure you have exactly what you want in the picture frame.

Discuss assignment.

Day 6. Student Work

I. Showing of work

Have students put their names on the back of their pictures and place them on their desks (face up) so that everyone can see them.

Give everyone a chance to walk around the room and view the work. This is a good time to ask if there were any technical problems. (When students are walking around looking at pictures, less attention is directed to those experiencing difficulty. Deal with those students individually.)

Points to stress:
— How interesting the pictures are, and how different they are from each other—each one is individual.
— There is no "right" or "wrong" picture.
— Don't make comparisons (for example, one person gets an 85 on a test, another a 98). In photography there is no way to compare.
— Not only is the content of the pictures different, but also there are different ways to photograph the subject matter (or different ways to see it).

II. Questions and discussion
Ask each person:
— What went into choosing this subject?
— Why did you choose it? How did you decide?
— What do you think it might say (reveal) about your family?
— If other members of your family were given this assignment, would they choose different or similar subjects?
— Did you learn anything about yourself?
Ask other class members:
— Do you have any questions to ask the photographer?
— What are your impressions of the picture?
Ask other questions dealing with formal aspects of the photograph (detail, abstraction, light, etc.).
We have talked a lot about the differences in these pictures; now what do they have in *common*?

III. Exercise (if time permits; otherwise do this exercise the following day, after the self-portraits)
Have one student "model." Choose another student to photograph him/her. Then choose a third student to make a photograph from a different angle. Encourage photographers to lie on the floor, stand on a desk, etc.
Have students bring camera bags the following day.

Days 7 and 8. Self-Portraits—Showing and Discussion

Objectives:
- To take risks by revealing oneself
- To show the many ways in which people view themselves
- To explore the self-portrait
- To explore fantasy and imagination through writing
- To view the photograph as a window; to view the photograph as a mirror

I. Review previous lesson

Assignment #2: How would you like to see yourself in a picture?
1. Have someone (camera partner, family member, friend) photograph you in any way that tells something about yourself.
Suggestions:
— Include anything you want in the picture.
— Wear anything you want.
— Create a fantasy or do a visual story. (Use your imagination.)
— Include yourself or not.

— Show as many different photographs as you would like.
— Have fun with it!

2. Choose three or four old photographs of yourself from different stages of your life (for example, as a baby, at three or four, seven or eight, or eleven or twelve years old). Please bring these pictures to class (on Monday) with your self-portraits. They will be mounted in class.
3. Write a statement or a story about all the photographs.

II. Showing of work

Have students display their mounted work in the classroom and then walk around and view each other's work. Give them sufficient time to look.

III. Discussion

Have students read their stories or statements. If students prefer not to read, ask them: "Who is this person?" Ask other students to talk about or describe the person in the picture.
— What do you see in this person?
— How would you photograph this person? (How others see us vs. how we see ourselves.)
— What have you learned about this person?

Day 9. Continuation of Discussion and Showing of Self-Portraits

Materials: Mounted photographs (self-portraits), materials for mounting and copies of assignment for absentees, photo corners, flash cubes

Remind students to return their cameras the following day.

Objectives:

- Same as those of previous lesson

I. Have students who were absent mount their photographs on the board, and do the written exercise.

II. At the same time, have other students display their work in the classroom and give everyone a chance to look at these photographs.

III. Questions for discussion:
— How would you describe the person in the pictures?
— What do you see in this person?
— How would you photograph this person? (How others see us vs. how we see ourselves.)

Also prepare one question for each student who did the self-portrait/written exercise. Base this question on what these students wrote about themselves.

Example: One boy wrote that even though he looks relaxed he is really very tense. There is so much to worry about, he is very pessimistic. His question: What worries you most, the present or the future? Why?

Example: One girl made a self-portrait in a double mirror. Her question: How many Susans are there?

Day 10. Evaluation

Ask each student to write a response to the following:

1. As a result of this photographic experience, I feel that I

2. What one personal thing have you learned about one person in this class through his/her pictures that might draw you closer to the person and eventual friendship?
3. To make this unit even better, could you suggest other photographic assignments (projects) that you would like to do?

Students then verbally share any reactions they may have.

Rules for Photographic Unit

1. You and your camera partner will share one camera.
2. Choose a camera partner who lives near you, or someone with whom you communicate well.
3. If you prefer to use your own camera, see the teacher after the first class.
4. After you take your pictures for each assignment, the film is due in class on _____ (specify dates). If you will not be in class, you *MUST* have someone bring the film into class for you.
5. You may pick up your finished prints two days later in the office.
6. All photographs should be mounted *BEFORE* class, not during class.
7. If there are any problems, please contact your teacher. Don't wait until you get to class the following week.
8. Class starts promptly at _____ (give time). Please be on time.
9. Please relax and enjoy this unit. Have fun with it!

