



## *How do values shape decisions? Considering postsecondary decisions*

**Purpose:** To explore the relationship between values and decisions, including decisions around postsecondary choices. Students are more likely to follow through on their postsecondary plans if they have clear reasons for pursuing them and if these reasons are grounded in students’ values.

**Activity Summary:** Students work up to identifying what values are reflected in their postsecondary plans and consider how these values align or conflict with their personal values. Students first identify values that are important to them, see how others may have similar or different values, and reflect on how values can show up in decisions. The sequence carefully builds trust within the group so students feel more comfortable sharing and being vulnerable.

Note the term “postsecondary” may need to be defined for some student groups or simplified to “after high school”.

<p><b>Grades:</b> 10-12</p>	<p><b>Length:</b> Four 45-minute sessions.</p>
<p><b>Setting:</b> Classroom, after school, summer program, postsecondary advising, etc.</p>	<p><b>Materials:</b> pencils, blank paper, sticky notes, scissors  <b>To Print:</b> Importance <a href="#">signs</a> (one set), Values and Decisions <a href="#">worksheet</a> (one per student), <a href="#">Values cards</a> (each pair gets one set, 7 different sets provided)</p>
<p><b>Student Success Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I can explain why 5 values are important to me.</li> <li>● I can give an example of values that show up in a decision I have made.</li> <li>● I can identify 2 values that show up in a postsecondary choice. I can explain how these values align or conflict with my personal values.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Alaska Cultural Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural Standards for Students:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Culturally-knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Cultural Standards for Curriculum:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. A culturally-responsive curriculum reinforces the integrity of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Facilitator Prep:

1. Reflect on what you consider success and how this influences what you think of as “good” and “bad” postsecondary choices. Consider what values underlie these perspectives and how your students’ values may be different from yours. For example, you may value the financial security that comes with earning a bachelor’s degree, but your students may value family and community, making it difficult for them to leave home to pursue a degree. Or, a student may want to leave home, but their family values having them physically close.
2. Think of a values-based decision you made that you can share with students. What was a hard decision you faced? What values showed up in the decision you ultimately made?
3. Invite Culture Bearers, community members, and/or school staff to participate in all four sessions, share personal examples of values-based decisions, and guide students through reflecting on their values. Aim for one adult for every 4-5 students and for adults with different life experiences. These guests should be paid honorariums or compensated in some way.

## Session 1 - 45 min

**Prep:** Tape Very Important/Somewhat Important/Not Important [signs](#) around the room.

### Connect (20 min)

1. Introduce the purpose of this activity: to explore the relationship between values and decisions, including decisions around postsecondary choices. Students are more likely to follow through on their postsecondary plans if they have clear reasons for pursuing them and if these reasons are grounded in students’ values.
2. Build trust and community between students and guests: go around in a circle and have everyone share their name, pronouns, grade, where they and their family are from, and a quality they look for in a friend (ex: funny, good listener, caring, shares things)
  - a. Make a list of these qualities on the board as students share them. Explain that these qualities reveal things that are important to each of us.
3. Three corners value statements:
  - a. Explain that you will read a series of statements that describe different aspects of life. Students should move to the posted sign (very important/somewhat important/not important) based on how important each of those statements feels to them.
  - b. Remind students there is no right or wrong, that they should be honest with themselves, and be respectful of where everyone chooses to stand.
  - c. After each statement, ask a few students standing by different signs to explain why they chose that sign.
  - d. Statements (select 4-5 drastically different ones that feel relevant to your group)

1. Having a healthy lifestyle	5. Being comfortable speaking up for yourself and asking for things you need
2. Doing community service	6. Making pro/con lists when you have a decision to make
3. Being bilingual or multilingual	
4. Enjoying dangerous or exciting things	

7. Having a close relationship with your parents/guardians/siblings
  8. Always having a plan or goals
  9. Being financially secure
  10. Having a romantic partner
  11. Starting a project and finishing it
  12. Being open and honest about who you are
  13. Voting and paying attention to issues you care about
  14. Participating in community celebrations
  15. Having a connection to a higher being or spirituality
  16. Creating some form of art or self-expression
  17. Being the best at a certain activity or skill
  18. Taking care of those around you
  19. Spending time alone
  20. Caring for the environment
  21. Supporting elders in your community
  22. Staying connected to nature
  23. Living a subsistence lifestyle
- e. Debrief as a full group after several rounds. Sample questions: *What did you notice during this activity? Were some statements easier or harder to decide on than others? Did anything surprise you during the activity? What statements had the most disagreement? Why do you think that is?*
- f. Explain that each of these statements reflect a value and that we're going to explore values more.

