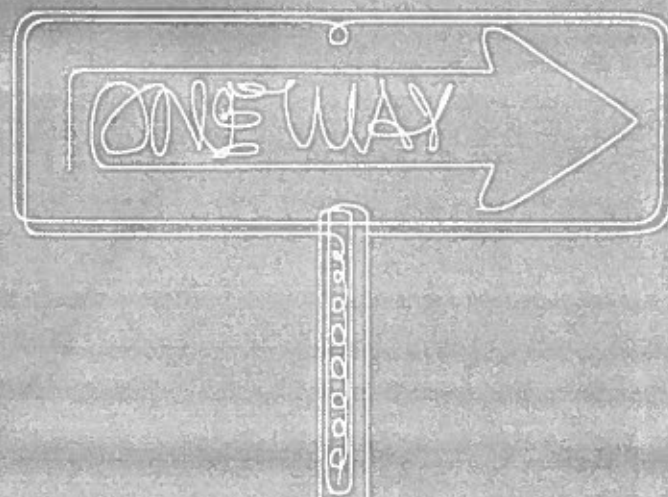


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## 7. DECISION MAKING

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## UNIT INCLUDES:

**OVERVIEW**

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**PROGRESS MONITORING**

**LESSON 1: MAKING LONG-TERM DECISIONS**

**LESSON 2: MAKING QUICK DECISIONS**

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**In this unit your students will:**

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- Recognize and articulate a problem
- Evaluate options when making a decision
- Identify sources for gathering information to aid in the decision-making process
- Decide and implement the appropriate option
- Predict possible outcomes and consequences



## OVERVIEW

# A STUDENT FACES MANY DECISIONS IN HIS OR HER DAILY LIFE.

THEY OFTEN MAKE CHOICES WITHOUT EVEN BEING AWARE THAT THERE ARE OPTIONS. SOME DECISIONS CAN BE ARRIVED AT QUICKLY AND MAY BE OF MINOR IMPORTANCE, BUT SOMETIMES THESE INSTANT DECISIONS MAY HAVE LASTING CONSEQUENCES. OTHER DECISIONS ARE MADE KNOWING THEY HAVE A LONG-TERM EFFECT AND CAN IMPACT ONE'S FUTURE. THESE TYPES OF DECISIONS REQUIRE CAREFUL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION SO THAT THE OPTIMAL SOLUTIONS CAN BE FOUND.



## DESCRIPTION OF LESSONS

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** How Well Do I Make Decisions? *(10–15 minutes)*

This eight-item self-assessment tool allows students to evaluate their ability to make quick and long-term decisions. Teachers can also use the assessment to monitor students' progress over time. (See pages 1-12 and 1-13 for instructions.)

## **LESSON 1:** Making Long-Term Decisions *(60–90 minutes, or divided into two sessions)*

Students are introduced to the decision-making process and the steps that will assist them when making important decisions.

## **LESSON 2:** Making Quick Decisions *(30–45 minutes)*

Students will explore the process of making hurried decisions and the consequences of their choices.



## REFLECTING ON YOUR PRACTICE

- *To what extent do I support students to make their own decisions?*

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- *How can I teach students to anticipate the consequences of their decisions?*

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- *How can I foster group decision making in my classroom?*

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- *How can I teach my students to use the techniques taught in this unit to resolve conflicts?*

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## BRIDGING TO THE CLASSROOM

- Allow students to work in groups when completing these lessons.

- Have students present and justify their decisions to other members of the class.

- Post and refer to page 89 in the Student Guide, *Making Long-Term Decisions*, when it is pertinent to a lesson or classroom situation.

- Have students use page 92 in the Student Guide, *Pros and Cons*, for making other individual or classroom decisions.

- Allow students time to reflect on decisions they have made in the past.