Chapter 3

Teaching Strategies, Projects and Activities

STRATEGIES

The most important initial strategy is to create a nonthreatening environment in the classroom. For example:

1. Arrange chairs or seats so that all participants can see each other. An effective discussion is not possible if one person faces another's back.
2. Encourage everyone to participate. Call on students to participate until they get used to volunteering.
3. Allow written work to be anonymous at first so that students will open up.
4. Build up the idea that each child is special and unique, with something to add to the class.
5. Point up the fact that all students have many things in common while they are striving for individual expression. For example, everyone wants to be loved and to love, everyone has felt rejected at some time in life. Help students realize that they share many ideas and feelings.
6. Give each student one minute of uninterrupted time to speak at least once each week, more often if possible.
7. Set the guideline, early in the year, that whatever is discussed in the class stays in the room, unless a student's health or life is endangered. (Check with school guidance personnel about the state's confidentiality law.)
8. Have class members determine the guidelines for participation and discussion—for example, "No put-downs will be allowed in this room."

A second teaching strategy is to build students' confidence. For example:

1. Periodically ask students to introduce themselves by giving them a chance to verbalize who they are. Because they change so rapidly during these years, their peers aren't always aware of changes, especially those that are internal.
2. Ask students to compliment each other. Teachers can facilitate this by having students complete a sentence stem. For example, The things that make _____ special are _____ _____.
3. Remind students that once they start knowing each other they should be able to start trusting each other. (This may not be true in every case, but it has been the experience of Elm Place.)
4. Have students practice ways of stating what they believe in without arguing.
5. Reinforce positive discussion techniques whenever possible.
6. Develop students' leadership capabilities. Use the leaders to start the ball rolling; let the outspoken students go first and set the pattern for other members of the class.
7. Ask the right questions, but do not impose your own personal feelings on the discussion. Keep a low profile as a teacher, but keep the conversation moving.

8. Build up students' self-esteem as the semester moves along. Allow time for expression of doubts and fears about self-esteem.
9. Encourage students to be compassionate human beings. Show them that sensitivity is a good attribute as they relate to one another.
10. Require two people to work together on exercises. Match students who are not already friends. The teacher should always select groups; this avoids one person not being chosen consistently.

A third strategy is to keep parents constantly informed about class activities. Appendix B contains several examples of communications sent to parents.

A fourth strategy is to incorporate as many projects and activities into the class schedule as possible. Descriptions of several of these follow: films, sporting events, high school transition activity, parent contacts, field trips, books, drug information program, discussions with college students and other adults. (Appendix A contains samples of specific activities.)

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Films

Seeing films together as a class is popular with students and a very helpful activity. The class as a group experiences the same happening at the same time. At Elm Place Middle School, after the movie we find a comfortable place to sit and talk. We relate to the characters, discuss their effect on us, and the values and decisions they project in the film, making connections to our own lives. Examples of several films seen by the Elm Place students and the resulting discussions follow.

Kramer vs. Kramer. It was important to view this movie in the same kind of environment that was threatened in the story, so our discussion took place in a student's home. Some students could talk about living in a divorced household and others could express their fears about what divorce in their family would be like.

Ordinary People. Students could identify with the pressures of suburban living, as well as with parental pressures, values, disappointment in love, and handling death and tragedy. They role played parental situations. They also discussed the importance of knowing when to get help or realizing when a person needs help, and they recognized the value of a support system.

Being There. This movie resulted in a discussion of influences on our lives, such as television and mass media; growing up and out of childhood to become thinking adults; how people perceive others; and the gullibility of the public.

Breaking Away. The discussion here centered around self-concept, peer pressures, and becoming an independent person; the family and relating to one another. It also included learning to give and take and to welcome each new stage of life.

Fame. The discussion of this movie included the frustrations of adolescents, making commitments, competing, grades, fear of failure, failure, the joys of success and showing it.

My Bodyguard. This movie led to a discussion about which type of student one was, fears and friendships, loyalty versus values.

Tex. The discussion here dealt with the way money shapes values and behavior, even in rural Oklahoma where everyone has plenty of room to move around.

Sporting Events

As spectators at a sporting event students have an opportunity to view and concentrate on the decision makers of the game. This assignment can be carried out by watching an event on television as a group or by attending a live event. Our class goes to the Chicago Stadium to watch professional basketball teams. We focus on the environment in which the game is played, the roles of players, coaches, and referees, and the behavior of the crowd. Watching and observing the decisions that are made and the crowd's reactions to them helps teach the concept of selective viewing and crowd behavior.

High School Transition Activity

This Saturday activity focuses directly on the transition from middle school to high school. Decision-making students meet in informal discussion groups with high school students and talk about the quality of life in the local high school. Topics are discussed and structured in advance by the decision-making teachers and students. They include academics, courses to take, teachers, how to plan your freshman year, activities, clubs that are available, sports, student council, senate, plays and other creative activities, peer pressure and problems, drinking, drugs, rejections, friends, parental expectations, and grades.

A question and answer period in a nonthreatening environment allows the middle school students to ask the questions uppermost on their minds. The high school students answer the questions, give their opinions of their own high school experience, and welcome the eighth graders as prospective freshmen. It is a very honest discussion; the decision-making students feel they get the "true" story of the high school.

This activity is useful for eighth graders for the following reasons:

1. They verbalize their fears and anxieties, tempering many of them.
2. They are welcomed in a warm atmosphere by their future peers.
3. They get the whole story.
4. Their transition is eased in a normal and natural progression.

Our goal in the near future is to have the high school initiate a similar experience at the beginning of the freshman year. Every new student would be assigned an upperclassman as a "buddy" and an advisor who was familiar with the decision-making program.

