Problem-Solving in Action

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the seven steps to decision-making
- Apply this decision-making model to everyday decision-making
- Understand decision-making and problem-solving as necessary skills
- Understand decision-making styles are individual and unique

Materials Needed

- Classroom display of a problem-solving or decision-making model. Examples:
  - 7 Steps to Decision-Making worksheet
- Pre-made problem/situation slips for each student

Instructions

1. Before class, choose a decision-making model for the class to use for duration of the term. It should have a step-by-step process that students can follow in a variety of situations.

2. Present or lead a discussion about the importance of problem-solving and decision-making skills.

3. Discuss how to analyze a situation and the basics of problem-solving
   a. Identify the problem
   b. Identify options or courses of action
   c. Analyze consequences of each choice
   d. Choose the best option
4. Present a problem for the students to solve. It can be related to education or career exploration (“which college should I go to?”) or related to their personal or school lives (“I don’t have enough time to get my homework done”). When possible, use situations students recently experienced.

5. As a group, have students go through the problem-solving model to choose the best option to solve the problem and evaluate if it would worked.

6. Present a new problem. Provide students with work-problem/situation slips, and let students go through problem solving to predict the best choice. This activity can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups or as a class.

7. Discuss the options the students chose.

Evaluation of Learning

- Assess participation in group discussion and activities.
- Grade the completion of the problem-solving slips.
- Monitor students’ decision-making skills.
- Assess how students apply their decision-making skills to their college or career exploration activities.

Enhanced Learning

- Adopt specific criteria for choosing the best options that will be used every time a student needs to make a decision. Example: Is it safe? Is it fair? How will people feel? Will it work?
- Choose a few careers of interest to students. Ask student what types of decisions people in those jobs have to make and the consequences of their making bad decisions.
- Create a “work problem of the week” (absenteeism/tardiness, dress code, team project conflict) and encourage students to figure out different ways to solve the problems and vote on the best solution.
- Create a “Situation Box” where students can anonymously submit real or hypothetical problems. At a regularly scheduled time, pick a problem for the class to process together.
- Assign an essay for students to describe a problem and how they would us the decision-making model to solve it.
- Invite the school counselor or persons who provide support services for students to come to class and talk about how they can help student with serious problems.