

THE BRIDGE HOME: DECISION-MAKING By Padma Venkatraman

**LYNNE STOVER, JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND
GIGI WOLF, FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of KANSAS CITY**

BOOK SYNOPSIS:

Four homeless, but determined, children living on the streets of Chennai, India struggle to survive in a threatening world. Viji, Rukku, Arul and Muthu work hard to survive and must make hard choices about ways to earn income and where to get support when they might need it. For the income to survive, the group has to decide whether to scavenge the city's trash heaps, sell handmade beaded necklaces, or clean in a tea shop in exchange for beads. And when a couple of them fall deathly ill, the others must make a tough decision. Should they seek help, giving up their independence, or choose to solve the situation on their own?

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Viji may just be 11-years old, but she finds herself responsible for herself and her older sister. She must make good decisions if she and Rukku are to survive while living on the streets of Chennai, India. Can a decision-making model help her make good choices? This lesson introduces students to a problem-solving tool that encourages critical thinking and analytical skills while applying economic concepts like human capital, earning income, and more. Reading the book is optional for the lesson.

GRADE LEVEL: 4-6

CONCEPTS: Choice, criteria, decision-making, alternatives, human capital, income

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

1. Define economic concepts such as decision-making, human capital, and income.
 2. Apply the P.A.C.E.D. decision-making model to solve problems.
 3. Rank alternatives in the decision-making process.
 4. Identify human capital traits of characters in a story.
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TIME REQUIRED: 35-40 minutes

MATERIALS:

- *The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman [ISBN: 9781524738136] – *optional*
 - Visual 1: Economic Concepts Review
 - Visual 2: Earning Our Way
 - Visual 3: Five Steps to Decision-Making
 - Handout 1: Learning P.A.C.E.D. Decision-Making
 - Handout 1: Learning P.A.C.E.D. Decision-Making Answer Key
 - Handout 2: P.A.C.E.D. Activity
 - Handout 2: P.A.C.E.D. Activity Answer Key
 - Handout 3: P.A.C.E.D. Extension Activity
 - Writing Tools
 - Document Camera or other projection device
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PREPARATION:

- Make copies of Visuals 1-5 for display during instruction.
 - Duplicate appropriate copies of the Activity Sheet PACED Decision-Making Model “Emergency Money.”
 - Duplicate appropriate copies Extension Activity PACED Decision-Making Model (Blank Grid)
 - Collect writing tools.
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PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the lesson by telling the students that today’s activity is based on a book about four homeless children living in Chennai, India.
2. Show students the cover of *The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman.
3. Tell students that the four children running across the bridge on the book cover include two sisters, Viji and Rukku, and two boys, named Arul and Muthu.
4. Explain that these children create a family of sorts, and find themselves homeless, along with a pet dog named Kutti, living on an abandoned bridge.
5. Share that according to United States Housing and Urban Development (HUD), being **homeless** or **unhoused** is defined as an individual or family that does not have a fixed, regular, and adequate place to stay overnight and that this is the case of the characters in this book.
6. Display Visual 1: Economic Concepts Review.
7. Tell students that these words and definitions will help with today’s activity.
8. Review the concepts aloud with the class.
9. Tell students that the four children in the story must make many important decisions to stay healthy and safe.
10. Read aloud pages 62-63 in Chapter 15 of the book.
11. Ask students to name the decision Viji was trying to make. (*Answer: Viji had to decide if Rukku was capable of sorting the rubbish without hurting herself.*)
12. Explain that these four children were very resourceful and had different skills and experience, or human capital.
13. Define **human capital** as the knowledge and skills that people obtain through education, experience, and training.
14. Share that the boys were physically strong and had sorted trash before.
15. Tell students that Viji was a fast learner and a leader, as well as having great math, writing, and storytelling skills.
16. Explain that although Rukku had an intellectual disability, she was strong-willed, good at crafts, and a team player.
17. Share that all of the children were also willing to work hard to earn an income.
18. Define **income** as payment people earn for the work they do.
19. Display Visual 2: Earning Our Way.
20. Ask a student to read the two paragraphs and question at the bottom of the visual.
21. Tell students that the information that was read includes a decision that needs to be made and what information one might need to make the decision.
22. Explain that the tool that can help is called the P.A.C.E.D. (*pronounced PACED*) decision-making model and that each letter represents a step in the decision-making process.
23. Reread the two paragraphs on Visual 2, pointing out the information that connects to each step of the P.A.C.E.D. model.
 - P is for problem; the children must decide what job(s) they should do to earn income.
 - A is for alternatives or options to choose from; which include making necklaces, sorting trash, or working in a tea shop.
 - C is for criteria or what is important to consider; including how much money is needed for the job, the amount of time it takes, whether or not it is safe, and how much it pays.
 - E is for evaluate; determining how the alternatives compare to all of the criteria.
 - D is for decision; adding up the totals to determine a decision.
24. Display Visual 3: Five Steps to Decision-Making.
25. Tell students that we will use the same information to step through the P.A.C.E.D. model.