Parent Contacts

Because many students do not explain the activities of the decision-making class to their parents, it is imperative that teachers keep the parents informed. All activities outside the class need parental approval; therefore permission slips should always be issued. At Elm Place Middle School contacts are made with parents during open school night, report card intervals, and special meetings to inform them of class activities. Parents are invited to visit the class if they are interested, and many accept this invitation. Students are encouraged to review and discuss all their worksheets, texts, and activities with their parents.

Field Trips

Activities designed to provide a change in environment also provide students with an opportunity to feel like outsiders and make adjustments, by meeting people who differ in age, background, and interests. Students have distinct fears and precon-

ceived notions, opinions, and ideas about different environments. For example, many rural and suburban students have never been to a city, ridden on a train, or walked on city streets. Some city children have not visited rural or suburban areas, or even certain areas of the city where they live. Field trips, then, might include visits to historic sites and ethnic neighborhoods that are unfamiliar to students. Descriptions of two activities used at Elm Place Middle School follow. (See also "City Survival Activities" in Appendix A.)

For Halloween, one of the most important observances for children, the Elm Place students bus to the west side of Chicago from the northern suburbs to team up with a neighborhood organization comprised of Latino, Italian, Polish, and Black eighth graders, and put on a Halloween carnival in a local recreation center for the entire neighborhood. Both city and suburban students mix and work together to run the booths. This makes the carnival an exciting time for all. By the end of the evening, the students have made new friends, they are reluctant to go home, and they exchange addresses and telephone numbers (particularly girls).

The bus ride home is filled with singing and tales of this wonderful experience and new-found growth. A discussion follows the activity.

Another trip to the city involves conducting a survey. We take a train to the city and walk through the streets until we reach the Art Institute (each project must have a centering point to conduct the activity). At the Art Institute, students split into groups of two, and with clipboard, pencil, and pad in hand they walk up to strangers, introduce themselves, and ask two questions:

1. What was the most important decision you made today?
2. What has been the most important decision you have made in your lifetime?

Each student must approach and talk to 50 people. They record the data as follows:

Sex	*Approximate Age in 10's*	*Response*

(There is no need to ask people their age or name.

Very few students jump right into this activity, because at first they are a little shy about approaching strangers and starting to talk. But eventually they overcome their shyness and once successful, they proceed with new-found confidence. Sometimes students are rejected but they continue the survey. They also become sensitive about who are the most interesting people to talk to. The groups meet for lunch at a prearranged time and place, compare notes, and then finish the activity. Students who finish early are free to choose another activity—shopping, visiting a museum or park—but they must have a destination. At 3:00 sharp, each student must be back at the Art Institute for the walk back to the train station and then home.

During the next class period, we compile all the data. Students discuss the people they talked to--including what was said, similarities and differences in the responses of different age groups and of men and women, the type of person interviewed, and reasons for avoiding other types. Then students summarize their data (specifically or generally). For example, one group concluded that men over 50 are the most interesting people to talk to and have an exciting life.

This activity offers students a chance to see the type of risk taker they are, to explore, and to experience a certain amount of freedom. They must make decisions on the spot, approach strangers, introduce themselves, and summon up all their strength to ask questions, risking rejection. In other words, the activity helps them learn more about themselves. They also learn that carrying a clipboard can make them seem important to others, important enough to stop to listen and talk.

Books (Adolescent Novels)

The books for the course should center around young people who make choices or are forced to make choices about their lives—young decision makers. The Elm Place program uses the following (teachers may use these or select their own):

No Promises in the Wind by Irene Hunt (Tempo Books, 1970)

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier (Dell Publishing Company, 1974)

The Cat Ate My Gymsuit by Paula Danziger (Dell Publishing Company, 1980) (Most girls have read this book by eighth grade.)

Jacob Have I Loved by Katherine Paterson (Avon Books, 1980)

Important quotations and passages are extracted and presented to students for their comments. Discussions should include values portrayed in the character study, alternatives that were available, actions taken, and what constitutes a critical decision.

Teachers who wish to use this activity will find the following suggestions helpful:

1. Find quotations or excerpts that help students understand the characters and their values.
2. Find evidence of decisions that characters make.
3. Find excerpts or phrases that show the character being externally forced to make decisions.
4. Find excerpts that show peer and adult relationships.

Drug Information Program

The Drug Information Program includes two sessions for Decision Making students and high school students.

The first, general session, takes place in the Learning Center where members of the three Decision Making classes listen to high school students talk about their personal lives. These students are typical children from "good" homes. Some are outstanding students, others are athletes, cheerleaders, and musicians. They tell how they started using alcohol and/or other drugs. At the time of the session, they are actually involved in a rehabilitation program that encourages talking about their problems. This helps them feel a greater sense of self-worth by trying to deter others by making them aware of some of the warning signals of a potential alcohol and/or other drug problem. A question and answer period follows.

The second session takes place in the classroom where 15 Decision Making students question two high school students on specific problems the questioners might be encountering at this time in their lives, and anything else they would like to talk about. The subjects of peer pressure, fear of failure, and rejection come out. We have found this exercise to be a real eye opener for eighth graders. It has a very positive effect on the way they look at their high school years.

A third session is held for parents and members of the Decision Making classes to increase parental awareness of the drug problem.

