

# Exploring Leadership

## ADAPTABILITY: ANALYSIS

Most students struggle with analysis – observing a set of facts and interpreting what they mean. Given that almost any writing assignment, from a middle school book report, to a doctoral dissertation requires analysts, it is important that youth improve their analytical skills through hands-on activities. Analytical thinking is the kind of skill that can be used in all academic subjects and everyday situations.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS:

Ask participants to interpret this quote: “The only people who see the whole picture are the ones who step outside the frame.” — Salman Rushdie, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

Most analytical thinking requires trial and error. Those with strong analytical thinking skills are often capable of quickly analyzing a situation, topic or problem, and often work well in a team setting to accomplish goals.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Learn how critical thinking helps you investigate complex issues.
- How to make decisions and develop solutions using tools you likely already possess.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 5 different boxes of cereal.
  - 1 name brand, 1 it's generic equivalent
  - 3 others, any brand/cereal

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Did you skip breakfast?

Many people make this mistake – just like they make the mistake of not analyzing their cereal. Why is cereal analysis important? Cereal is a staple food in most countries and is considered an important source of nutrition. Let’s analyze just a few different kinds of cereal for this activity. First, divide participants into teams. Hand out the bags of cereal to be analyzed and discussed. Start the activity by asking the following questions:

- What brand of cereal is it?
- Who is the cereal marketed to?
- What is the marketing/advertising strategy behind this cereal?

### FACILITATOR TIP:

- Remove bags of cereal from boxes and mark so you will know which bag belongs to which box
- Practice these analytical interview questions with groups:
  - Tell us about a complex problem you have faced and what you did to solve it.
  - Explain a difficulty in your life and how you overcame it.

Do any of the shapes seem honest or trustworthy? What type of milk would go best with the cereal? Whole, 2%, skim, soy, rice, etc. What does the group think the ingredients are? Does the group think those are catered for a certain audience?

Hand out boxes for corresponding cereals. Now that the group knows what the cereals are, they should analyze the box it came in. Then they are to determine if their original marketing and advertising suspicions and assumptions were correct.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Ask the below open ended questions to your group to engage in a discussion about what happened during the activity.

- What skills are important to have when purchasing cereal?
- Are those skills valuable in your daily life?
- How can you be sure that the information that you are finding is truthful and fact?
- Will this activity affect how you buy cereal in the future? How?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- How can you demonstrate that you have analytical skills?
  - Think about where you have had to interpret complex information in your school subjects. This could be interpreting texts in English, extracting valuable information from research in social sciences like psychology or sociology or making sense of results from a chemistry experiment.
- Have you ever been treasurer of a school club or society?
  - The treasurer must keep track of money coming in and out and make decisions about what cash can be spent on based on need and financial prudence.



## CONCLUSION:

Analysis is a difficult concept for youth to master because they often think that identifying evidence is analysis. However, once youth have been shown an easy way to dissect evidence and connect it back to a central point, they can apply this skill in more complicated arguments and texts. This process will help develop a fundamental skill they will need throughout their life.

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## REFERENCES

- <https://thelinebreak.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/cereal-exercise-for-rhetorical-analysis.pdf>