## RESEARCH SAYS:

RESEARCH SUGGESTS SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS THAT FOSTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS (I.E., DECISION MAKING) SCHOOL WIDE LEAD TO INCREASED EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS (ELIAS, 2003). ADDITIONALLY, RESEARCH FROM THE COLLABORATIVE TO ADVANCE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (CASEL) FOUND THAT TEACHING SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING SKILLS LIKE DECISION MAKING ASSISTS IN PREPARING STUDENTS TO REACH NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS SUCH AS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP AND ACHIEVEMENT AS WELL AS ASSURING SAFE, DISCIPLINED, AND DRUG/ALCOHOL FREE SCHOOLS.

# Student Worksheet:

## How Well Do I Make Decisions?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	NONE OF THE TIME 0	SOME OF THE TIME 1	MOST OF THE TIME 2	ALL OF THE TIME 3
I take time to analyze all my options before making a big decision.				
I ask for advice when I have a hard time making a decision.				
I always weigh the pros and cons of each option before I make my choice.				
I often reflect on whether or not I made the right decision.				
I am able to make decisions quickly.				
I try to predict what might happen as a result of my decision.				
I often feel that I make the right decision.				
I like to help others make the right decision.				

### Reflection Questions:

1. What parts of decision making am I already good at? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What parts of decision making would I like to improve? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are specific actions I can take to improve my ability to make good decisions? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

# Teacher Resource: Monthly Progress Monitoring Charts

STUDENT:		STUDENT:			
		DATE:	DATE:	DATE:	DATE:
<b>DECISION MAKING</b>	<b>Mastery</b>	24	24	24	24
		23	23	23	23
		22	22	22	22
		21	21	21	21
	<b>Developing</b>	20	20	20	20
		19	19	19	19
		18	18	18	18
		17	17	17	17
	<b>Emerging</b>	16	16	16	16
		15	15	15	15
		14	14	14	14
		13	13	13	13
<b>Not Yet Established</b>	12	12	12	12	
	11	11	11	11	
	10	10	10	10	
	9	9	9	9	
<b>DECISION MAKING</b>	<b>Mastery</b>	8	8	8	8
		7	7	7	7
		6	6	6	6
		5	5	5	5
	<b>Developing</b>	4	4	4	4
		3	3	3	3
		2	2	2	2
		1	1	1	1
	<b>Emerging</b>	0	0	0	0
		9	9	9	9
		8	8	8	8
		7	7	7	7
<b>Not Yet Established</b>	6	6	6	6	
	5	5	5	5	
	4	4	4	4	
	3	3	3	3	
<b>Not Yet Established</b>	2	2	2	2	
	1	1	1	1	
	0	0	0	0	
	0	0	0	0	

# Making Long-Term Decisions

TIME:  
**60-90**  
MINUTES

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- Explore the process of decision making
- Apply the decision-making process to a scenario

## Planning Ahead

- Post *Gathering Information Sheets 1-9* (pages 7-8-7-16) around the classroom (on walls, desks, etc.). They are: *Trackside High, Hometown High School, Justice Academy, Mother, Aunt Vivian, Track Coach, Teacher, Theresa, and Tasha.*

## Materials

Student Guide pages 87-96

*For Teacher:*

- *Gathering Information Sheets 1-9*
- *Pros and Cons Possible Answers*

**STUDENT GUIDE CONNECTION:** Have students read page 87 in the Student Guide and then take the Self-Assessment on page 88. This assessment can be self-administered or taken during a teacher-student interview. However, it should be completed before starting this lesson.

## Procedure

Please feel free to select and adapt parts of the procedural suggestions below.

### DISCUSS

#### Ask students questions about making difficult decisions.

- Ask: *Have you ever had to make a difficult decision?*  
*How did you go about making the decision?*  
*What happened? Were you happy with the decision that you chose?*  
*If so, what allowed you to make the right decision?*  
*If you weren't happy with your decision, what do you wish you had done?*  
*How could you have made a better decision?*

### INTRODUCE

#### Explain the decision-making process.

Explain: *We are constantly making decisions. We make most decisions automatically, without even thinking about them. However, when decisions are complex and consequences are significant, it is important that we go through a thinking process that will help us arrive at the best solution. This is called the decision-making process.*

People have different ideas about the number of steps involved in decision making, but the components described below are generally agreed upon.