It is important to allow sufficient time between these sessions so that students can absorb the information they receive.

Discussions with College Students

Discussions with college students can give eighth graders insights into college life and plant some seeds for longer-term decisions. The two groups see a movie together and meet somewhere on the campus to talk.

Discussions with Other Adults

Discussions with senior citizens and grandparents, neglected members of society, are valuable for students. The elders are thrilled to be included, they need the attention, they are not threatened, they have made more decisions and have had more experiences to talk about than younger age groups. Students mix very well with them.

In discussions with parent groups, when their own parents are present, early adolescents tend to be not as open as they are with other groups. In our experience, students do not talk freely and their parents feel threatened. In groups made up of the parents of other students, however, discussions are more successful.

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Appendix A

Sample Activities

Treasure Hunt

You, the members of this decision-making class, are the real treasures. Let's see what good listeners you have been and how in touch you are with the members of your class. On each of the following open spaces write the name of the class member who fits the statement. Use only one name for each statement. Work quickly; have fun!

Find someone who—

has a dog and a cat _____

has a basement "wreck room" _____

likes to write stories _____

hates her hair _____

enjoys jogging _____

plays the flute _____

does NOT get mad easily _____

has an indoor basketball hoop _____

likes the color pink _____

is a real Hawkeye _____

loves M&Ms _____

likes to collect coins _____

is a big collector of miscellany _____

values independence _____

loves to sing and act _____

Values Vocabulary

approval

creativity

education

family

friendship

getting ahead, advancement

happiness

helping others

honesty

immediate pleasure

independence

individuality

money

obedience

power

prestige

progress

recognition

respect

responsibility

security

social conformity

solitude

spontaneousness

Who Are You?

Ask each student to write a response to the following question ten times:

Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?
Who are you?

Ask students to read their responses individually in front of the group. They learn that they are not one-dimensional, but multifaceted people.

Then have students ask each other questions about who they are and also suggest that there might be things they forgot about themselves.

Encourage students to share their lists with their parents.

Maze

Objectives:

- To develop the ability to follow directions
- To develop trust in a working group
- To develop problem-solving skills

Materials:

- 100 to 200 feet of rope
- One blindfold per person
- An outdoor site with trees or an indoor gym where chairs can be set up
- Video camera, if possible

Construct a maze using the rope. Make several dead ends. Put a flag at the end of the maze. Be sure participants do not see the maze.

In groups of no more than six, blindfold all participants. Lead them to a starting point in the maze. Have one group observe.

Give the following directions:

> Your task is to reach the flag as a group. Put your left hand on the shoulder of the person in front of you. Do not let go.

Time the groups. Move the flag before the second group goes through the maze. Note which group completes the task in the shortest time. Have the observers debrief participants by explaining the process each group used to solve the problem.

After the debriefing, lead a discussion on feelings about the activity.

City Survival Activities
Pre-Trip Planning

The following in-class activities are designed to familiarize students with physical aspects of the city and provide background information to help prepare them for several field trips. These trips can include the study of several neighborhoods, interviews with residents, surveys. (See Chapter 3 for descriptions of specific trips.)

1. Draw a detailed map of the city. Show lakefront, parks, notable buildings, streets, other interesting features.

2. Prepare individual reports about people, places, and events pertaining to the city. This might include neighborhoods, politicians, sports personalities, festivals, restaurants, governmental agencies (state and federal), special services.

3. Invite guests who might lend some expertise to a particular subject about the city, such as—

architecture	music
politics	culture
media	economics
sports	history

4. Formulate a game plan for interviewing people on the street. This would include forming a team composed of—

   an interviewer
   a note taker
   an observer to make suggestions for improvement if needed
   a person to summarize the interview.

5. Discuss personal feelings and ideas about the city, such as fears and expectations.

6. Become familiar with the transportation system.

7. Learn how streets are numbered, including where the 00 streets cross each other and all numbering begins.

8. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of city life compared with those of country or suburban life.

Values Questionnaire

_____
(Name)

If you value something, it means

_____

_____

_____

List 10 things you value.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you had one hour to do what you most enjoy, what would you do?

_____

_____

_____

_____

List five values you would like everyone to live by.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Unfinished Sentences

Complete the following sentences.

1. I feel best when people _____
2. I like people who _____
3. People who know me well think I am _____
4. In a group, I am _____
5. If I had a million dollars I would _____
6. People can hurt my feelings most by _____
7. I feel closest to someone when _____
8. My children won't have to _____
9. I don't like people who _____
10. My favorite vacation place would be _____
11. The hardest thing for me to do is _____
12. If I had a gun, I would _____
13. In school, I do best when _____
14. If I were President, I would _____
15. If I had 24 hours to live _____
16. I get depressed when _____
17. Secretly I wish _____
18. I would be willing to die for _____
19. I would be willing to physically fight for _____
20. I would argue strongly in favor of _____
21. I would quietly take a position in favor of _____
22. I will share only with my friends my belief that _____
23. I prefer to keep to myself my belief that _____
24. If I could be anything in the world, I would want to be _____
25. People who expect a lot from me make me feel _____

Sample Problems

Each of the following problems has several possible solutions. Ask students to read the problems and write what the person decides to do in each case. Then ask them to indicate what the person's values are, based on the decision.

