

OPTIONS MATRIX

LESSON PLAN



LESSON PLAN: OPTIONS MATRIX



Teacher Overview: Students will identify relevant criteria for making decisions about how to address political and social issues. Students will score these criteria and then apply them to the options presented in a *Current Issues* policy unit or monthly policy discussion. The options matrix can be done individually, in small groups, or as a whole class. The larger the group, the more students will grapple with the scoring of the criteria.

Goal: Students will develop a deeper understanding of multiple perspectives on an issue, and will come to better understand the choices facing policymakers and the potential advantages and pitfalls of those choices. Students will also develop critical thinking skills by developing and applying their own criteria for evaluating public policy.

Rationale: This activity compels students to cooperate with one another, articulate their policy preferences, and negotiate with their peers. The options matrix also provides students with a tool for considering and comparing competing policy options.

Alignment with Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B. Work with peers to promote civil democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed. (Fosters Constructive Climate)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task. (Curiosity and Perspective Taking)

Alignment with C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) Framework

D2.CIV.7.9-12. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others. (Fosters Constructive Climate)

D2.CIV.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings. (Civic Communication)

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Objectives:

Students will

- Develop criteria for evaluating policy proposals relating to the issue at hand
- Weigh each criterion in order to indicate which values/outcomes are most important
- Evaluate policy proposals using the criteria
- Reflect on the outcome

Materials: Attachment 1: Example Options Matrix and Instructions, Attachment 2: Make Your Own Options Matrix

Procedures (45 minutes):

1. Brainstorm

- After reading one of the *Current Issues* policy units or monthly policy discussions, brainstorm with the entire class to consider what actions, if any, the government could take to address the problem identified in the reading. For example, you may pose the following question: “What, if anything, should the federal government do about illegal immigration?”
- Record student ideas in a visible location. If students’ ideas are vague or unclear, ask for further explanation.
- Try to develop a list of 4-8 policy actions.

2. Weigh the Options

- Place students in groups of 6-8. Distribute copies of Attachment 1: Example Options Matrix and Instructions to all students. Give them an opportunity to read the instructions and check for understanding.
- Allow students 15-20 minutes to develop criteria and to use those criteria to evaluate each of the policy options listed during the brainstorm.
- As students are developing criteria, circulate to make sure they are on track. If, for example, you are examining immigration, students may list criteria such as *cost*, *protects American workers*, *keeps families together*, and *size of impact*. For environmental issues, criteria might be *protects nature*, *promotes jobs*, *cost*, and *sustainable over time*.

3. Reflect

- Still in their small groups, ask students to discuss:
 1. Did the final scores of any of the proposals surprise them?
 2. Were they pleased with the outcome? Did the option they believed to be best receive the highest score?
 3. If not, how could they adjust their criteria?
- Ask groups to share their top policy proposals according to the options matrix and also which option, if any, the group preferred to the option that garnered the highest score.

ATTACHMENT 1: EXAMPLE OPTIONS MATRIX AND INSTRUCTIONS

Directions:

- 1. As a group, develop the criteria that you would like to use to evaluate your various options. In the example to the right, the criteria used to rate desserts are: sweetness; chocolate level; fruitiness; and texture.
- 2. Assign a relative value (1-10) to each criteria. In other words, which criteria are most/least important? In the example, chocolate level and sweetness were assigned the value “9”—they are most important. Record the value in the upper right corner.
- 3. Across the top row of the chart, list the options you would like to consider. In the example to the right, chocolate cake, apple pie, and chocolate chip ice cream are the three options that will be rated.
- 4. Score each option according to the criteria you have developed. In other words, how sweet/chocolaty/fruity/textured is each dessert? Record each score in the upper right corner of the appropriate box.
- 5. Multiply each option’s score by the relative value of the criteria. Record that number at the center of each box.
- 6. Total each score at the bottom of the chart.
- 7. Follow the same procedures with the issue at hand. First develop criteria that your group believes to be important, and then assign values to the criteria. Fill in the policy options across the top row and score each option on each of the criteria. Multiply the value and record the score in each box. Total the scores at the bottom.

OPTION (across) CRITERIA (down)	Chocolate Cake	Apple Pie	Chocolate Chip Ice Cream
Sweetness	9 81	8 72	9 81
Chocolate Level	9 90	0 0	7 63
Fruitiness	5 0	10 50	0 0
Texture	6 48	8 48	10 60
TOTALS	219	170	204

ATTACHMENT 2: MAKE YOUR OWN OPTIONS MATRIX

OPTION (across) CRITERIA (down)	A:	B:	C:	D:	E:
TOTALS					