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26. Distribute a copy of Handout 1: Learning Decision-Making, one to each student.
27. Walk through Visual 3 by highlighting each step of the P.A.C.E.D. model as follows:
- Explain that the P.A.C.E.D. model includes five steps shown on the top left of the visual and of the handout.
 - Share that you will all go through each step together to determine a decision using the P.A.C.E.D. model.
 - Tell students that you will use the visual for each step while they use their handout.
 - Say that P is for problem.
 - Ask what the problem is again. (*Answer: the children need to work to earn money for their survival*)
 - Tell students to write the problem in their own words in the appropriate space in the middle of the handout while you do the same on the visual.
 - Say A is for alternatives.
 - Ask what are the alternatives for their jobs? (*Answer: making beaded necklaces, sorting, and selling garbage and recyclables, and cleaning in a tea shop in exchange for beads*)
 - Instruct students to write the three alternatives in that section in the middle of the handout while you do the same on the visual.
 - Say C is for criteria.
 - Ask what are the criteria or important things for the children to consider when deciding on a job? (*Answer: how much money is needed to do the job, how much time it takes, whether or not it is safe, and what amount it pays*)
 - Tell students to write the four criteria in the appropriate space in the middle of the handout while you do the same on the visual.
 - Ask students to look at the table at the bottom of their handout and the visual.
 - Explain that you will all use the table to complete the last two steps of the P.A.C.E.D. model.
 - Say E is for evaluate, which includes comparing the alternatives to the criteria.
 - Share that during step E each alternative will receive a number ranking.
 - Tell students that 1 should be for alternatives that do not meet the criteria or are the worst option in their opinion, 2 should be for alternatives that are second-best or that meet the criteria somewhat, and 3 should be for alternatives that meet the criteria or are the best option.
 - Invite students to think about what it might cost in order to do each job
 - Ask students the following and instruct them to record their answers in the appropriate boxes of the table:
 - A. How would you rank the three alternatives? (*Answers may vary*)
 - B. Is there a cost to making beaded necklaces? (*Answer: yes, there is a cost to buy/get the beads*)
 - C. What ranking should you put in the empty space next to that alternative? (*Answers may vary, but would most likely be 1*)
 - D. Is there a cost to trash sorting or cleaning in a tea shop? (*Answer: no*)
 - E. Which of these jobs is the best match for not costing any money? (*Answers may vary*)
 - F. How should each of these jobs be ranked considering the remaining two options? (*Answers may vary*)
 - G. Does each job now have a number ranking of 1, 2, or 3 under the Cost column of your table? (*Answers may vary*)
 - Tell students to complete steps A through G for each of the criteria, including filling in the spaces in the table accordingly.
 - Say D is for decision.
 - Share that the last step in P.A.C.E.D. is determining the decision by adding up totals for each job.
 - Instruct students to add the numbers for each row and to record the total in the Total column accordingly.
 - Explain that the alternative or job with the highest total becomes the decision.
 - Ask students to write the chosen job in the space provided at the bottom of the table.
 - Ask students which job they decided is the best match for the children in the story. (*Answer may vary*)

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Teacher's Note: Handout 1: Learning Decision-Making Answer Key is provided for reference to guide students in completing the handout and offers a possible solution for the given problem. It is fine for students to have a different solution as long as they completed the process in the way described.

28. Introduce the next activity by reading aloud the first section of chapter 31, "Fever", pages 134-135.
 29. Ask students if they can tell how sick Rukku is? (*Answers may vary, but may include: she is so sick she can't move or eat or work, etc.*)
 30. Distribute Handout 2: P.A.C.E.D. Activity, one to each student.
 31. Read the instructions on Handout 2 aloud.
 32. Invite students to work in pairs to complete the handout using the P.A.C.E.D. decision-making model and what was just read from the book.
 33. Remind students that the steps are at the top of their handout, as well as the key for ranking each alternative.
 34. Inform students that there are no right or wrong answers for this activity, but they are to put themselves in the character's shoes as they evaluate the alternatives or options.
 35. Give students about 10 minutes to complete the handout.
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CLOSURE:

36. After about 10 minutes, ask each pair to share their results and to explain their rankings if time permits.

Teacher's Note: Handout 2: P.A.C.E.D Activity Answer Key is provided for reference during the students' report out.