Pete is under great parental pressure to get all A's in school. He receives a test paper scored 92. When reviewing the test in class, he discovers that he actually earned 88.

Sally is working on the school newspaper. After finishing work, the staff goes to Bill's house for a party where there is smoking and drinking. Sally sees a friend who is not drinking. Just as she approaches her friend, Tom hands her a beer, saying, "Join us."

Jane has a crush on her science teacher, Mr. Jones. She pours out her feelings about him in her diary. Her younger sister finds her diary and shows her parents.

Tom has been recommended for the high school's accelerated academic program. An excellent tennis player, he has a hectic schedule with his tennis lessons and tournaments. He knows that the accelerated academic program will take a great deal of time.

Steps in Information Gathering

1. Determine what information is needed.
2. Determine accurate sources for information.
3. Gather information.
4. Prioritize information from most useful to least useful.
5. Eliminate least useful information.
6. Incorporate information into decision.
7. Store information for future decisions.

Most Important Decision

Objective:

- Students will learn to prioritize their decisions into categories of importance.

Activity:

Read the following sentences and ask students to write their responses.

1. The most important decision I've made so far today is

   _____

2. The most important decision I've made so far this week is

   _____

3. The most important decision I've made so far this school year is

   _____

4. The most important decision I've ever made in my life was

   _____

After students have completed the sentences, divide the class into groups of four. Ask each student to share two decisions with the other members of the group.

Then ask students to list the steps they took in making their decisions.

Ask the following questions to help students get started:

1. Did you define the problem?
2. Did you gather information?
3. Did you list alternatives?

Lastly, compile a composite list of the steps students used in making their decisions.

Pieces of Eight

Design a hypothetical dilemma that requires several important decisions to be made. For example:

Mark

Mark was new to the middle school and wanted to make some friends. He decided to try to join one group of students who seemed to be more popular than others. For three weeks he tried speaking to the members of the group and even invited two of them to his house to play with his collection of video games. However, he received no invitations to spend any time with these students either in or out of school.

One day Mark asked Tom, the obvious leader, if he could "hang out" with the group after school. Tom said no, there were requirements for membership. When Mark asked what he had to do or be, Tom said, "It's simple, all you have to do is shoplift at least $100 worth of tapes from K-Mart for the gang's collection."

If you were Mark, what would you do?

Sally

Sally was eleven and eleven-twelfths when she began planning her twelfth birthday party. Because of her immaturity and emotional nature, she was not well liked by most of her peers. She had not really begun to seek independence from her family. Her mother was her strongest advocate.

Sally intended to invite to her party the boys and girls from the group to which she most wanted to belong but which constantly rejected her. She painstakingly designed her own invitations and handed them out. Some of her peers were offended by their exclusion from her list.

The small group of seven boys and six girls who were invited received the invitations with mock surprise and pleasure. Then the trouble began. One of the invited guests casually asked Sally if her parents would be at the party. She instantly responded yes, not noticing the inquirer's raised eyebrows.

The next day, after the telephone wires had carried the plot, two representatives of the invited guests informed Sally that none of them wanted to come to a chaperoned party, that she would have to "forget it" unless her parents were not at home.

If you were Sally, how would you handle this problem?

Other dilemmas include those involving grades, study habits, cheating, selection of friends, relationships with adults, viewing media, drugs, parental pressure, stress, use of leisure time, shoplifting, careers, and other topics of concern to students in the class.

Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Give each group three pieces of information that are necessary to make a decision concerning the dilemma. Then ask groups to determine the following:

1. What is the most necessary piece of information?
2. Can you make a decision based on the information you have?
3. If you can make a decision, what will it be?

The entire class determines the most effective final decision. Students write in their journals what they learned from the activity.

Your Personality

1. I am a male ____ female ____.
2. I am 10 ____ 11 ____ 12 ____ 13 ____ 14 ____ 15 ____ years old.
3. I have a best friend. Yes ____ No ____
4. If I could change one thing about myself, I would change _____
_____
5. When I want to be alone, I go to _____
6. I can do most things if I try. Yes ____ No ____
7. My parents trust me. Yes ____ No ____ I'm not sure ____
8. The best part of my school day is _____
9. The worst part of my school day is _____
10. My parents understand me. Yes ____ No ____ Who cares? ____
11. In a game situation, I would rather—win ____ lose ____; don't care ____.
12. I feel most comfortable with teachers who _____
13. My favorite school activity is _____
14. When I finish school, I want to be _____
15. When I have a problem at school I talk to _____
16. The person I respect most is _____
Why? _____
17. People like me because _____
18. I get angry at my friends when they _____
19. My grades in school are what I deserve. Yes ____ No ____
20. The best part of my day at home is _____
21. I have as many friends as I'd like to have. Yes ____ No ____
22. I am happiest
a. alone ____
b. with one friend ____
c. with lots of people around ____
d. Comment: _____
23. I have someone at home to talk to if I have a problem. Yes ____ No ____
24. The worst thing that ever happened to me was _____
25. The best thing that ever happened to me was _____
26. I have tried marijuana. Yes ____ No ____
27. The one thing other people like about me is _____
28. Most of my friends smoke marijuana. Yes ____ No ____
29. I'm afraid of _____
30. If I could change one thing in my school, it would be _____
_____