### Explore (25 min)

1. Values card sorting in pairs: Each pair gets a set of [values cards](#). These sets are meant to be less overwhelming than giving every pair 70+ values to sort. They cut out their cards and then work together to sort each card into very important/somewhat important/not important. Explain that no values are “better” or “worse” than others. The goal is to generate discussion, especially if the pair disagrees about where to categorize a value.
  - Encourage pairs to write their own values on blank cards if their set is missing something that is important to them. Remind them these can be cultural values or values written in another language.
2. Pass out Values and Decisions [worksheet](#) and complete question 1: list what values are very important to them.
3. Close by letting students know they'll do more activities to complete the rest of the worksheet. Collect worksheets to be used in the other sessions.

## Session 2 - 45 min

### Connect (25 min)

1. Remind students of this activity's purpose, and explain they will continue considering the relationship between values and decisions.
2. Back-to-back drawing:
  - a. Pass out their worksheets from Session 1. Ask students to look at the values they listed in question 1 and silently think of an object or activity that represents that value in their life. Share a few examples: a drum could reflect values of “culture”, “community”, or “honoring traditions”, or playing sports could reflect values of “being active”, “teamwork”, or “health”.

- b. Have students get into pairs, sitting back-to-back, each with paper and pencil. Partner A draws the object or activity they thought of in Step A step-by-step, only explaining the shape they're drawing in each step. Partner B listens and follows Partner A's directions to try to draw the same thing without seeing Partner A's paper or knowing what it is. After they finish, both partners look at each other's drawings and laugh at how different they are! Partner A explains what they drew and partners discuss what values are reflected in Partner A's object or activity. Switch so Partner B draws the object or activity from Step A with Partner A trying to draw the same thing. *Tip: The facilitator should model how this works with a partner before students get into pairs!*
3. Full group debrief:
  - a. Explain that whatever you drew are examples of how values show up in real life. Ask for a few volunteers to share their object/activity and the values it represents. List examples on the whiteboard.

### Explore & Discuss (20 min)

1. Considering values in decisions: Facilitator or guest shares an example following the Values & Decisions worksheet.
  - a. What was a difficult decision you made? What options did you consider? What did you ultimately decide to do?
  - b. Ask students: What values show up in that decision?
  - c. Adult can agree/provide other values that showed up for them
  - d. Explain: Decisions can be difficult because values are in conflict or there are external pressures (ex: desire to earn money takes you away from your family)
2. Values & Decisions worksheets: Divide students into groups of 4-5. Each group should have an adult: culture bearers and guests you invited to participate in this activity, counselors, school support staff, etc. *Tip: If you know the adults, be thoughtful about who you put in each small group so students are more likely to relate to the adult.*
  - a. Adults guide students through questions 2-5, helping students see how values show up in decisions. The adult should start the small group by walking through a personal example of their own hard decision.
 

*Tip: Be prepared to help students access mental health resources if needed.*
3. Close by letting students know they'll get to share their answers with a partner in the next session. Collect worksheets to be used in the other sessions.

## Session 3 - 45 min

### Connect (15 min)

1. Remind students of this activity's purpose, and explain they will continue considering the relationship between values and decisions.
2. Pair share: split group into pairs, ideally partnering students with someone who was not in their small group in session 2, and invite them to share their worksheet answers to questions 2-5.

### Discuss (15 min)

1. Have students answer the question "what values do your family or community want you to have?" on small sticky notes. Post these stickies where everyone can see them.

2. Have students reflect whether these values are very important, somewhat important, or not important to them. Explore examples of values that seem to conflict with family/community values.
  - Explain that students can choose what values to carry forward or prioritize. Sometimes these values will match your family's/community's values and sometimes they won't. This is ok but can be really difficult. If you only follow the values because of societal pressure and not because that is what you truly believe, you're unlikely to feel happy or fulfilled.
    - i. Examples: you may want to leave home when you graduate but feel pressure from your family to stay. Or you might want to stay, but your family wants you to seek an opportunity away from home.
  - Sometimes seemingly opposing values can coexist. For example, you decide to leave home to pursue an opportunity. This prioritizes the opportunity over being physically close to family. But, if the reason you wanted to pursue the opportunity is to help your family or community, then this choice actually shows how much you value your family and community.

