

Decisions that Shape Community and Environment.

Lesson Objective:

Students will explore how decisions impact the community and environment, practice thoughtful decision-making using the S.T.A.R. strategy, and reflect on ways they can contribute to positive change.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Chapter 20: Decisions that Shape Community and Environment.

- Paper and pencils
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Community and Environmental Decision Journal Worksheet
- Home Connection Letter

Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Briefly discuss the idea that our choices can affect the community and environment.

Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script

Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:

- “Today, we’ll be learning about how the choices we make affect the community and environment around us. Every decision, big or small, has consequences. Some decisions help the environment, while others might harm it. The key is to think carefully and make thoughtful choices.”

Discussion Starter

- “What are some decisions people make every day that impact the environment or community?”
- “How can small decisions, like recycling or picking up litter, create a larger impact?”

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 20 aloud.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

Story Time Teacher Script:

Prepare the Children for the Story:

- “Now let’s read a chapter from The Star Squad: Navigating Fifth Grade Adventures, pay close attention to how Ollie and his friends think through the decisions they need to make. Notice how they balance what’s best for the community with what’s best for the environment.”

(Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments.

While reading, pause during key moments.

Ask Questions:

- What decisions are Ollie and his friends trying to make in this chapter?
- Why is it difficult to choose between the different options that come up?
- How do they try to balance what’s good for the community with what’s good for the environment?
- What challenges do they encounter along the way?
- How do emotions influence the decisions they make?
- How do the friends use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help them make decisions?
- What role does teamwork play in their decision-making process?
- What do they learn from the outcome of their decision?
- How do they reflect on the environmental and social impact of their actions?
- How do their decisions inspire others in the community?

Chapter 20: Decisions that Shape the Community and Environment

“While we read this chapter, pay close attention to how Ollie and his friends think through the decisions they need to make. Notice how they balance what’s best for the community with what’s best for the environment.”

It was mid-March, and the school was buzzing with excitement as Earth Week approached. Each year, the students participated in different activities to learn about the environment and ways they could help make a positive impact. This year, Mr. Jenkins decided to challenge his class to think more deeply about how their daily choices affected not just themselves, but also their community and the planet.

During a class discussion, Mr. Jenkins said, “We often make decisions without realizing how much they affect the world around us. This week, I want you all to think about how even small actions can have a big impact.”

The friends were intrigued. They talked at lunch about different ways people could help the environment, like recycling, reducing water waste, or planting trees. But they wanted to go beyond these ideas and think about other ways their choices could make a difference.

The Dilemma: Should We Use Paper or Plastic?

As part of the Earth Week activities, the class was assigned a group project to come up with a school initiative to reduce waste. Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, Betty, and Maya started brainstorming ideas. One suggestion was to encourage students to use reusable water bottles instead of plastic ones, but there was also a debate about paper usage in classrooms.

“I read that even though plastic can be bad for the environment, using a lot of paper isn’t great either because it means cutting down more trees,” Sammy said. “So which is worse?”

Betty added, “And what about using tablets instead of paper for assignments? That would save trees, but then we’re using more electricity.”

The group found themselves in a dilemma. They realized that each option had benefits and drawbacks, and making a responsible decision wasn’t always straightforward.

Considering the Community and Environment

The friends decided to use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help guide their decision-making:
Stop: They paused to consider the problem. It wasn’t just about choosing between paper and plastic, it was about thinking holistically about the impact of their choice.

Think: They discussed the pros and cons of each option:

- Paper: It's biodegradable and recyclable, but using a lot of paper means more trees need to be cut down, which impacts forests and wildlife.
- Plastic: It's lightweight and reusable if handled properly, but if it's not recycled, it ends up in landfills and oceans, harming wildlife.
- Tablets: They reduce the need for paper, but they consume electricity and require resources to manufacture.

Act: The group decided to propose a new idea: a "mixed strategy" where students would use paper sparingly for necessary tasks, encourage reusable items like water bottles and lunch containers, and use technology responsibly by limiting screen time and energy use.