31. If only my teachers were a little more _____
and a little less _____
32. If I could be someone else for a week, I would choose to be _____
_____
33. The toughest decision I have ever had to make was _____
_____
34. The subject that I have the most trouble learning is _____
35. The hardest part about being my age is _____
_____
36. As a result of going to this school, I've learned that I _____
_____
37. As a result of going to this school, I've learned that _____
_____
38. My teachers think I am a poor ____ good ____ very good ____ student.
39. My teachers know me very little ____ some ____ very well ____ .
40. I like school a little ____ some ____ a lot ____ .
41. I need more facts and information about—

alcohol. Yes ____ No ____ Comments: _____
sex. Yes ____ No ____ Comments: _____
marijuana. Yes ____ No ____ Comments: _____
growing up. Yes ____ No ____ Comments: _____

Right Now I Feel—

Responses to the following should be either written, shared verbally, or both.

1. Right now I feel _____

2. Right now I am _____

3. Right now I think _____

4. Right now I wish _____

5. Right now I can _____

6. Right now I hope _____

7. Right now I care about _____

8. Right now I don't care about _____

9. Right now I look _____

Dilemmas

This sheet is to be used in answering the dilemmas that follow.

Possible Values

academic success
accomplishment
being needed
being part of a group
courage
creativity
education
equality
family
freedom
friendship
getting ahead, advancement
getting along with parents
getting along with the law
happiness
health
helping others
honesty
immediate pleasure
independence
individuality
loyalty
making a profit
money
obedience
opinion of others
power
prestige and recognition
progress
respect
responsibility
security
self-respect
social conformity
spontaneousness
wisdom

Possible Strategies

agonizing
combination
compliance
delaying
escape
fatalism
impulsiveness
intuition
paralysis
planning
safety
wishing

Dilemma No. 1

Bruce is an eighth grader at Oak Street Middle School. He comes from a family that values a prestige education and emphasizes grades. In the algebra class Bruce feels both the pressure from home and his own motivation to excel. Recently on an important algebra test he received a grade of 92. Upon reviewing his paper he realized that the teacher erred in totaling his score and his grade should have been 86.

1. What are your values in this situation?
2. What are your alternatives?
3. What strategy do you choose?
4. What decision do you reach?

Dilemma No. 2

Sarah, a freshman at Madison High, is very anxious to make new acquaintances and friends and has volunteered to take part in many extracurricular activities. One Friday afternoon, after a newspaper and yearbook committee meeting, a few students ask her to join them at a student's home for a little get-together. She accepts, and upon arrival finds a house full of high school students who are drinking and "living it up." She notices a pungent odor in the air but is too overwhelmed to realize what's going on. On the one hand she is happy that she has been asked to join this party, but on the other hand she feels very uncomfortable. As she walks around, she notices Nancy, a friend from junior high school and someone she has known for many years. Upon seeing Sarah, Nancy runs over and gives her a big hug. At the same time Roger hands Sarah a can of beer saying, "Drink up," and Bill leans over and asks her to take a drag on his cigarette.

1. What are your values in this situation?
2. What are your alternatives?
3. What strategy do you choose?
4. What decision do you reach?

Classroom Personalities

Ask each student to draw one description of a classroom personality from a hat. Students are to role play the personality they draw, without telling anyone the part they are playing. Ask the student who draws "adult advisory leader" to begin a discussion on how much television students watch each week and why.

Allow the discussion to continue for about five minutes until all roles are evident. At the end of that time, ask students to give their role cards to the person on their left, without talking during the exchange. Then continue the discussion as before with students playing their new roles.

After the discussion, ask students to be themselves and lead a discussion based on the following questions:

1. Which personality types do you think were portrayed in the group discussions?

2. Which roles were helpful?

3. Which roles kept the discussion from being productive?

4. How did it feel to have to play the role you were assigned?

5. How did it feel to be the leader?

6. How much is too much of any one of these roles?

7. Were both your roles quite different from you?

8. Were any roles overlooked?

9. What are the necessary parts of a good discussion?

Repeat this exercise several times if students are interested in the types of roles being played.

Examples of Classroom Personalities

Class Clown: You always joke. You make sure that no topic gets too serious.

Very Shy Student: You don't speak unless asked a direct question.

Suzy or Sam Smart: You always have the answer or an opinion on every subject.

Constant Interrupter: Your answer doesn't have to be related to the topic.

Jittery Joe or Jill: You want to be involved, but you can't sit still. You are constantly distracting others.

Clockwatcher: You are very task-oriented. You go along but let others know what time frame they are using.

Put-down Pete or Pat: Every comment you make is a negative one about a member of the group.

Bored Bertha or Bill: You could care less about what's going on.

Pollyanna: Everything in the group is sweet and light and a bit spacy.

You are willing to share ideas in a true group spirit. You really like and need this decision-making class.

You are willing to share ideas in a true group spirit. You really like and need this decision-making class.

You are willing to share ideas in a true group spirit. You really like and need this decision-making class.

You are willing to share ideas in a true group spirit. You really like and need this decision-making class.

You participate, but must be urged to do so.

You are very quiet but you do make comments that are very appropriate.

You constantly try to change the subject.

You constantly strive to be recognized as the group leader.

You are the adult advisory leader.

