Bessie Makes a Decision

5th grade

Travis Whiting

Hancock Elementary
Introduction
Saint Paul Public Schools is a diverse, urban district with approximately 30,000 students. About 45% of these are English Language Learners. Most of the students in the district qualify for free or reduced lunch. The section we read from *Won't Take No for an Answer: The Story of Bessie Coleman* is part of a shared reading from the Mondo curriculum our district uses. This lesson uses the PACED decision making model from the Minnesota Council on Economic Education.

Lesson Description
Bessie Coleman was the first African-American woman aviator. But, what if she had made different choices along the way? The first part of this lesson shows students how to use criteria and alternatives to make a decision about a class game. In the second part of the lesson, students then examine a choice Bessie Coleman made and explore the possible impact if she had made a different choice.

Key Economic Concepts Taught
Decision-making, alternatives, criteria, opportunity cost

Standards Addressed
2.2.3.3.1 Because of scarcity, individuals, organizations and governments must evaluate trade-offs, make choices and incur opportunity costs.

Benchmark: Describe the trade-offs of a decision; describe the opportunity cost of a choice as the next best alternative which was not chosen

5.2.1.1.1 People make informed economic choices by identifying their goals, interpreting and applying data, considering the short- and long-run costs and benefits of alternative choices and revising their goals based on their analysis.

Benchmark: Apply a decision-making process to identify an alternative choice that could have been made for a historical event; explain the probable impact of that choice

Objectives/ Learning Outcomes
1) Students will apply a reasoned decision making process to make a choice by filling in a decision-making grid related to a class recess game
2) Students will describe opportunity cost of a choice as the next best alternative that was not chosen
3) Student will apply a reasoned decision making process to analyze a choice made by Bessie Coleman
4) Students will explain the choice Bessie Coleman made using the terms alternatives, criteria, and opportunity cost as demonstrated by writing a paragraph.
Time Required
Between 45 and 60 minutes, in one lesson or split into two lessons.

Materials
overhead projector or document camera
transparencies of packet (if necessary)
copies of packet for students and teacher
copies of the reading passage

Outline of the Instruction Process

Day 1

1) Introduction

2) Hook
   a) Say: Imagine your mom or dad says he/she will take you out to eat. Only you. And you get to
      choose where to go. Some people may only have one favorite restaurant, so it's an easy choice. For others, like me, they may have three or more favorite restaurants. Can I
      go to all of my favorite restaurants tonight? No. Why not? Because there's not enough time,
or money. When there is not enough of something, you have to make a decision. Everyone
      has to make decisions throughout the day. Do I want cold lunch or hot lunch? Where should I
      sit in the cafeteria? We may not realize it, but there is often a reason we make those choices.
   b) Ask for a student to give an example of a choice they made today.
   c) Say: Why did you choose that? If the student cannot come up with reason, ask the other
      students to make suggestions why he/she might have made that particular choice.
   d) Say: Today we are going to practice using a more thoughtful process to make decisions. This
      process is call "Reasoned Decision-Making"
   e) Pass out the packets to students. Use and overhead projector or a document camera to project
      the page from the packet as students work on them.
   f) Define the following term. Students should copy the definitions into their packets
   g) Decisions - choices about what to take or do and what to give up

3) Procedure
   a) Say: Today, we will start by making a class decision about what game to play at recess.
   b) Ask students to name some whole class recess games. Write them on the board.
   c) Say: We want to play a game at recess. We have more than one choice. The possible choices
      are called alternatives.
   d) Define alternatives as: different possible choices when making a decision.
   e) Point to the list on the board. Say: These are our what?. Students should respond with
      "alternatives"
   f) Say: Today we are going to use a reasoned-decision making process to decide on a class game.
      For the sake of time, we need to narrow our alternatives down to three.
g) Either have the class vote to find the three alternatives or pick the two that are usually the most popular.

h) Show students the PACED Decision-Making grid. Say: We will use a decision-making grid to make our final choice today. Start with the problem. What problem are we trying to solve? (Which recess game should we play?). Write the problem at the top of the class chart.

i) Say: Let's put the alternatives on the decision making grid. The alternatives go on the left side.

j) Write the alternatives on the left side of the grid. Tell students to flip back to the front side again.

k) Say: When we make our decision today, we need to figure what is important in choosing a recess game.

l) Define Criteria as the things we think are important in making a decision. Say: What criteria should we use? For example, we could say our game has to be fun. Write "fun" on the board.

m) Ask students what other criteria they would use in making our decision. They may come up with things like "everyone participates, cooperation, fair, safe, etc." Write the criteria on the board as students list them.

