

CHOICES Workshop Activities Summary



"You gave us an education about why we need education." –Evan, middle school student, Washington

DAY ONE – Stay in School

The Time of My Life

After introducing themselves and the workshop, the presenter gives students a preview of their whole life by unveiling an 11-foot long scroll depicting 100 years. This activity demonstrates that even though students may think school will last forever, it is only a small part of their lifespan, yet the choices they make during their school years will have a profound impact on the nature and quality of the rest of their lives. Students' eyes grow wide as they take in the big picture of their future.

Take Charge Factors

The presenter gives each student a card printed with 30 factors that impact their lives, and then asks them to indicate which factors they think they control. They learn that many factors impact their lives, and that they can take charge of most of them through the choices they make. One key factor is self-discipline, and students discover that they can use it to help control many of the other factors, and thereby positively impact their future.

School Decisions & Career Consequences

Three student volunteers play the roles of job seekers with three different levels of education: Education Beyond High School, High School Graduate and High School Dropout. The rest of the class helps decide which of them are qualified for six different jobs based on their level of education. Everyone quickly discovers that a higher level of education will result in more job opportunities. The presenter emphasizes that no job is a bad job, and also briefly demonstrates that the attributes of a good education are directly related to those of a successful career.

Money Management

A student volunteer pretends to drop out of school and start enjoying life. However, he or she also gets kicked out of the house with no money and no place to live. So after finding a job for \$10.00 an hour and getting a monthly paycheck of \$1,700, the dropout starts paying the bills to other students pretending to be bill collectors. Of course, he or she runs out of money halfway through the bills – and realizes this could continue for the next 50 years! This is a fun exercise with a serious "wake up" message.

The Graduation Challenge

After revealing to students the stunning reality of national dropout statistics, the presenter challenges them to make a personal commitment to graduate from high school. Students are invited to complete a personalized "CHOICES Challenge Certificate" to make this commitment to their educational goals. The students sign the certificate and turn it in for their teacher to sign and return to them for a daily reminder of their personal commitment to their future.

Dog Tags & Texting Game Cards

Each student is given a CHOICES Dog Tag that states "I am who I choose to become." They are encouraged to keep it to always remind them that they have the power to choose who or what they will become. They are also given game cards providing access to the out-of-school follow-up CHOICES Challenge via Text cell phone game. The game asks them to guide a fictional in-game character facing daily choices based on the classroom workshop, engaging them in critical thinking to address challenging situations they will themselves face in high school.

DAY TWO – Skills for Success

Review of Day One

The presenter reviews the main point of each topic covered on DAY ONE and the teacher returns the signed Graduation Challenge certificates the students to take home with them as a reminder of their personal commitment to their future.

Mock Job Interview

In this “turn the tables” activity, the presenter plays the role of a job applicant and three students ask interview questions prepared for them. The presenter responds in some positive and some negative ways, after which the students decide if they would hire the presenter. This activity shows students what happens in a job interview and conveys the importance of taking challenging classes in high school to be better prepared for the world of work.

Time Management

The presenter acknowledges to the class that it is often difficult for them to make time for schoolwork outside of school. He or she then shows them an easy-to-remember time management technique, after which nine student volunteers engage in an exercise in the front of the room to help the class learn how to better prioritize their time. The presenter also discusses the value of finding a healthy balance between schoolwork and other activities in order to enjoy life while still making steady progress toward long-term life goals.

The CHOICES Challenge

Nine student volunteers are presented with three education-related situations, three volunteers for each situation, in which they must choose what to do from three options. They discover that making well-considered choices will likely lead to more desirable outcomes and possibly even more opportunities in their lives. They also learn that the choices they make about their lives and education can have both short and long-term consequences.

Be a Goal Getter

In this important exercise the presenter introduces students to goal setting by asking them to envision life at age 25. The students then write on their Goal-Getter worksheet what they envision, and set three goals they plan to accomplish to help them reach that vision. The presenter also walks the students through the S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting process, which guides them to set goals that are **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Actionable**, **Relevant**, and **Timely**.

The Key to Success and Surveys

At the end of the workshop, each student receives a CHOICES key chain that states, “The Key to Success is Self-Discipline.” The presenter encourages them to keep this as a reminder of the CHOICES message, thanks them for their time and attention, and wishes them a successful future. The students and school staff then each complete a survey that provides immediate feedback on the impact of the workshop, and provides valuable data to help us and our local partners improve the CHOICES experience for future participants.

More About CHOICES

CHOICES is an interactive live classroom workshop that empowers teens to make positive educational CHOICES to increase their career and life opportunities. In two 45-minute sessions trained community volunteers take students through real-world exercises on the consequences of dropping out and the benefits of educational attainment, also introducing them to skills for success such as self-discipline, decision making, time management and goal setting. CHOICES has been delivered to more than six million teens in three countries since 1985. CHOICES Education Group is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit social enterprise. To learn more and to bring CHOICES to teens in your community, please call 1-888-CHOICES or visit www.choices.org.