*(continued)*

## INTRODUCE

(continued)

Read and discuss with students page 89 in the Student Guide, *Making Long-Term Decisions*. The main steps and explanations are listed below.

1. **Identify the problem or opportunity.** Sometimes the decision that needs to be made is obvious. Other times it needs to be thought about and articulated. It can be hard to make a decision if you are not clear about the central issue.
2. **Gather relevant information.** In order to make a good decision, you need good information and advice. After clearly stating the decision that needs to be made, you need to gather as much relevant information as possible. It may help to brainstorm the different sources that will provide the information you need.
3. **Develop as many options as possible.** What are all of the possible options you could choose? Although sometimes this is obvious, it is important to keep an open mind about options by thinking of as many as you can.
4. **Evaluate your options and decide on and implement the best one.** Once you have generated a number of possible options, begin considering the pros and cons of each choice. Ask yourself, "What are all of the positive and negative consequences that would result from this option?" and "Are there ways to minimize the negative consequences and maximize the positive ones?" List the pros and cons for each option. Decide which option you think is the best.
5. **Continue to evaluate the consequences of the decision.** Even though the decision is made, the process is not finished. Continue to examine the consequences of your decision. Are there unforeseen consequences (either positive or negative)? Are there decisions you can make now that will minimize negative consequences or maximize positive ones? What should you do differently next time you are faced with a similar situation?

**Explain to students that they are about to consider a scenario in which a student similar to them needs to make a very important and difficult decision.**

**Step 1:** Have students look at pages 90 and 91 in the Student Guide, *Maria's Decision* and *Working Through the Decision*.

**Step 2:** Divide students into groups of two or three.

**Step 3:** Have students read and complete Step 1 of *Working Through the Decision*.

**Step 4:** Read Step 2 of *Working Through the Decision* as a class. Explain that students now have to gather information in order to make the decision. Point out the *Gathering Information Sheets* posted around the room. Direct students to read the nine different sources of information and take notes on facts that will contribute to Maria's decision-making process.

**Step 5:** Read Step 3 of *Working Through the Decision* as a class. Have students list Maria's options on page 92 in the Student Guide, *Pros and Cons*.

(continued)

## DECIDE

## DECIDE

(continued)

Step 6: Tell students to read Step 4 of *Working Through the Decision*. Have them evaluate Maria's options and complete page 92, *Pros and Cons*, using the information on the *Gathering Information Sheets*. Encourage them to have a lively discussion.

Step 7: Have each group come to a consensus about where they think Maria should go to high school and use that information to answer the questions in Step 5 of *Working Through the Decision*.

Step 8: Have each group evaluate their decision and answer the questions in Step 6 of *Working Through the Decision*.

## DISCUSS

### Share student answers.

Allow groups to share their suggestions for Maria, and ask students to justify their decisions. Discuss the similarities and differences of the groups' responses.

- How did you decide on the best option if all options had pros and cons?
- What was most difficult about the process?
- What further pieces of information would have helped you make the decision?
- To what extent was Maria making more than one decision (e.g., career, college, friends)?
- How could each of these decisions be explored using the decision-making process?
- How was this process similar/different from your decision making in the past?
- What present or future decisions might benefit from this type of thinking?



