

Spend-a-Buck

Purpose

Spend-a-Buck is a useful self-assessment tool used at a midpoint in a project or learning series. It helps individuals and groups determine relative priorities within a list of options, interests, or actions. Each group member is offered an *imaginary* stack of one hundred pennies to “spend” across the items of choice.

Benefit

This strategy promotes choice making and personalization. It allows individuals to reflect on their own preferences, strengths, and interests. Spend-a-Buck also supports group members in appreciating the variety of interests and perspectives of others.

Logistics

Materials and Preparation

- Recording sheet with options listed (if known ahead of time)
- Chart paper for master list

Time

- Ten to fifteen minutes depending on group size

Grouping

- Full group

Instructions

1. Display a slide or chart that presents the options, actions, or interest areas of choice. Distribute recording sheets listing the options.
2. Describe the Spend-a-Buck procedure: Participants may “spend” as many or as few of their pennies for each option as they desire. The goal is to create as clear a representation as possible of their personal interests.
3. With a calculator in hand, have each group member tally and report the number of pennies he or she spent for each item. Add these together, and record the group’s total for each item on a public chart. This is especially useful if the group is using Spend-a-Buck as a decision-making tool.
4. Form task groups or learning groups by having people join others with similar interests per the public chart. Note: Group members without strong preferences or needs can then balance out the numbers in the subgroups.

Example of a Tally

Professional development study-group options—

<i>Differentiated learning</i>	33
<i>Technology integration</i>	24
<i>Reading in the content areas</i>	21
<i>Formative assessment</i>	22
	<hr/>
	100

Variation: Give each participant one hundred sticky dots to place on a public chart. This is especially important when group members need to see the relative support for options and proposed actions.

Source: Lipton & Wellman, 2011a.