

# Responsible Decision-Making Handout 4b: Educator Vignettes — Example Responses

## **Directions:**

After completing Handout 4a, consider the examples here as well as your responses. Examples are provided to help spark thought, but there is more than one “correct” answer.

## **Vignette: Ms. Lee**

Ms. Lee teaches 6th grade mathematics and covers ratios, fractions, and beginning statistics. Every year, Ms. Lee does a project in which students engage with some of these mathematical concepts by starting their own “business.” As part of the project, students go through activities to write a business plan, make a pitch for funding, and then take out loans for their business. Students select activity cards each day that present new opportunities for and challenges to their business, requiring them to make decisions and adaptations. At each decision point in the project, Ms. Lee has students complete a decision tree, thinking through the possible outcomes, risks, and benefits of each decision (e.g., taking out a larger loan means they can start their business more quickly, but it also means they need to make more revenue immediately to begin to pay down their loan).

**How might this teacher build readiness and effectively introduce this activity and, following the activity, help students process what they learned?**

**Example:** The teacher can show examples from previous classes at the beginning of the unit, and, before each project activity, share examples of decisions that past classes have made.

**Example:** The teacher can have students journal or structure small-group discussions after each activity to reflect on the consequences of the decisions they made, why they made those decisions, and what they might change if they could do it again.

**How might this teacher encourage active participation by all students?**

**Example:** The teacher can ensure that all students have a clear understanding of all academic content before beginning the lesson that requires them to apply the concepts in a new way.

**Example:** The project can incorporate personalized elements so that each student feels more connected to the theoretical set-up (e.g., each student can decide what kind of business to run, do research on the typical costs and structure of that business, and incorporate individual creative design elements into their project).

**How might this teacher ensure that this activity is responsive to the cultures of her students?**

**Example:** Students can find businesses in their community to model their project on. The teacher can incorporate elements like an interview with a business owner to add real-life elements to the students’ businesses.

**Example:** The teacher can be open to different benchmarks for judging successes, risks, and different management options based on the varied backgrounds of the students (e.g., students may decide to open their business with a family member; take out a “community loan” from relatives to supplement a bank loan; or decide to make a riskier decision for their business, like carrying different types of more expensive products, because that risk is desirable or beneficial to their community).

**How might this teacher build students’ understanding of why they are engaging in this activity?**

**Example:** The teacher can explicitly state that they are working on building real-world connections to mathematics as well as applying responsible decision-making skills.

**Example:** The teacher can invite a guest speaker from a local business to come talk to her class about ways they use mathematics in their own work, the types of decisions they have made in the past, and the consequences of those decisions.

## **Vignette: Ms. Morrison**

At the beginning of the school year, Ms. Morrison has her 2nd-grade students write class guidelines together. She explains to her class that instead of having a long list of class rules that are supposed to cover everything, they will have little lists of guidelines that cover different times of the day, activities, and especially interpersonal interactions (e.g., for activities in which they need to work in groups, the class sets guidelines for productive cooperation, sharing, and listening to each other’s ideas). After the first few weeks of school, Ms. Morrison has students brainstorm ways they have not followed the guidelines. Students reflect individually about the actions they took, why they took those actions, how their actions may have affected others, and whether they could have done things differently. Afterward, students share ideas on how they could make more positive choices in the future and be more aware of the consequences of their actions.

**How might this teacher build readiness and effectively introduce this activity and, following the activity, help students process what they learned?**

**Example:** The teacher can make sure students know from the beginning of the year that they will be asked to reflect on the times when they do not follow the class guidelines, so that students are ready for the conversation.

**Example:** The teacher can tie the reflection to some class decisions about consequences and restorative practices when guidelines are not followed moving forward.

**How might this teacher encourage active participation by all students?**

**Example:** The teacher can have students write notes to themselves over the first two weeks when she sees them not following a guideline. Students can use these notes to choose a time they want to reflect on.

**Example:** The teacher can have the whole class engage in an example conversation first, in which they talk about some imagined scenarios, before they are asked to reflect on their own behavior.

**How might this teacher ensure that this activity is responsive to the cultures of her students?**

**Example:** The teacher can be careful not to pass judgement on student behavior as “good” or “bad.” Instead, the conversation can be centered on the supportive guidelines they have made together as a class and how each person can be thoughtful about their own behavior in support of the broader community.

**Example:** The teacher can make sure that guidelines allow flexibility and can be adapted throughout the year. When possible, guidelines can have multiple options to allow for different cultural interpretations or needs (e.g., instead of mandating that everyone speak, there can be a guideline for sharing in discussion time that allows students to pass or circle back during the conversation if they are feeling uncomfortable or unsure.)

**How might this teacher build students’ understanding of why they are engaging in this activity?**

**Example:** Students can role-play or discuss different scenarios in which students don’t follow guidelines and what might happen in their classroom.

**Example:** Students can share in writing or through discussion which guidelines are most important to them or how they were personally impacted when guidelines were not followed.

This work was originally produced at least in part by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center at WestEd, with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under cooperative agreement numbers S283B120021 and S283B1200. The content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does its mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Copyright © 2019. Permission to reproduce and adapt for non-commercial use, with attribution to New Jersey Department of Education, American Institutes for Research, and WestEd, is hereby granted.