ASSESSMENT:

37. Ask students the following questions:
 - How did the children in the story *The Bridge Home* earn their income? (*Answer: by making and selling beaded necklaces and sorting and recycling trash*)
 - Which part of the P.A.C.E.D. model is focused on things that are important to consider? (*Answer: criteria*)
 - What part of your own human capital are most proud of? (*Answers may vary*)
 - How can the P.A.C.E.D. model be used in decisions you have to make in your life today or in the future? (*Answers may vary*)
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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITY 1

- Read aloud the list below of challenges characters faced in the book.
 - It is no longer safe for Viji and Rukku to stay in their home. Where should they go?
 - Viji and Rukku meet other homeless children that steal from them. What should they do for protection?
 - Rukku is very sick. Should Viji take her to a children's home to get care?
 - Viji has a chance to go to boarding school to get training to be a teacher. Should she take this opportunity or not?
 - Viji sells Kutti to a wealthy family to get money, which upsets Rukku. How can Viji improve their relationship now?
 - Viji would like to stay in a children's home to get care for Rukku, but Arul refuses to go. What should she do?
 - Viji and Rukku have one change of clothes and the river water is dirty. How can they clean their clothes?
- Distribute Handout 3: P.A.C.E.D. Extension Activity, one to each student.
- Ask students to choose one of the challenges from the list and to use the P.A.C.E.D. decision-making model to solve the problem selected.

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ACTIVITY 2

- Ask students to identify a problem related to their school and to complete a P.A.C.E.D. grid to find a solution, using Handout 3: P.A.C.E.D. Extension Activity.

Teacher's Note: Possible problems include deciding whether to ride the bus or their bike to school, increasing student usage of the school library, improving the school playground, encouraging students to eat school lunch rather than bring their own, recruiting members for an afterschool club or activity, etc..

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL ECONOMIC STANDARDS:

- Content Standard 2: Students will understand that effective decision making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are "all or nothing" decisions.
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COMMON CORE CONTENT STANDARDS:

ELA-Reading Standards Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details

- Grade 4: 1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Grade 5: 1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Grade 6: 1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says as well as inferences drawn from the text.

ELA-Speaking and Listening Standards

Comprehension and Collaboration

- Grade 4: 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- Grade 5: 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- Grade 6: 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.

VISUAL 1: ECONOMIC CONCEPTS REVIEW



Alternatives: The different possibilities to choose from in a given situation.

Choice: A decision made between two or more possibilities or alternatives.

Criteria: Things that are really important to think about when making a decision.

Decision-making: Deciding among choices (alternatives or options).

Human Capital: The knowledge and skills that people obtain through education, experience, and training.

Income: Payment people earn for the work they do.

VISUAL 2: EARNING OUR WAY

Sisters Viji and Rukku have left their home and need to make money to survive while being homeless in Chennai, India. To earn a living, they can make beaded necklaces, sort trash, or help Teashop Aunty clean the tea shop in exchange for beads. For each option, they need to consider how much money they will make, how much time is required, what tools or materials are needed, and if it is safe.

Which choice will the sisters make that uses their skills in the best way? Rukku has intellectual disabilities, but makes beaded necklaces much more quickly than she can sort trash, which could also be unsafe. Viji does well collecting items from the trash for recycling even though it can be dangerous, and is not skilled at making necklaces. Cleaning floors in the tea shop does not guarantee income. However, it is a good way to earn the beads that Rukku uses to make necklaces, which can earn them more money than trash sorting.

Which choice do you think is best? Why?

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VISUAL 3: FIVE STEPS TO DECISION-MAKING

P.A.C.E.D. Decision-making Steps

- A. State the Problem
- B. List the Alternatives
- C. Identify the Criteria
- D. Evaluate the Alternatives
- E. Make a Decision

Compare Alternatives to Criteria

Lowest = 1

(Does not meet the criteria or is the worst option)

Middle = 2

(Meets the criteria somewhat or is the second-best option)

Highest= 3

(Meets the criteria or is the best option)

What is the problem?	
What are the alternatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What are the criteria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

CRITERIA → ALTERNATIVES ↓	COST Can the job be done without spending money?	TIME Can the job be done quickly?	SAFETY Can the job be done with little or no chance of injury?	INCOME Can the job help earn enough to cover what they need?	TOTAL
Making beaded necklaces					
Sorting and selling recyclables and trash					
Cleaning floors in a tea shop					
DECISION					

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HANDOUT 1: LEARNING P.A.C.E.D. DECISION-MAKING

P.A.C.E.D. Decision-making Steps

- A. State the **Problem**
- B. List the **Alternatives**
- C. Identify the **Criteria**
- D. Evaluate the **Alternatives**
- E. Make a **Decision**