## BRIDGING TO THE CLASSROOM

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post a copy of <i>Making Long-Term Decisions</i> somewhere visible in your classroom.</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to and model the decision-making process when making class-wide decisions.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how the decision-making process relates to your content area (e.g., the Scientific Method in science, the decisions of historical figures or fictional characters in humanities, the creative process in the arts).</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference the decision-making process for historical figures, novel characters, and math problem-solving skills.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure difficult decisions for students (e.g., choosing a research paper topic or deciding where to go to college) by referring to the decision-making process.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create writing prompts that involve the decision-making process.</li> </ul>   |

## Teacher Resource: Trackside High

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Trackside High, one of the largest public schools on the South Side, has one of the best track and field programs in Chicago, and they just got a brand new field house with an indoor track. They have won several city and state championships, and many of their athletes get track scholarships to good colleges. Many of Maria's current teammates are planning to go there. Although Trackside High offers lots of courses in history and government, it does not have any special classes for studying law. They do have a Future Lawyers of America Club that meets after school, but that might conflict with track practice.

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## Teacher Resource: Hometown High School

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Hometown High School is the public high school right in Maria's neighborhood. Except for some of her good friends from the track team, most of Maria's friends are going to Hometown High. Maria already knows a lot of people at Hometown. Some of them like it because they say it's easy, but some of them don't like it because sometimes there are fights and they don't feel safe. Hometown has a track team but no track to practice on. There are no special law courses or after-school groups at Hometown High School. Only about half of the students that graduate from Hometown go on to college.

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# Teacher Resource: Justice Academy

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Justice Academy is a private school in downtown Chicago. It will accept the one-year scholarship Maria earned and it will be renewed each year as long as she continues to maintain a 3.0 (B) average. The school is small and has a lot of law courses, but they don't have a track team. Almost every student who graduates from Justice Academy gets into a great college and goes on to law school. Maria's Aunt Vivian graduated from Justice Academy and is now a high-paid lawyer in Atlanta. Maria doesn't know anyone else who's going to Justice Academy, and she would have to take the train to get there.

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# Teacher Resource: Mother

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**I'm so proud of you. You are so smart and talented. I want you to make the most of your life and pursue your dreams. If you want to become a lawyer, you can. If you want to be a track star, you can. You can do anything you put your heart and soul into. I don't know if we can afford the tuition at Justice Academy, but if you keep your grades up, we won't have to worry about that. I just want you to be happy.**

# Teacher Resource:

## Aunt Vivian

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**Maria, I am so proud of you for getting a scholarship to Justice Academy. It is a terrific school, and you will learn a lot about what it takes to be a lawyer. It really helped to prepare me for college and law school. It won't be easy, but if you stay focused, you can do it. Becoming a successful lawyer takes years and years of dedication and hard work. But it really pays off in the end!**

# Teacher Resource: Track Coach

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**I've coached you for three years. You're an amazing runner, Maria. The other girls on the team really look up to you ... and not just because of your skills on the track. You are a genuine leader. I really hope you keep running and keep developing yourself as a leader. With the right team and facilities, you could easily make it to the state championships. Who knows, maybe you'll even be a state champion yourself!**

# Teacher Resource: Teacher

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I encourage you to become a lawyer. Based on what I've seen from your work and in-class discussions, you have what it takes for law school. Sure it's seven more years of school, but we need good, intelligent people like you working as lawyers. Your scholarship to Justice Academy is a great opportunity. Not many girls from this neighborhood get to go to such a prestigious school.

## Teacher Resource: Theresa

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Hey, Ria. I can't believe we're finally going to be in high school. We've been talking about this our whole lives. I know Hometown High School isn't the best, but at least we'll know everyone there. If you go to that fancy lawyer school, I'll never see you again. Think of all the dances and parties you're going to miss. We still got a lot of memories to make, girl! You know you're my best friend, right?

# Teacher Resource: Tasha

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**Hey, girl. Have you seen Trackside's new indoor track? It's like the best track in the city. You can even train during the winter. I just know we're going to make it to state. You're not going to Hometown are you? They don't have a track. And if you go to that private school downtown, you'll be so busy trying to keep your grades up that you won't have time to be on the team. You should go to Trackside with me. We'll tear that track up!**

# Student Resource:

## Making Long-Term Decisions

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

It is easy to get lost in the process of making difficult decisions. The steps below provide a useful and versatile sequence that can help you make all kinds of decisions. The questions to the right will help you start thinking about the essential issues of each step.

