

The Pyramid

This working method is an excellent way to come to a decision in a participatory way. It teaches students to come to a common decision, by using conversation as well as counting. You can also use this method to rank elements. Most of the time you will have done other exercises to explore, investigate, brainstorm about something before using this method to come to a decision. In addition to this principle, this activity support Learning Through Thinking and Learning Through Dialogue and Interaction.

Expected Outcomes – students will:

- Be able to explore other perspectives
- Be able to generate arguments
- Be able to demonstrate active listening behaviours
- Be able to demonstrate and explain how their thinking evolved and changed

Timing

The timing of this activity is dependent on many factors: experience, classroom culture, and how you implement it, etc., the minimum amount of time you should plan for this method is 45 minutes.

Material

- sticky notes

Prepare yourself

- Choose a topic
- Make sure you have a minimum of 3 elements* that students can choose from.

Write each element down in key words on a poster and hang them on the walls or write them on the board. Make sure there is enough space to put sticky notes. You can also use drawings, pictures, photograph, etc to show the different elements.

**elements could be anything: statements, facts, ideas, arguments, problems, solutions, ... Your main question also determines in what way students will grade: Which solution would you choose? Which argument is the most decisive? ...*

Step-by-step or course

1 Input

Tell the students that they are going to grade elements and/or come to a common decision about those elements. View or read together the input related

to the elements: videos, short stories, images, ... or refresh the information that you already built up with the students. Make sure that every student knows what the different elements are about. Note, if necessary, a supporting key phrase with each action.

2 Choose

Give each student three sticky notes*². They stick a sticky note on three elements that match your question. Depending on your question, the students will make different choices. For instance, you want them to choose between different actions to reduce bullying at school:

- Which actions appeal to you?
- What actions would you like to take (at school or elsewhere)?
- Which actions do you think are a good solution?

For each element they choose, students write down their name and the arguments to choose this element on a sticky note. They hang their sticky notes with the concerned elements.

**² If you have 3 or 4 elements, you give each student only one sticky note. Starting from 5 elements, you give them 3 sticky notes.*

3 Debate

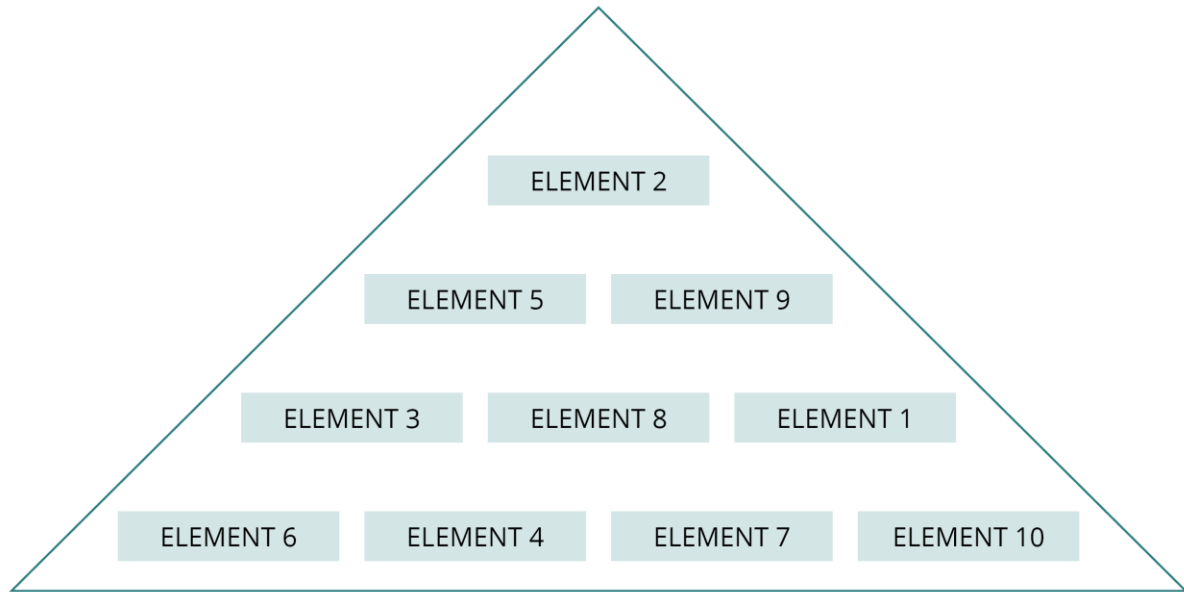
Briefly go over the elements and the different sticky notes by asking:

- Which element was most/least chosen?
- What arguments are there for element x?
- Who gave more or less the same arguments? What other arguments did you think of to choose for this element?
- What elements had you heard about before?

4 Rank and Decide

Draw a pyramid on the board with the same number of squares as the number of elements. You can also use sticky notes or photos, pictures, ... if you used that to express the elements.

Rank the elements in the pyramid according to the number of sticky notes each element got. Write the action with the most sticky notes in the top box near the top and go down from there.



Discuss:

- Which element do you prefer? Would you agree with the element that is now at the top? Why (not)?
- Would you change your choice now that you've heard the arguments from the other students? What would that be?
- Do we have enough information to choose or decide?
- Is additional information needed to make a choice? Which? How can we collect that info?
- What can we do with this information: carry out this action(s), further investigate action(s), ...?

If necessary, change position of the elements in the pyramid.

Finally decide together with the students which elements you are going to choose. Do this by supporting the conversation and making sure all the different perspectives have been addressed. Then make a proposition or let a student(s) make a proposition.

Check whether everyone can agree with this proposition. If not, ask the student(s) to make a suggestion to change the proposition.

TIP: Don't limit yourself to only choose the element at the top. You can get to work with several elements from the top.

4 Reflection

Reflect together with the students:

- What did I let you do?
- How was it to choose three elements?
- What was the most important reason for you to make a choice?
- How was it to listen to the arguments of the others?
- How was it to make a decision together with the others?
- Does the ranking match your choice? Why (not)?

- In what way could ranking and then making a choice be helpful? Why (not)?
- What kind of choices can a pyramid support you with?

5 Variation

You can start the 'input' by asking the students, individually or in small groups, to:

- Take a camera.
- Go and walk around in the school or the school surroundings or another place.
- Take pictures of certain elements that strike them e.g.:
 - ✘ Take pictures of 'problems' you see concerning waste
 - ✘ Take pictures of solutions you see concerning water wasting
 - ✘ Take pictures of places you like to go to
 - ✘ ...

Let the students upload their photos on a digital platform or let them print them. If necessary, let them choose one or two photos that express most what they want to tell the others concerning the task.

Let every group or student explain their photo(s) and then follow step 2 and so on.

6 Bring it home

- Let the students take pictures of certain elements at home. E.g.:
 - ✘ Take pictures of things you do at home that help reduce global warming.
 - ✘ Take pictures of things you like to do with your family (afterwards rank them and compare those with families in another school, neighborhood, country, ...)
- The next day they report in class or you ask them to write their experiences down on paper or online or make a short video or compilation of photos, ...