

W.O.W. Factor

Words Of Wisdom for FPS Coaches & Students

Selecting Criteria

Deciding on what criteria to use is an important step in the creative problem solving process! Here are some tips for devising quality criteria for your Underlying Problem.

Don't simply settle for generic criteria.

Often teams simply "plug in" what we call generic ideas – those that could be used with any topic or UP. Those most commonly used are:

- Which solution costs the least?
- Which solution is easiest to implement?
- Which solution can be put into effect most quickly?

However, if these are three of your primary concerns, you will typically end up with a solution that is simply cheap, quick and easy, and not necessarily the best alternative.



Instead, try to focus on criteria that are REALLY important to your UP. Here's how:

- Develop your first criterion from your KVP.
- Develop your second criterion from your purpose.
- Think hard about what you would need to consider in order to determine whether a solution works to help solve your UP, rather than settle for generic options.
- Rely on generic criteria only AS A LAST RESORT. Even better, *modify or justify* generic criteria to fit your UP by adding important stakeholders/participants or information from the Future Scene that shows why it's important.

For example, consider the following UP and solution options:

*Cultural and economic differences between students can sometimes cause tension and problems that can interfere with their education. Therefore, how might we **create a climate of respect** at XYZ Middle School, so that there are fewer behavior problems in the 2017-18 school year?*

- Implement fun games/bonding activities.
- Practice role playing.
- Teach conflict resolution strategies.
- Show movies that demonstrate respect.
- Punish students who disrespect others.
- Have students do community service.
- Plan more group projects where students constantly mix with new people.
- Assign each student a classroom buddy.
- Have a weekly class to teach about other cultures.
- Have a complaint box in each classroom.

Create the first criterion from the KVP:

- Which solution creates an atmosphere where students respect each other the most?
 - If this is your main goal, then this is a crucial consideration.

Create the second criterion from the purpose:

- Which solution will result in the least number of behavior problems?
 - If this is why you want to accomplish your KVP, it is another very important factor.

Think of other options (**NOT generic**) that are important considerations for determining how solutions help solve the UP:

- Which solution will most easily fit in with classroom lessons?
 - This is important because teachers have a required curriculum to teach, so activities that can complement (rather than add to) the curriculum will be better.
- Which solution best convinces students about the importance of showing respect?
 - This is significant because if students are convinced that respect is important, they will be more likely to show it.
- Which solution will give students the most practice in showing respect?
 - This is also important because the more opportunities students have to learn and show respect, the more likely it will become second nature to them.

FINALLY, **modify** a generic criterion to fit your UP adding important stakeholders/participants or information from the Future Scene that shows why it's important:

- Which solution will be easiest for teachers to implement?
 - The generic issue of "easiest to implement" is more important to this UP when *teachers* are considered, because they are the ones that will have to help students learn about concepts related to respect.
- Since budgets have been cut, which solution will cost the least?
 - School budgets have indeed been cut in many districts, and because this information was in the Future Scene, the generic consideration of cost becomes more important.

You might also consider **justifying** a generic criterion with information from the Future Scene:

- Because education budgets have been cut across the state, which solution will cost the least for XYZ School? (*Budget cuts were explained in the FS; this issue was also substantiated in the research*)
- Because teachers are overwhelmed with additional testing and other additions to the curriculum, which solution will be easiest for them to implement? (*Teachers being overwhelmed with testing, etc. was mentioned in the FS*)

Remember . . .
Don't simply settle for generic criteria!
Really think about your Underlying Problem and search for quality
concepts that are important in determining which solutions
will be best!

