Landmark Teaching Strategies

Include Students in the Learning Process

Responsible decision making requires students to demonstrate competence in a series of skills that ultimately assist them in the process of analyzing a situation and making the appropriate choice. The table below outlines potential ways to guide students as they develop each relevant skill.

Skill	Activity Options	Explanation
Identifying the Problem	**Observe**	Many students can not immediately recognize what the problem is or that there is a problem at all, especially in social situations. Therefore, students are encouraged to observe their surroundings to notice social interactions, decisions, or even environmental concerns. These observations allow students to process a situation either on their own or with an educator who can help guide them to recognize where the problem occurred.
Analyzing the Situation	**"Stop and Think"**	These skills are best addressed in a progression, so once students have successfully identified the problem, they then need to analyze the decision or behavior that caused the problem. Educator guidance is important in this step as students attempt to understand where the problem began. Educators should ask questions to help students more fully understand the situation so they can process their role and then make a responsible decision.
Solving the Problem	**Picture Plans and Option Walls**	Once students begin to recognize a problem and understand its causes, they also need to determine the possible choices they can make and what the consequences of those choices could be. One way that educators can help facilitate this process is to help students brainstorm all their choices in a given situation and connect them to possible outcomes. Developing appropriate language and responses can help guide students to make informed decisions. These resources can remain in a classroom and/or with individual students to provide reminders and cues when an issue arises.

Considering Ethical Responsibilities	**Decision Tree** CASE IF · IF · IF · IF THEN · THEN · THEN · THEN END · END · END · END END	The model of an "If/Then" decision tree can be used as students work to solve problems. It can also be effective as they consider the ethical responsibilities of their decisions. Following this model, students can map out different decision options in a specific situation. For instance, if a student is deciding whether or not to join a sports team, their options may be: join, don't join, or join and possibly quit. The additional factors involved might be whether or not they enjoy the sport, who the coach is, and which friends may or may not be playing. Each potential choice has a consequence. Through this type of mapping, students can also determine where their ethical or moral responsibilities may lie. For example, quitting half-way through the season may violate a moral obligation. Once all the possible avenues and repercussions have been mapped and discussed, students should be able to make an appropriate choice.
Evaluating and Reflecting	**Decision Reflection Template**	Because decision making is a process that is repeated often, students should be given the opportunity to reflect on their decisions and evaluate their appropriateness. Some may have made an inappropriate decision, so an educator can assist in determining why the decision was inappropriate and how the consequences of that decision provide proof. On the other hand, perhaps the student made a responsible decision. In this instance, the educator may help the student process how he/she arrived at that decision and how the consequences demonstrate that it was the correct choice. This process allows students to develop and continue to demonstrate thoughtful decision making.

HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO INCLUDING STUDENTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS?

Responsible decision making requires practice, feedback, and reflection that considers experiences, choices, and adjustments at its foundation. For students to successfully build this skill, they must be included in the process of considering and evaluating their choices, which is Landmark's sixth Teaching Principle™. The more students are at the center of this skill-building and reflective practice, the better able they are to comprehend problematic situations, possible decisions, and potential outcomes of those decisions.