n) Say: For the sake of time, we need to narrow our criteria down to three.

o) Either have the class vote to find the three alternatives or you can pick the three that are usually the most popular.

p) Show students the PACED Decision-Making grid again. Say: Let's put the criteria on the decision making grid. The criteria go across the top. Write the criteria on the side of the chart.

q) Say: Now we will rate each alternative on a scale from 1 to 5 for each criterion. 5 is the best, 1 is the worst. For example for our first game (capture the flag or whatever game), our first criterion is (fun or whatever criterion). Since I think (capture the flag or whatever game) is really (fun or whatever criterion), I might give it a 5. Someone else might think it is not as (fun or whatever criterion), so they would give it a 2 or 3.

r) Tell students to rate each alternative for the three criterion on their Decision making grids.

s) Say: Now, hold up you fingers to show your rating for each area. Different people will have different ideas of the value of each criteria. We will go with the number that the majority of the people choose.

t) Look for the number that comes up the most. Write this number on the teacher copy of the grid. (Alternatively, you could use the mean, median, or mode to make a cross-curricular connection, but this will take longer.)

u) Say: Next, we will add up each row. Add the rows on the teacher copy. The total is the value for each alternative.

v) Say: Based on our criteria, what is the best choice for a recess game? Circle the choice made.

w) Say: So, we couldn't do everything we wanted to do. The next best alternative that we didn't choose is called the opportunity cost.

x) Write the definition of opportunity cost on the teacher copy of the packet: The next best alternative that you miss out on once you make a decision. Student should copy into their packets.

y) Point to the alternative chosen on the decision making grid. Say: We chose ______. What is the opportunity cost for our decision about a recess game? Put a star by the opportunity cost.

z) Say: Now let's write down the definitions of some of the new words we just learned. Take one minute to see if you can fill in the words in the blanks. Give students a minute to try it on their own. Then review it with them.
Day 2

4) **Hook, part 2** (Note: if you decide to complete this lesson in one day, you may want to skip the review and continue on with the procedure part 2).
   a) Before the lesson, post the class decision-making chart about the recess game.
   b) Say: *today we are going to look at Reasoned Decision-Making again. Let's see what you remember from the first part of the lesson.*
   c) Say: *We came up with three choices for a class game. In a reasoned decision making process what are these? (alternatives). In order to choose a game, we decided it was important that the game would be ____________, ______________; and finally, that it would be ____________. What are these called? (criteria).*
   d) Say: *According to my decision making chart, what decision did we make. So if we decided to play ____________ what was our opportunity cost? (students should name the next best alternative).*
   e) Put a star by it and write opportunity cost.
   f) Say: *Now let's play a little game called "what if". What if we had chosen __________ instead? What would be different? (Yeng would not have won; I would not have gotten my pants dirty from falling; we would have played a more exciting game; everyone would have been involved). So, making a decision changes a lot of things.*

5) **Procedure, part 2**
   a) Say: *Now we will repeat the process to look at one of the decisions that Bessie Coleman had to make and play the "what if" game with that decision.*
   b) Say: *First, let's re-read the selection of the text about Bessie Coleman together. It is found in your packet. Read the selection aloud with the students.*
   c) Say: *What is the problem she was trying to solve?*
   d) Say: *Next, with a partner at your table, you need to do two steps. First, go through the text again and circle the alternatives she has to solve her problem. Second, underline the criteria she probably used to make her decision. Try to imagine you are Bessie when you look for criteria.*
   e) Give students a few minutes to find alternatives and criteria. Then, ask them to share their ideas. Put these on the Decision-Making Chart. Students should then copy to their own decision making charts.
   f) *With a partner at your table, rate each alternative for the criteria you have found. What do you think Bessie would have thought about each one? Try to rate it as she would.*
   g) After student have had a few minutes to fill in their charts, ask students to share their rating, by holding up fingers or whatever method you used for the first part of the lesson. Write these on the chart.
   h) *Add up the totals for each alternative.*
Closing

i) Say: Based on the criteria, what was the best choice for Bessie? Circle this on the class chart.

j) What was the opportunity cost of her choice? Put a star by this on the class chart.

k) Think about what happened after she moved to Chicago. What do you think would have happened if she had taken her second choice and moved back home? Tell students to turn to a partner and talk about the last question. Then, call on students to share what their partner's ideas were.

Assessment

l) Say: Your homework is to write a paragraph explaining the choice that Bessie Coleman made. Use the words alternatives, criteria, and opportunity cost in your paragraph.

m) Say: You also need to write a second paragraph explaining how the world might have been different if Bessie had chosen a different alternative.