1	<b>Identify the problem or opportunity.</b>	What am I trying to decide? Is there more than one decision I need to make? Can I articulate the decision in only one sentence?
2	<b>Gather relevant information.</b>	Where do I need to look to find information that will help me make my decision? Who can help me?
3	<b>Develop as many options as possible.</b>	What are all of the possible options available to me? Be creative. Don't stop at just one or two, and don't judge their worth right away.
4	<b>Evaluate your options and decide on and implement the best one.</b>	What are the pros and cons of each option? How can I maximize the pros and minimize the cons?
5	<b>Continue to evaluate the consequences of the decision.</b>	What adjustments do I need to make? What would I do differently the next time I am confronted with a similar decision?

# Student Resource:

## Maria's Decision

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**It is the winter of her eighth-grade year and Maria has a difficult decision to make. There are three different high schools that she could go to, but she doesn't know which one to choose. Your job is to help Maria decide which school will be best for her.**

Here are a few things you should know about Maria.

- Maria has gone to public schools in Chicago's West Side her whole life. She is a very smart girl and almost always earns A's and B's. Although she spends lots of time with her family and friends, she always sets aside time to finish her homework and study for any upcoming tests.
- Maria has three main interests right now:
  - running on the track team
  - learning about law
  - spending time with her friends
- Maria is one of the stars of her school's track team. She is the fastest girl in the school, and she can't wait to start competing on a high school team.
- Maria's favorite subjects in school are history and government. She dreams of one day being a high-paid lawyer like her Aunt Vivian. Last summer, Maria participated in a Future Lawyers of America Institute and earned a one-year scholarship to a private high school called Justice Academy.
- Growing up on the West Side of Chicago isn't easy for Maria. Luckily, she has a lot of friends and a strong family to support her. She has known most of her friends since first grade. All through junior high, they talked about how much fun it will be to go to high school together.
- Even though it is still several years away, one of Maria's goals is to go to college. She knows that she will need to continue to get good grades if she wants to get accepted and maybe even get a scholarship.

# Student Worksheet:

## Working Through the Decision

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: Define the Decision, Problem, or Opportunity

Read page 90, *Maria's Decision*. In one complete sentence, state the decision Maria is facing.

### Step 2: Gathering Information

In order to help Maria make her decision, you will need more information. There are several sources of information that can help you determine which option is most appropriate for Maria. Review the information about the different high school choices and the advice from Maria's family, friends, coach, and teacher. Consider all the information provided to assist Maria in making the best school choice.

### Step 3: Generate Options

What options are available to Maria? In the gray boxes on page 92 of the Student Guide, *Pros and Cons*, briefly list the three options Maria has available. If you think of another option, put it in the fourth box.

### Step 4: Evaluate Options

For each option, list as many positive and negative consequences as you can that would likely result from that choice. For example: If Option One is to go to Trackside High, positive consequences might include getting a chance to run in the state championships, while negative consequences might include the fact that she might not learn much about law.

### Step 5: Choose the Best Option

Consider the positive and negative consequences of each option.

1) Which is the best option for Maria? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) What makes that choice better than the others? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Step 6: Evaluating the Decision

How will Maria know if she made the right decision? What can she do to evaluate her decision and make changes if necessary? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Teacher Resource: Pros and Cons Possible Answers

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. List the options available to Maria in the shaded cells below.
2. Record as many pros and cons as you can for each option.
3. Circle the option that you think represents the best option.

