

Learning Objective: To teach children to weigh options and make decisions as a group

Skill: Creating consensus

Divide the children into groups of three or four. Choose a spokesperson and a note-taker for each group.

Tell them:

Your group has just been given a large sum of money to use for any purpose it chooses. You could donate it to a charity, you could go on a shopping spree, you could use it for school supplies—you can decide to do anything you want with it, but you must come to the decision together.

Give each group 15 minutes to brainstorm ideas, which the note-taker writes down. Each person should try to persuade the group by telling why she feels her idea is the most sensible, fun, altruistic, and so on.

At the end of the 15-minute period, the group must decide on one idea. If they don't succeed in deciding, they will "lose" the money. Each group's spokesperson then tells the larger group of their decision, and each group member must say why he thinks it's a good idea, even if it wasn't his idea originally.

For example, one child might say, "I originally thought we should donate the money to a charity. When the group decided to buy toys for kids who don't get holiday gifts, I realized doing that is kind of the same thing," or "I originally thought we should donate it to a charity. When the group decided we should take a vacation together, I realized that would be more fun. I can still donate some of my own money to a charity."