

# decisionmaker

## a student-directed transition program

By Luanne Kowalski

*DecisionMaker: A Student-Directed Transition Program* helps students develop essential skills in planning and decision-making. Developed for use with middle school and high school deaf and hard of hearing students, *DecisionMaker* includes a teacher/facilitator handbook, lessons, student journals, and a teacher orientation videotape. *DecisionMaker* can be used with students individually or in classrooms, counseling groups, dormitory groups, or other school activities. It provides teachers, transition specialists, and other educators with a structured approach to teaching decision-making through a series of group and individual activities in a six-step *DecisionMaker* model. The steps are:

### 1 LEARN ABOUT SELF

Students identify their talents, interests, and hopes.

### 2 GENERATE CHOICES

Students consider how many choices they have in a day and explore the importance of those choices.

### 3 DEVELOP/KNOW THE CRITERIA

Students ask themselves, “What important criteria should I use as I make my decisions?”

### 4 SET GOALS

Students consider why goals are important, discuss their ideas with the class, and then create their own short-term/long-term goal listings.

### 5 MAKE A PLAN

Students address what they need to do specifically to accomplish their goals.

### 6 MONITOR AND PROBLEM-SOLVE

Students focus on why reviewing and revising their plans are important.

“Self-determination is a critical factor in successful transitions,” said Susan Jacoby, manager of National Transition Initiatives at the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center. “Students are often not aware that they are responsible for the decisions they make, but the decisions that they make now may affect them today and possibly for the rest of their lives.

“Sometimes it helps if they realize that there is a process they can use to make effective decisions. Without awareness of this process, students too often learn by trial and error and without understanding the thinking that precedes actions. *DecisionMaker* allows students to approach decision-making in a more systematic way.”

*DecisionMaker* encourages students to apply decision-making skills throughout their school experience, including developing their Individualized Education Programs and transition plans, exploring possible careers of interest, creating postsecondary action plans, and working with vocational rehabilitation and other social service agencies.

The teacher facilitates student learning, encourages students to think, take risks, and develop plans based on the student’s self-awareness. With the teacher functioning as facilitator, students assume greater responsibility. Facilitation encourages students to share their experiences, take chances, and participate in their own planning and problem solving.

For more information, visit the Clerc Center’s website, <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/Products/decisionmaker.html>.

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**Above:** *DecisionMaker: A Student-Directed Transition Program* is now available from the Clerc Center.