### Explore (15 min)

1. Explain students will be in small groups for the next session with one of the guest adults to work through the Values & Life After High School Decisions part of the worksheet. Today, they'll get to hear what these adults did after high school and choose what adult's group they want to be in. *Tip: This is why the guest adults should have a variety of life experiences.*
2. Give each guest a few minutes to share what they did after high school and why they made that choice.
3. Have students write their own name on a sticky note and list their first and second choice for what adult's group they would like to be in.
4. Close by reminding students they can talk more with these adults outside of these sessions about the adults' postsecondary decisions.

## Session 4 - 45 min

**Prep:** Use students' stickies from session 3 to assign equal-size student groups for the number of adults. *Tip: Don't lead your own group so you can float and help the other groups.*

### Connect (10 min)

1. Remind students of this activity's purpose, and explain they will continue considering the relationship between values and decisions.
2. Let students know that thinking about life after high school can be both exciting and scary. This activity will show students they are not alone in their thoughts about life after high school. Ask students to stand up if:
  - a. They are excited about life after high school.
  - b. They are nervous about life after high school.
  - c. They have some ideas about what they want to do after high school.
  - d. They don't know what they want to do after high school.
  - e. They want to stay in their home community.
  - f. They want to move away from home.

- g. They want to earn money.
3. Explain that this activity feeds into what students will be doing in their small groups with the guest adults. Divide students into their groups.

### Explore (25 min)

1. Values & Decisions worksheet in small groups of 4-5. Each group's adult guides students through completing questions 6-9. This adult should talk about their personal postsecondary choices, decisions, and values that were honored or compromised in that choice.

### Discuss (10 min)

1. Full group: Remind students that all postsecondary decisions are valid and will have challenges. If students make postsecondary choices that align with their values, they'll be more likely to stick with their choice when things get hard.
2. Pair share: *What personal values are rising to the top for you? How do these align or conflict with the values that you identified in question 6b? What are examples of where values are in conflict with each other?*
3. Debrief these pair share questions as a full group.
  - a. Emphasize that conflicting values are not "bad" but something to be aware of. You should try to understand why you are prioritizing one value over another for a given situation. *Tip: Be prepared to help students access mental health resources if needed.*
4. Close: Praise students for participating. It's ok if their answers change. This is a tool they can revisit to help them think through their choices and decisions.

### Extension Ideas:

1. Students categorize their values into "negotiable" and "non-negotiable" to help them identify deep-rooted beliefs. Prompt students to reflect on what influences these deep-rooted beliefs.
2. Students reflect on a decision they made that did not align with their values and how this decision made them feel. Compare and contrast this with a decision they made that did align with their values.
3. Interview a family or community member about what values are important to them, why these values are important, and how these values show up in their lives.

**Credits and Additional Resources:** This activity was informed by and adapted from a variety of sources and theories including Janelle Vanasse, Kelly Forster, [Bridging to the Future Framework](#), [Facing History and Ourselves](#), the [Art of Hosting](#), the University of Michigan's LSA Inclusive Teaching [Core Values Activity](#), the [Live Your Values Deck](#) by Lisa Congdon and Andreea Niculescu, and UC Davis Success Coaching and Learning Strategies [Values-based Decision Making Activity](#).

*The Ilakucaraq Project was a 2021-2024 partnership between the Alaska Humanities Forum and the Alaska Native Heritage Center and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Alaska Native Education Program.*

# Very Important

# Somewhat Important



# Not Important

# Values & Decisions

1. List what values are very important to you (include values you wrote on blank cards):

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

2.

What was a hard decision you made?	What options did you consider?	What did you ultimately decide to do?

*(Example decisions: going or not going to boarding school, starting or stopping an extracurricular activity, working or not working)*

3. What factors most heavily influenced your decision (examples: friends, family, money, values)?

4. What values show up in your decision? How do they show up?

5. How did you feel about your decision when you made it?

5b. How did you feel about your decision after it played out?

5c. If the values you listed in Question 1 didn't show up in this decision, consider these values now. Would considering these values have changed how you felt about your decision?