OPTION ONE: TRACKSIDE HIGH		OPTION TWO: HOMETOWN HIGH SCHOOL	
<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great track and field program and facilities</li> <li>• Many current teammates are attending</li> <li>• Can join the Future Lawyers of America Club</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No classes on law</li> <li>• Future Lawyers of America Club may interfere with track practice</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will know many people</li> <li>• Easier classes</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violence/safety concerns</li> <li>• No track to practice on</li> <li>• No law courses or clubs to join</li> <li>• Low rate of students going from there to college</li> </ul>
OPTION THREE: JUSTICE ACADEMY		OTHER:	
<p><b>PROS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarship as long as Maria has a 3.0 GPA</li> <li>• Most graduates go to college and law school</li> <li>• Aunt Vivian's success is attributed to Justice Academy</li> </ul>	<p><b>CONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won't know anybody there</li> <li>• Will have to take the train</li> <li>• No track team</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROS</b></p>	<p><b>CONS</b></p>

# Making Quick Decisions

TIME:  
**30-45**  
MINUTES

## Objectives

In this lesson, students will:

- Apply the decision-making process to real-life scenarios

## Materials

Student Guide pages 93–96

## Procedure

Please feel free to select and adapt parts of the procedural suggestions below.

DISCUSS

### Discuss and think through quick decisions.

Ask: *Have you ever had to make a quick decision?*

*How did you go about making the decision?*

*Have you ever been in a situation where it was hard to make the right choice?*

*Why was it hard to make that choice?*

*What did you do to weigh the options?*

*What were the consequences of your decision?*

*How could you have made a better decision?*

INTRODUCE

### Explain the decision-making process.

Explain: *You make important decisions every day. Sometimes, you have time to think over your decisions before you make them. On the other hand, some decisions have to be made quickly. The objective of this exercise is to think about the consequences of your decisions beforehand. This way, when you have to make decisions quickly, you will have the skills to predict the possible outcomes. This will help you to be prepared to make the right decision.*

DECIDE

### Use scenarios to consider possible outcomes.

Explain to students that they are about to consider three scenarios in which students similar to them need to make very important but fast decisions.

Have students read page 93 in the Student Guide, *Decision Scenarios*. Then, working either individually or as a group, ask students to read the scenarios on pages 94–96 in the Student Guide and to think about the outcomes of each decision. Explain that they are to write the outcomes of making each decision in the boxes. After weighing the outcomes, have students choose which decision they would make for each scenario.



# Student Resource: Decision Scenarios

Name: ..... Date: .....

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The following pages contain scenarios that may happen at school. In the passages, the main character is forced to make a quick decision. Read the passages and possible decisions. Then fill in the boxes with possible outcomes and consequences that could occur after making each decision.

