



Decision Making

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Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility's evidence-validated programs engage young people in learning essential social and emotional skills and help educators build productive and respectful schools. The 4Rs Program combines superior children's books with engaging SEL activities that explore community, feelings, relationships, conflict, and problem-solving, adding depth to literacy instruction.

Decision Making

By: The 4Rs



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Note to the teacher:

This is Lesson 2 from The 4Rs™ [Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution] *Teaching Guide for Grade 1*, Unit 5, Problem Solving, pp 67-69. The book selection for this unit is *Owen* by Kevin Henkes.

Like all 4Rs Applied Learning lessons for primary grades, this lesson follows this structure: Gathering / Check agenda / Skill-building activity / Closing.

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Agenda on chart paper; a pair of puppets

Objective

Students will help the puppets solve problems.

Materials Needed

- agenda on chart paper or the chalkboard
- the puppets

Gathering: Stand Up

Introduce the children to the “Stand Up” game. The teacher says, “Stand up if you’re wearing anything that’s blue.” The children wearing blue stand up. The teacher says, “Okay. Thank you. Sit down,” and then continues, “Stand up if you like pizza.” And so on. Continue for several minutes if interest remains high. Invent “stand-ups” tailored to your class. Here are a few to get you started:

- Stand up if you have a pet at home.
- Stand up if your birthday is this month.
- Stand up if you’re wearing sneakers.
- Stand up if you like ice cream.



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When children are standing, you can ask one or two of them to share a bit more. For example, if children who like ice cream are standing, give a chance for several to share what flavor they like before moving on to your next stand-up.

Check agenda

Go over the agenda and the objectives.

Helping the Puppets Talk Things Out

With the puppets, present the following skit:

Yvette grabs a pencil from Michael. “This pencil’s mine!” says Yvette. “You thief! You stole it out of my desk! I’ve been looking for it all morning.”

Michael grabs the pencil back. “I did not steal it, liar! It’s my pencil. I brought it from home this morning.”

Freeze the action. But ask the actors to stay in character.

Ask the class, What is happening? Encourage the children to describe what’s going on in a neutral, non-judgmental way.

Ask, How are Yvette and Michael feeling?

Ask, Is there anything Yvette or Michael might have done differently? The students may say that Yvette could have asserted herself strongly about her pencil without calling Michael a thief and accusing him of stealing it. Michael could have protested his innocence and his ownership of the pencil without calling Yvette a liar.



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Ask: If the children continue their grabbing and name-calling, how is this conflict likely to turn out?

Ask: How might Yvette and Michael solve this problem so that it will work out well for both of them? Accept all ideas without judging them. When several ideas are on the table, propose them one at a time to the puppets for their consideration. Push the children's thinking by making the puppet characters feisty—like real children. For example: “Why should I apologize? He did steal my pencil!” or “I don't want to break the pencil in half— that'll ruin a good pencil!”

After some back-and-forth with the class about their ideas for solutions, **have one of the characters agree to act on one of the proposed ideas** for solving the conflict.

Continue the skit, with the puppets coming to some kind of resolution. The solution might be something like this:

Yvette apologizes for grabbing the pencil from Michael, but says that her pencil, which she thought was in her desk, looks like the one Michael has.

Michael accepts the apology, says that he did bring the pencil from home, and has a witness to back him up. He agrees to help her look for her pencil.

Together they let the teacher know that they're looking for Yvette's pencil, and s/he tells the class to look as well. The pencil is found, either in back of Yvette's desk or somewhere else in the classroom.



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Ask the class: What do you think of the solution the puppets came up with? Did it solve the problem? How are Yvette and Michael feeling now? Was the solution realistic – could it happen in real life?

Ask: Do we ever have problems like this in our class? Elicit students' comments. With Yvette and Michael in mind, what shouldn't you do if you lose a pencil? What should you do?

Sum up the lesson: We all have conflicts from time to time. Conflict is part of life. When a conflict comes up, we need to work together with others to try to solve it. Sometimes, like Yvette and Michael, we can solve conflicts so that everybody wins.

Note to the teacher: By using the puppets to present a conflict and then guiding your students through the sequence of questions above, you are introducing them to a useful approach or “habit of mind” for dealing with conflict. To reinforce this way of thinking about conflict and enable your students to integrate it into their lives, use this activity frequently throughout the year.

Closing

Lead the children in a round of applause for their hard work in helping the puppet characters solve their problem.

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