Final Exam in Decision Making

Name: _____

Five things I learned about decision making this year are (be specific– I learned that . . .):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Five things I learned about myself this year are (be specific—I learned that I . . .):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Be specific:

My greatest strength is _____
I need to improve most in _____
I am most concerned about _____
I would consider it risky to _____

Self-Prediction

Name: _____

Answer the following questions and then fold the paper, insert it in an envelope and seal it. Write on the envelope "Not to be opened until June 1, 2000," and your name.

1. What will your occupation be 15 years from now?

_____

_____

2. What will the world be like?

_____

_____

3. Will you be married and have a family?

_____

_____

4. What will be the most important decision you have made during the past 15 years?

_____

_____

5. What will be your strongest quality during the next 15 years?

_____

_____

Appendix B

Sample Communications to Parents and Students

Course Description

Class Title:	Decision Making in the Middle School
School:	Elm Place Middle School 1234 School Street Anytown, U.S.A.
Principal:	John Smith
Grade:	8th
Enrollment:	Approximately 15 per class
Class Time:	Monday and Tuesday, 7:45-8:20 A.M. One Saturday afternoon per month
Teachers:	Jerry Rudman, Mary Loss, Tom Creighton, and Susan Fell-Lazar, Photographic Consultant
Class Description:	This course involves the students with issues of self-awareness, decision making, values clarification, and family structures and peer relationships. The students use language, written and spoken, to examine feelings and communicate ideas.

Purpose of Course:

1. To reveal the process of decision making
   a. Examination and recognition of personal *values*
   b. Knowledge and use of adequate, relevant *information*
   c. Knowledge and use of an effective strategy for converting this information into action
2. To share feelings and thoughts
3. To build a stronger self-concept
4. To facilitate successful transition to high school
5. To facilitate better verbal, written, and photographic communication

Textbook:	*Deciding* by H. B. Gelatt. Barbara Varenhorst, and Richard Carey (College Entrance Examination Board, 1972) Leader's Guide Available
Recommended Reading:	*No Promises in the Wind* by Irene Hunt (Tempo Books, 1970) *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier (Dell, 1974) *Jacob Have I Loved* by Katherine Paterson (Avon Books, 1980)

Major Projects:

1. Photographic Unit—six weeks (using the camera as a mirror as well as a window to student lives)
2. Drug Awareness Program
3. Experiences bridging the middle school and the high school

Outside Activities (optional but encouraged):

1. Viewing and discussing films (examples: *Ordinary People*, *Fame*, *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Breaking Away*, *My Bodyguard*, and *Tex*).
2. Working cooperatively with inner-city middle schoolers to put on a Halloween Carnival at a settlement house on Chicago's near West Side.
3. Outdoor education field experiences.
4. Census taking with a partner in downtown Chicago, asking 50 people the most important decisions they made that day and in their entire lives.
5. Attending sports events with the emphasis on the decision-making strategy of the players, coaches, and referees, and observing crowd reactions to those decisions.
6. Activities with senior citizens and grandparents, focusing on important lifetime decisions.
7. Cooperative activities between Elm Place and Onward Neighborhood House on Chicago's West Side. The relationship between the groups facilitates not only the sharing of experiences but of friendships, neighborhoods, cultures, and customs as well. Activities have included Picnic/Activity Day at Wilmette Beach, movie/pizza outing in the city, putting on a Halloween Carnival for younger children at Onward House, cross school visitation, camping, and winter sports.

Evaluation:

Our evaluation is based on the students' *commitment* to the class. *Commitment* is based on attendance, participation, listening, and projects, and is reflected in grades O, S, and U (Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory), as well as in any written notation we might send home.

Report to Parents

DECISION-MAKING PROGRAM FOR 8TH GRADERS
REPORT TO PARENTS

Name _____ Date _____

The Decision-Making Program for 8th graders meets on Monday and Tuesday mornings from 7:45 to 8:20 and devotes time to the process of making decisions. The three major requirements of skillful decision making are (1) examination and recognition of personal *values*, (2) knowledge and use of adequate relevant *information*, and (3) knowledge and use of an effective *strategy* for converting this information into action.

Early in each semester, students are asked to identify two personal goals. Later in the semester students evaluate their progress in achieving these goals.

PERSONAL GOALS

1. _____
2. _____

STUDENT COMMENTS:

EVALUATION PROFILE OF STUDENT:	Demonstrates this behavior	Needs improvement
1. Attends regularly	_____	_____
2. Is punctual to Decision-Making class	_____	_____
3. Comes prepared to class	_____	_____
4. Participates positively in Decision-Making discussions	_____	_____
5. Is considerate of the rights of others	_____	_____
6. Has good listening skills	_____	_____
7. Is supportive of peers	_____	_____
8. Displays a positive attitude	_____	_____
9. Grasps concepts of Decision-Making process to date	_____	_____

TEACHER COMMENTS:

Decison-Making Teacher _____ **Principal** _____

Parent Invitation to Open House

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

Dear Parents of Decision Making Students:

The Elm Place Middle School Open House will be Wednesday, October 20th. The Decision Making Open House will be the same day from 6:45 p.m. through 7:30 p.m. in the classrooms listed below.

Please stop in and meet with your child's Decision Making teacher. Discuss the activities in the classroom and the exciting educational field trips that are planned for this year.