Reflect: They would evaluate how effective the new strategy was after a month and consider whether it reduced waste and conserved resources.

Understanding Emotional Motivations

As they worked through the project, the friends talked about how their emotions influenced their choices. Maya noted, "When I think about animals losing their homes because of deforestation, it makes me feel really sad. That makes me want to do more to protect the environment."

Buzz added, "I feel angry when I see trash in the park. It's like people don't care about the community, and it motivates me to help clean up."

They realized that emotions could inspire them to take action, but could also make decision-making complicated if they didn't consider all the facts. The group knew it was important to balance their emotional responses with careful thinking.

The Earth Week Presentation

On the last day of Earth Week, Ollie, Harriet, Bennie, Sammy, Buzz, Betty, and Maya presented their initiative to the class. They explained the "mixed strategy" approach, emphasizing the importance of thoughtful decision-making when it came to everyday choices.

"We're not saying that one solution is always the best," Harriet said. "It's about finding ways to reduce our impact while still meeting our needs."

Sammy added, "And by thinking about how our decisions affect both the community and the environment, we can come up with creative solutions that benefit everyone."

The class responded positively to the presentation, and Mr. Jenkins praised the group for considering multiple factors and addressing both sides of the debate.

Reflecting on the Outcome

After Earth Week, the friends took time to reflect on what they had learned. “I didn’t realize how complicated some decisions could be,” Ollie admitted. “But thinking about the bigger picture helped us come up with a better plan.”

Harriet agreed. “We can’t always avoid having an impact, but we can choose to make that impact as positive as possible.”

The friends also recognized that responsible decision-making wasn’t just about what felt right emotionally, it was also about considering the long-term consequences of their actions and how they could contribute to a better community and a healthier environment.

Moving Forward

The friends decided to keep practicing what they had learned about weighing the impact of their choices. Whether it was deciding how to handle school supplies, conserving water, or choosing to walk instead of drive, they knew that every small decision added up.

And as they looked to the future, they felt more empowered to not only make responsible decisions for themselves but also to inspire others in the community to do the same. With their newfound understanding of how decisions shaped the world around them, they knew they could make a difference, one thoughtful choice at a time.

Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “This story shows us how the decisions that we make can, over time, have big consequences for our communities and the earth.”

Post-Chapter Questions

These questions encourage children to think deeply about what they listen to and to understand that they can use the S.T.A.R. Strategy in many different situations.

- Why do the friends believe their decisions matter to the community and environment?
- How did they manage disagreements about what to do?
- What were the positive outcomes of their choices?
- Were there any consequences they hadn’t predicted?
- How does teamwork help make better decisions?
- Why is it important to consider the environment when making community-based decisions?

- What challenges did they face, and how did they overcome them?
- How did the S.T.A.R. strategy help them?
- What would they do differently next time?
- How can we apply the lessons from this chapter to our own community and environment?

Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will ...



Activity: Title of activity

Introduce Activity

○ “Today we’re going to reflect on the kinds of decisions we make that can affect not just ourselves, but also the world around us, our **community** and our **environment**. Every choice we make, big or small, has an impact. Maybe you’ve decided to recycle more at home, pick up trash at the park, or help a neighbor. Or maybe you’re thinking about a project that could help others in your school or neighborhood.

I’m going to give you a journal page called the *Community and Environmental Decision Journal*. This is your space to think about a decision you’ve already made, or one you want to make, that helps people or the planet.

You’ll be writing about four key things:

- First, **describe the decision**, what was it, or what do you plan to do?
- Then, think about how this decision affects your **community**. Who might benefit or be impacted?
- Next, consider how it affects the **environment**. Does it help protect nature, reduce waste, or save energy?
- Finally, you’ll walk through the **S.T.A.R. strategy** to explore how you make thoughtful choices:

- **Stop** – What emotions are involved in making this decision?
- **Think** – What could happen based on the choice you make?
- **Act** – What action are you going to take?
- **Reflect** – After taking action, how will you know if it made a difference?