Extension

n) Note: students study biography as a part of the 5th grade writing curriculum. After they finish writing about their person, they could go back and evaluate a decision that he/she made.

o) Use the Chart on the back on this page to evaluate a decision that your person had to make.

   i) What alternatives are there?

   ii) What criteria did you use?

   iii) What choice should you make?

   iv) What is the opportunity cost?

Reflection

The lesson I actually taught to my class was much longer originally. However, it took a little bit too long and students seemed confused because I had to many foci for the lesson. So, I eliminated parts of the lesson that focused on scarcity and trade-offs, to narrow the focus on alternatives, criteria, and opportunity costs.

Moreover, I saw the new standards after I completed the lesson. The benchmark for standard 5.2.1 suggests that students hypothesize as to what would have happened in a historical event if a different decision were made. I added a some steps into the lesson to include a focus on the “what if” aspect of the benchmark.

Bibliography

Appendix A
Student Packet
Reasoned Decision-Making

Decision

Part 1
So, let's start by making a class decision about what game to play at recess.

**Alternatives** are the different possible choices when making a decision.

What are the *alternatives* in terms of games we could play?
Ex: Capture the Flag,

**Criteria** are the things we think are important in making a decision.
What *criteria* should we use?
Ex: Fun,

**Opportunity Cost** – The next best alternative that you miss out on once you make a decision

What is the opportunity cost for our decision about a recess game?
Recess

VISUAL 1-2: PACED DECISION-MAKING GRID

The Problem:

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The Decision:
Step 1: Define the Problem.
Why must you make a choice?

Step 2: List the Alternatives.
What are the possible options?

Step 3: Determine the Criteria.
What makes one option better than another?

Step 4: Evaluate the Alternatives.
How well does each option meet each criterion?

Step 5: Make the Decision.
Which option has the most favorable trade-offs?
Part 2

Now we will repeat the process to look at one of the decisions that Bessie Coleman had to make.

What were her alternatives (choices)?

What criteria do you think she used?

With a partner at your table, rate each alternative for the criteria you have found. What do you think Bessie would have thought about each one? Try to rate it as she would.

According to the criteria, what choice should she have made?

What was the opportunity cost of her choice?

HW: 1) Write a paragraph explaining the choice that Bessie Coleman made. Use the words alternatives, criteria, and opportunity cost in your paragraph.
2) Write a second paragraph explaining how the world might have been different if Bessie had chosen a different alternative
there was nothing for her back in Waxahachie but field work, ironing, or cleaning white folks’ houses. In fact, even with an education, there were limits on her life in most parts of the South, where blacks were not allowed to vote, or use the same restrooms or sit in the same seats as white folks, much less pursue the same careers. Returning home would mean a certain kind of prison for Bessie, where once again she could probably do little more than imagine a different life for herself.

But there was another option, and it was one Bessie now seriously considered. Years earlier, Bessie’s brothers had moved to Chicago as part of a wave of relocation now called the Great Migration. In the South, people were hearing rumors that jobs for blacks were more plentiful in big northern cities like Chicago, and the pay was better, too. This wasn’t because Chicagoans were necessarily more tolerant of other races, but because they had a greater need.

It was the beginning of World War I, and fewer immigrants were being admitted to the United States. These immigrants had been a steady source of unskilled labor in big cities, but now business owners needed to find other people to do their hard work. Not only that, but Bessie had heard blacks in the big cities “up North” were finding it easier to enter professions usually closed to them in the South, such as medicine and journalism. The prospect of trying something different
from what she had always known tempted Bessie mightily.

Bessie was perfectly aware that things were far from ideal for blacks in Chicago. There was still plenty of racism in the north, where many whites believed that African-Americans should be “kept in their places,” restricted from attending the same schools and even living in the same neighborhoods. Worse, black women were often relegated to the more traditional jobs they had always done, such as cooking and housekeeping. But at 23, Bessie decided she could risk any of these possibilities to find a better life.
VISUAL 1-2: PACED DECISION-MAKING GRID

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Bessie Coleman
VISUAL 1-2: PACED DECISION-MAKING GRID

The Problem:
  
The Decision:
Bessie Coleman had two alternatives: Stay home or go to Chicago. She thought about the criteria. The opportunity cost for her was leaving her family. The trade-offs included leaving home and taking a risk.

Bessie Coleman had 2 alternatives if she goes to Chicago or back to Wewahitchka. Her trade off was that she had an opportunity cost to Chicago because there were a lot of criteria.

Bessie had 2 alternatives but she didn't go to both of them. She just wanted a better life. She used some criteria which helped her a little bit.