### Values & Life After High School Decisions

6. What are you considering doing after high school? Check all that apply or write your own. If you don't know, choose an option below to think about for the rest of this activity.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> College                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Move away from home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Get a job           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade school              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stay in my home community |  |

6b. What values show up in the options you checked? How do they show up?  
*(Example: Values that show up in selecting the military could be security and structure. These values show up by having a place to live provided and having the same routine every day.)*

7. What values are most important to you and that you absolutely want to honor after high school?

8. What values are you willing to compromise after high school?

9. How do your values align or conflict with the values you identified in question 6b?

# Master List of Values Cards

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Activism</li> <li>2. Adventure</li> <li>3. Ambition</li> <li>4. Beauty</li> <li>5. Being true to yourself</li> <li>6. Being a leader</li> <li>7. Being present</li> <li>8. Being responsible</li> <li>9. Career</li> <li>10. Civic engagement</li> <li>11. Compassion</li> <li>12. Community</li> <li>13. Community service</li> <li>14. Having courage</li> <li>15. Creativity</li> <li>16. Curiosity</li> <li>17. Culture</li> <li>18. Diversity</li> <li>19. Education</li> <li>20. Equality</li> <li>21. Excellence</li> <li>22. Family</li> <li>23. Forgiveness</li> <li>24. Fun</li> <li>25. Financial stability</li> <li>26. Finishing what you started</li> <li>27. Goals</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. Gratitude</li> <li>29. Growth</li> <li>30. Hard work</li> <li>31. Harmony (getting along with others; peace)</li> <li>32. Having a partner</li> <li>33. Helping others</li> <li>34. Health</li> <li>35. Honesty</li> <li>36. Honoring traditions</li> <li>37. Humor</li> <li>38. Inclusiveness</li> <li>39. Independence</li> <li>40. Integrity</li> <li>41. Justice</li> <li>42. Kindness</li> <li>43. Knowledge</li> <li>44. Lifelong learner</li> <li>45. Love</li> <li>46. Loyalty</li> <li>47. Logic</li> <li>48. Nature</li> <li>49. Openness</li> <li>50. Optimism</li> <li>51. Passion</li> <li>52. Patience</li> <li>53. Preserving your language</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>54. Preserving your culture</li> <li>55. Purpose</li> <li>56. Resilience</li> <li>57. Respect</li> <li>58. Risk-taking</li> <li>59. Self-awareness</li> <li>60. Self-discipline</li> <li>61. Self-expression</li> <li>62. Self-respect</li> <li>63. Simplicity</li> <li>64. Social connection</li> <li>65. Sharing what you have</li> <li>66. Sharing your opinions</li> <li>67. Spending time by yourself</li> <li>68. Spirituality or religion</li> <li>69. Stability</li> <li>70. Standing out</li> <li>71. Subsistence</li> <li>72. Supporting elders</li> <li>73. Taking care of others</li> <li>74. Teamwork</li> <li>75. Trusting yourself</li> <li>76. Vulnerability</li> </ol>
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**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Activism**

**Community  
service**

**Fun**

Write your  
own value

**Honoring  
traditions**

**Logic**

**Being  
responsible**

**Spirituality  
or religion**

**Vulnerability**

**Adventure**

**Having  
courage**

**Financial  
stability**

**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Ambition**

**Creativity**

**Finishing  
what you  
started**

Write your  
own value

**Humor**

**Nature**

**Risk-  
taking**

**Stability**

**Beauty**

**Curiosity**

**Independence**

**Preserving  
your  
culture**

**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Trusting  
yourself**

**Spending  
time by  
yourself**

**Respect**

Write your  
own value

**Patience**

**Lifelong  
learner**

**Health**

**Growth**

**Excellence**

**Being  
present**

**Subsistence**

**Purpose**

**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Being true  
to yourself**

**Culture**

**Love**

Write your  
own value

**Hard work**

**Integrity**

**Optimism**

**Teamwork**

**Sharing  
what you  
have**

**Simplicity**

**Taking  
care of  
others**

**Career**



**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Being a  
leader**

**Forgiveness**

**Having a  
partner**

Write your  
own value

**Knowledge**

**Preserving  
your  
language**

**Resilience**

**Standing  
out**

**Self-  
awareness**

**Diversity**

**Loyalty**

**Openness**

**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Compassion**

**Equality**

**Gratitude**

Write your  
own value

**Supporting  
elders**

**Self-  
respect**

**Harmony**  
(getting  
along with  
others;  
peace)

**Community**

**Justice**

**Social  
connection**

**Goals**

**Humor**

**Very  
Important**

**Somewhat  
Important**

**Not  
Important**

Write your  
own value

**Education**

**Passion**

**Self-  
discipline**

Write your  
own value

**Sharing  
your  
opinions**

**Kindness**

**Helping  
others**

**Civic  
engagement**

**Family**

**Inclusiveness**

**Self-  
expression**

**Honesty**