Compare Alternatives to Criteria

Lowest = 1

(Does not meet the criteria or is the worst option)



Middle = 2

(Meets the criteria somewhat or is the second-best option)

Highest= 3

(Meets the criteria or is the best option)

What is the problem?	
What are the alternatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
What are the criteria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

CRITERIA  ALTERNATIVES 	COST Can the job be done without spending money?	TIME Can the job be done quickly?	SAFETY Can the job be done with little or no chance of injury?	INCOME Can the job help earn enough to cover what they need?	TOTAL
Making beaded necklaces					
Sorting and selling recyclables and trash					
Cleaning floors in a tea shop					
DECISION					

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HANDOUT 1: LEARNING P.A.C.E.D. ANSWER KEY

P.A.C.E.D. Decision-making Steps

- A. State the **P**roblem
- B. List the **A**lternatives
- C. Identify the **C**riteria
- D. **E**valuate the Alternatives
- E. Make a **D**ecision

Compare Alternatives to Criteria

Lowest = 1

(Does not meet the criteria or is the worst option)



Middle = 2

(Meets the criteria somewhat or is the second-best option)

Highest = 3

(Meets the criteria or is the best option)

What is the problem ?	Four children are homeless and need to make money to survive in Chennai, India.
What are the alternatives ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make beaded necklaces • Sort and sell garbage and recyclables • Cleaning floors in a tea shop in exchange for beads
What are the criteria ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much does it cost to do the job? • How much time does it take? • Is it safe? • What does it pay?

CRITERIA  ALTERNATIVES 	COST Can the job be done without spending money?	TIME Can the job be done quickly?	SAFETY Can the job be done with little or no chance of injury?	INCOME Can the job help earn enough to cover what they need?	TOTAL
	Making beaded necklaces	1	2	3	
Sorting and selling recyclables and trash	3	1	1	2	7
Cleaning floors in a tea shop	2	3	2	1	8
DECISION	Making beaded necklaces				

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HANDOUT 2: P.A.C.E.D. ACTIVITY

Instructions: Work with a partner to find a solution to the problem from the book excerpt using the P.A.C.E.D. decision-making model.

P.A.C.E.D. Decision-making Steps

- A. State the Problem
- B. List the Alternatives
- C. Identify the Criteria
- D. Evaluate the Alternatives
- E. Make a Decision

Compare Alternatives to Criteria

Lowest = 1

(Does not meet the criteria or is the worst option)



Middle = 2

(Meets the criteria somewhat or is the second-best option)

Highest= 3

(Meets the criteria or is the best option)

PROBLEM	Rukku and Muthu are very ill and Viji and Arul must find a quick way to get money for medicine.
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CRITERIA  ALTERNATIVES 	CONTROL Can it be done independently or on their own?	FAST Can it be done quickly so they can get back to care for the sick?	SAFE Can it be done without danger or hurting oneself?	EASE Will it be simple?	TOTAL
Ask for help from a stranger at the nearby children's shelter.					
Sort and sell recyclable items found in the trash					
Sell Kutti the dog to a nice wealthy family that wants a pet					
DECISION					

Which of the three alternatives above requires the most human capital?

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HANDOUT 2: P.A.C.E.D. ACTIVITY ANSWER KEY

Instructions: Work with a partner to find a solution to the problem from the book excerpt using the P.A.C.E.D. decision-making model.

P.A.C.E.D. Decision-making Steps

- A. State the **P**roblem
- B. List the **A**lternatives
- C. Identify the **C**riteria
- D. **E**valuate the Alternatives
- E. Make a **D**ecision

Compare Alternatives to Criteria

Lowest = 1

(Does not meet the criteria or is the worst option)



Middle = 2

(Meets the criteria somewhat or is the second-best option)

Highest= 3

(Meets the criteria or is the best option)

PROBLEM	Rukku and Muthu are very ill and Viji and Arul must find a quick way to get money for medicine.
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CRITERIA 	CONTROL Can it be done independently or on their own?	FAST Can it be done quickly so they can get back to care for the sick?	SAFE Can it be done without danger or hurting oneself?	EASE Will it be simple?	TOTAL
ALTERNATIVES 					
Ask for help from a stranger at the nearby children's shelter.	1	2	2	2	7
Sort and sell recyclable items found in the trash	3	1	1	3	8
Sell Kutti the dog to a nice wealthy family that wants a pet	2	3	3	1	9

DECISION	Sell Kutti the dog to a nice wealthy family
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Which of the three alternatives above requires the most human capital? Sorting and selling recyclable items found in the trash

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HANDOUT 3: P.A.C.E.D. EXTENSION ACTIVITY

PROBLEM	
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CRITERIA 					TOTAL
ALTERNATIVES 					
DECISION					