You'll have about 15 to 20 minutes to write quietly. This is your time to think deeply about how you can make a positive impact. Your ideas matter, and your choices can help create a better world."

Instructions

- Hand out the "Community and Environmental Decision Journal" template.
- Ask students to reflect on a decision they've made (or will make) that affects the environment or their community. This could be a personal choice, like recycling, or a group effort, like planning a community event.
- Students will complete the following sections:
 - Describe the Decision: What decision did you (or will you) make?
 - Impact on the Community: How will this decision help or affect the people around you?
 - Impact on the Environment: How will this decision affect the environment?
- Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy:
 - Stop: What emotions are involved in this decision?
 - Think: What are the potential consequences of your choice?
 - Act: What action will you take?
 - Reflect: After taking action, how will you evaluate the outcome?
- Allow students to write quietly for 15-20 minutes.

Closing Discussion (5 minutes):

Sharing



“Now that we’ve had time to think and write about the choices we make for our community and environment, let’s come together and share some of our ideas.

You don’t have to read everything, but if you feel comfortable, you can tell us about the decision you made or want to make, and how it might help others or the planet.

Sharing your ideas can inspire others to make a difference too.”

Prompt students with questions if needed:

- “What was your decision about?”
- “Who do you hope it will help?”
- “What made you want to take action?”

Wrapping It Up

- “Wow, I’m so proud of the thoughtful choices you’re all making. Today, we saw how even one small action, like picking up litter or helping someone in need, can ripple out and create a positive change in our world.
- Whether your idea helps the environment, your school, or your neighborhood, you are using your voice and your actions to care for others, and that’s something to be proud of.”

Wrap Up the Lesson (5 minutes)

Review and Reflection Overview:

- Have students reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

Review and Reflection Teacher Script

Gather in a Circle for Reflection:



- “Let’s all come together in a circle to reflect. Sitting in a circle helps us see and hear one another equally, it’s a way of showing that everyone’s voice matters.
- Let’s go around the circle. When it’s your turn, you can finish this sentence:
- ‘One way I can help my community or the environment is...’
- If you’re not ready to share, it’s okay to say, ‘I’ll pass.’ Let’s listen carefully and support each other as we speak.”
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Closing

- “Thank you all for sharing your ideas and listening with respect. Today, we learned that we have the power to make positive choices, not just for ourselves, but for the world around us.
- Every time you stop to think, use your heart to act, and reflect on what matters, you are being a leader and a caring citizen. I hope you’ll keep noticing ways to help and keep taking action, one thoughtful choice at a time.”

Home Connection Letter

Sending Information Home:

- “Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that we explored how the choices we make can affect our communities and our environment. Using the S.T.A.R. strategy, Stop, Think, Act, and Reflect, students reflected on personal decisions that could make a positive impact.”
- Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today, your child explored the topic of community and environmental decision-making. They reflected on how their personal choices impact the world around them and practiced using the S.T.A.R. strategy to make thoughtful decisions.



At home, we encourage you to ask your child about what they learned. Here are a few questions you can discuss together:

- "What decisions do we make as a family that affect the environment or community?"
- "How can we work together to make positive changes?"
- "What is one small decision we could change to have a bigger impact?"

Thank you for your continued support in fostering responsible decision-making skills.

With Gratitude,

S.T.A.R. Strategy



Stop -Take some deep breaths.

Think -What solutions are there?

Act -Pick the best solution.

Reflect -How did it go?



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Community and Environment Decision Journal Worksheet

1. Describe the Decision

- What decision did you (or will you) make?

2. Impact on the Community

- How will this decision help or affect the people around you?

3. Impact on the Environment

- How will this decision affect the environment?

4. Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy

S - Stop:

- What emotions are involved in this decision?

T - Think:

- What are the potential consequences of your choice (positive and negative)?

A - Act:

- What action will you take to make your decision happen?

R - Reflect:

- After taking action, how will you evaluate the outcome? What did you learn?

Reflection

- How did making this decision help you become more aware of your impact on the community and environment?

- What will you do differently next time you need to make a decision like this?