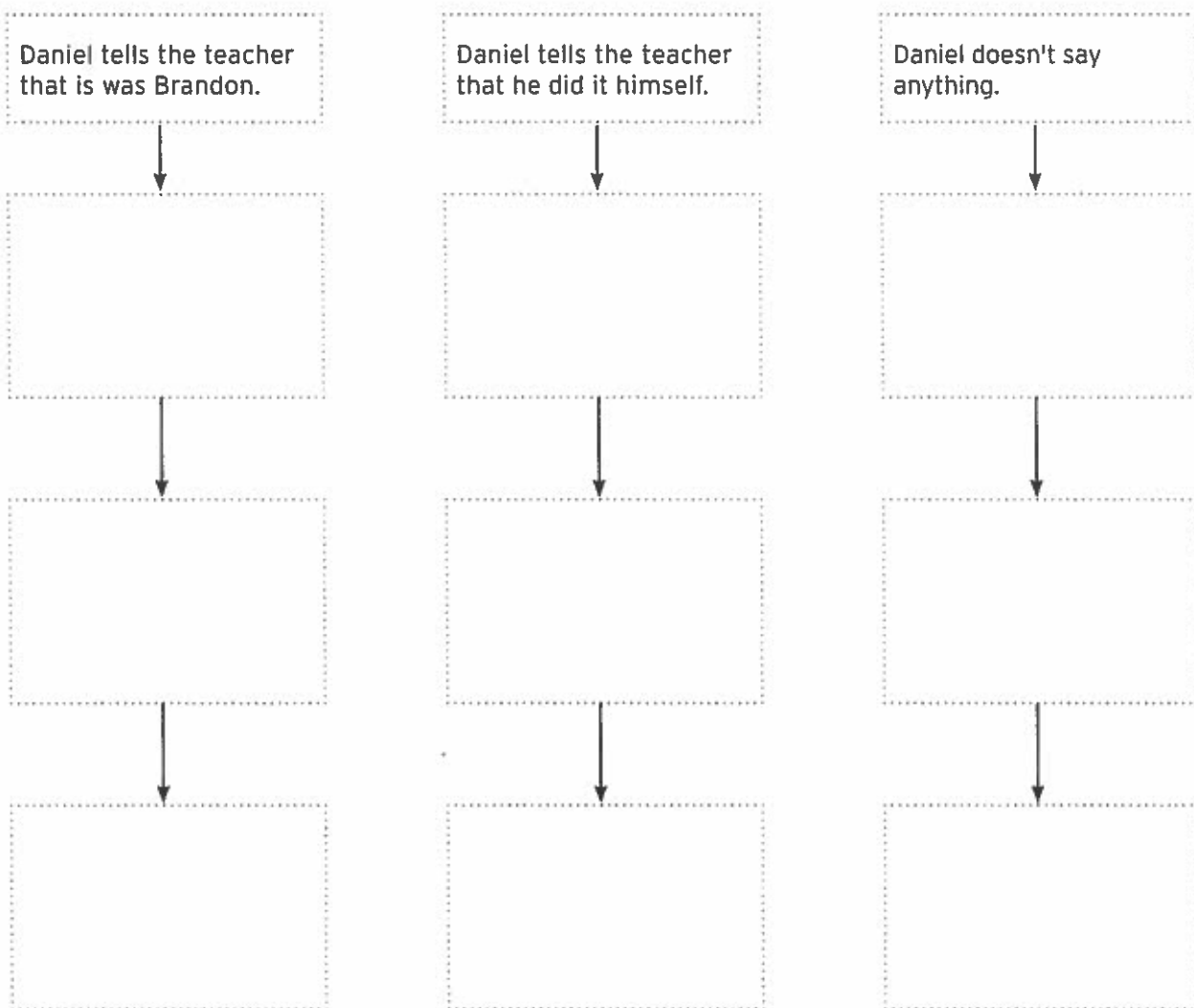
Think about how the main character's teachers, family, and friends would react to each scenario as well.

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# Student Worksheet: Scenario 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