Looking forward to meeting with you

Jerry Rudman, Room 104
Mary Loss, Room 107
Janet Bodi, Room 105
Tom Creighton, Room 106
Decision Making Teachers

Permission Request for Field Trip (Senior Citizens)

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

To Parents of Decision Making Students:

On Saturday, October 23, the Decision Making classes will bus to the Jewish Community Center in Milwaukee to see "The Music of Their Lives," a photographic study of unusual portraits of the elderly and accompanying selections from their life short stories, grace notes of intimately personal tales and details of captured moments that people can't always see. The students will see that old age can be an astonishingly vital time, a happy, busy, productive, and fulfilling passage of a person's life.

After the exhibit, students will be able to talk to these people in an informal setting. As decision makers who have experienced long life, they will remember and speak about the tough times, the life-and-death struggles of their lives, as well as the quiet threads of everyday life, their loves, their arts, their labors, their children.

This is an opportunity to participate in a special program that dignifies the existence of human life, and to present to your children subjects that have become masters of an undefined art--the ability to survive.

The bus will leave Elm Place promptly at 10:30 a.m. and return to the school at 5:00 p.m. We will lunch in Milwaukee. Students should bring an appropriate amount of money.

Jerry Rudman,
Mary Loss
Tom Creighton
Janet Bodi

_____ may participate in the field trip to the J. C. C. in Milwaukee on October 23, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

_____
Parent's Signature

Permission Request for Saturday Activity

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

Dear Parent of Decision Making Student:

In connection with the unit on values, Decision Making classes will meet Saturday, December 11, at 1:00 p.m. in the Elm Place School Learning Center.

We will view the movie Ordinary People and follow it with a discussion. The movie and discussion will end at 4:00 p.m.

Sincerely

Jerry Rudman
Janet Bodi
Mary Loss
Tom Creighton

_____ has my permission to attend the movie and discussion at Elm Place School Learning Center on Saturday, December 11, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

_____
Parent's Signature

Request for Parent Support of Photographic Unit

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

To Parents of Decision Making Students:

As stated during Open School Night, the Photographic Communications Unit is an important part of the Decision Making curriculum for this coming year.

Photography is a wonderful means of expression for all students who learn to use the camera as both a mirror and a window to their lives. Last year's unit was especially meaningful, as you were able to see during my slide presentation on Open School Night.

In order to continue this effective means of communication, I would like your cooperation in absorbing all or part of the cost of the film (black and white Polaroid #667). The actual cost is $15 per student. Cameras, flash bulbs, and mounting supplies will be furnished at no cost. The unit runs six weeks and there will be enough film for three and a half projects.

I would appreciate it if you could make a contribution toward this worthwhile project. Checks should be made payable to Elm Place Middle School.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jerry Rudman

Permission Request for High School Transition Activity

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

To Decision Making Students:

On Saturday, January 28, from noon to 4:00 p.m., we will have a special program regarding your forthcoming transition to high school.

Former Decision Making students who are now seniors, juniors, sophomores, and freshmen will come to Elm Place to welcome, inform, educate, share experiences with you, and answer your questions about Highland Park High School.

Subjects included will be academic planning, course selections, clubs and activities, sports, counselor relationships, peer pressures, drugs and alcoholism, cheating, parental involvement and pressure, grades, failures, and the importance of participating.

We encourage you to participate in this activity. The program will begin promptly at noon in the Learning Center at Elm Place and you should be home no later than 5:00 p.m.

If you can attend for only part of the session, it would still be worth your while.

Gerald J. Rudman
Mary Loss
Tom Creighton

I do _____ or I do not _____ want my child to participate in this activity.

_____
Parent's Signature

Parent Invitation to High School Transition Activity

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

To Parents of Decision Making Students:

On Saturday, January 28, at 1:00 p.m., students of Highland Park High School will present a special program for parents of Decision Making students, which will deal with all aspects of high school life at Highland Park, except the curriculum area. which will be covered at a special meeting at the high school on the 23d of January.

Subjects that will be covered in the meeting of the 28th deal with emotions, adjustment, transitions, social activities, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol.

The meeting will be held in Room 101 at Elm Place School. It will start promptly at 1:00 p.m. and you should be out by 3:00. There will be a question and answer period.

Jerry Rudman
Mary Loss
Tom Creighton

Permission Request for Field Trip (Survey)

ELM PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
1234 SCHOOL STREET
ANYTOWN, U.S.A

To Parents of Decision Making Students:

In connection with our current unit, on Wednesday, May 22, the Decision Making class will take a train trip to Chicago to survey opinions and collect data. The activity will center around the Art Institute. The students will complete the activity in a specified amount of time, which will leave them some free time to explore.

We will meet at the train station at 9:15 a.m., leave Highland Park at 9:32 a.m., and arrive in Chicago at 10:35 a.m. We will return on the 4:35 p.m., which arrives back at Highland Park at 5:24 p.m.

We will have lunch at the Burger King on Michigan Avenue, approximately one and a half blocks from the Art Institute. Each student will need $10 to cover costs.

Please complete and sign the attached authorization form.

Jerry Rudman
Anne Krosnjar
Mary Loss

My child _____ may attend _____
may not attend _____
the Chicago Surveying Expedition.

_____
Parent's Signature

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