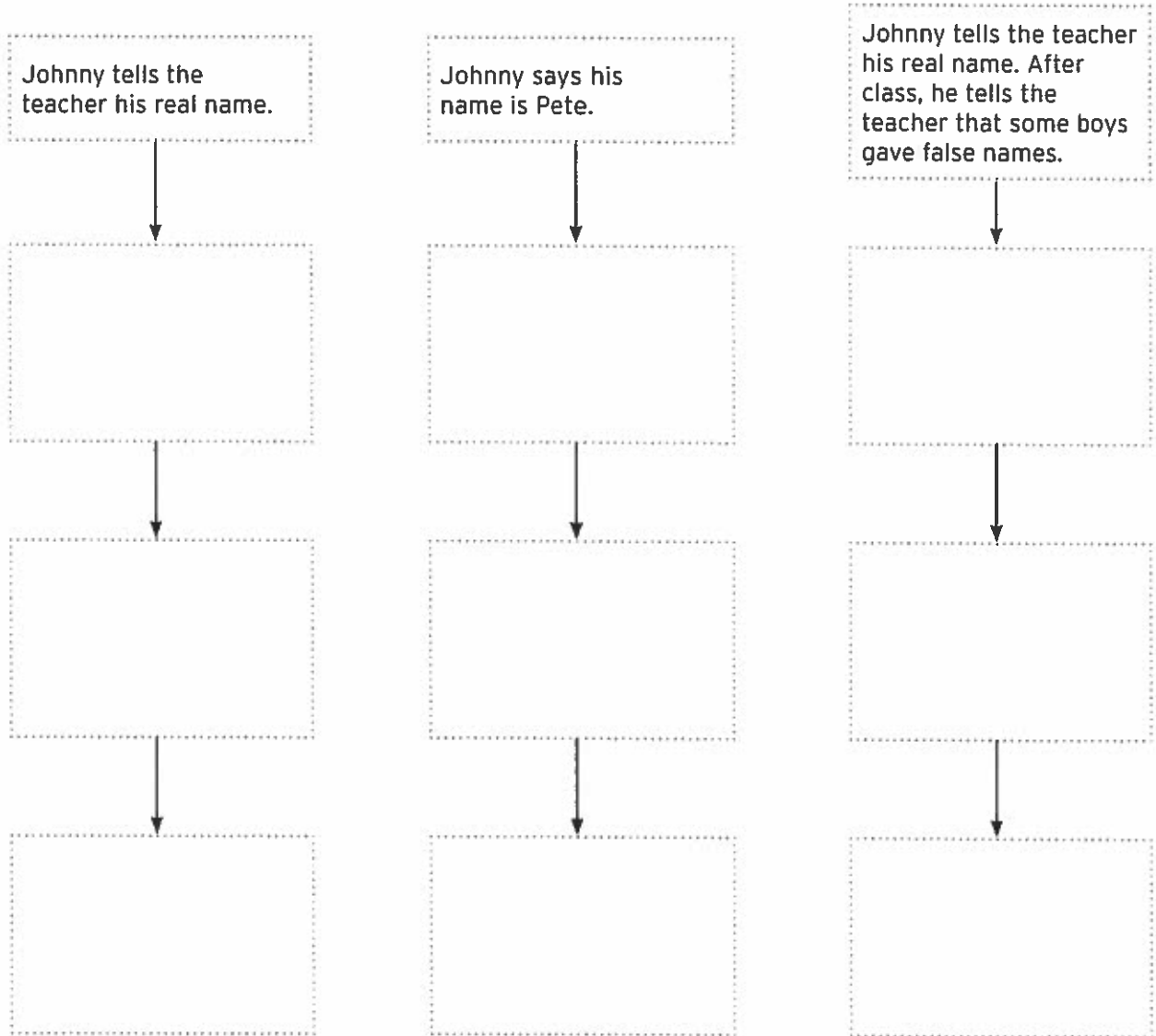
Daniel and Brandon have always been best friends. One Monday morning, Daniel came into science class a few minutes late. He sat down next to Brandon and saw that Brandon had drawn a picture of the female science teacher with devil ears and a mustache on the desk. The following day, the teacher announced to the class that somebody had drawn an inappropriate picture on a desk and explained that this is vandalism. She spoke about how it reflected badly on the entire class. She asked any student that knew anything about the vandalism to please step forward. She said that if nobody does, she will cancel the end-of-year party for the whole class.



# Student Worksheet: Scenario 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Johnny's history teacher was absent for the day, which meant that his class was getting a substitute teacher. When the teacher walked in, she asked the students to go around and say their names. A few of the other boys in his class told the teacher wrong names. Johnny wasn't normally a troublemaker, like some of the other boys in his class, but he thought that being funny and loud, like the others, would make people like him. When it came to Johnny's turn to state his name, he had only a second to decide what to say.



# Student Worksheet: Scenario 3

Name: ..... Date: .....

Melissa loves math, but it doesn't always come easy for her, so she studies a lot and practices often. One afternoon, Melissa had a math quiz. She had studied for a few days. Erica, one of Melissa's classmates, sat in the desk on her left. Erica is not one of Melissa's best friends at school, but they were always friendly during class. When the teacher turned her back to the class to write instructions on the blackboard, Erica whispered to Melissa that she didn't have a chance to study for the math quiz because of an important soccer game and asked if she could copy from Melissa's quiz. Erica said if she failed this quiz, her parents would ground her.

