Field Day Choices

A student council weighs benefits and costs

E.1.4 "Define scarcity, and explain how choices incur opportunity costs, utility, and trade-offs."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the limited resources and competing wants, then circle a benefit students expect from the chosen project. Write 1 beside the next-best option and 2 beside a benefit the council gives up.

One Budget, Three Ideas

1. On the Friday before field day, the student council has $300 and eight volunteer hours to improve the event. Students want more than these resources can provide: water stations near the track, a shaded seating area, and a student DJ. This gap between limited resources and competing wants is scarcity. Water stations cost $240 and require six volunteer hours. Shaded seating costs $270 and takes seven hours to arrange. A DJ costs $150 and takes four hours to set up and manage. Because both money and volunteer time are limited, the council cannot provide all three.

2. The council asks students which change would help most. Many expect water stations to bring the greatest utility, or usefulness and satisfaction, because runners could get water without walking to the building. Students rank shaded seating second because spectators could escape the sun. The DJ ranks third because music would be fun but would not ease heat or long walks for water. These rankings reflect the students surveyed, not a value that every person must share. Someone who cannot stand for long might value shaded seating most. Utility depends on what a person needs and prefers.

3. The council chooses water stations. It gives up the next-best option, shaded seating, so the seating area's benefits are the opportunity cost of that choice. The $240 price is an expense, but it is not the opportunity cost. The decision also involves a trade-off: more convenient water comes with less relief from the sun for spectators. The council has $60 and two volunteer hours left, too little for either remaining project at its listed cost and time. Choosing the DJ instead would leave enough money for another project, but only four volunteer hours, still too few to add shaded seating or water stations.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the council face scarcity? Name the limited resources and the competing wants.

2. Why do many students expect water stations to have the greatest utility? Why might another student disagree?

3. What is the opportunity cost of choosing water stations? Explain why the $240 price is different.

4. What trade-off does the council make by choosing water stations, and why can it not add either remaining project?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Think of a choice your school could make with limited time, money, or space. In 4 to 5 sentences, name two competing options, choose one, and explain the scarcity, its utility, the opportunity cost, and the trade-off.

Field Day Choices

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the limited resources and competing wants, then circle a benefit students expect from the chosen project. Write 1 beside the next-best option and 2 beside a benefit the council gives up. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the council face scarcity? Name the limited resources and the competing wants.	**It has only $300 and eight volunteer hours, but students want water stations, shaded seating, and a DJ.**
2	Why do many students expect water stations to have the greatest utility? Why might another student disagree?	**Runners could get water without walking to the building. A student who cannot stand for long might get more utility from shaded seating.**
3	What is the opportunity cost of choosing water stations? Explain why the $240 price is different.	**The opportunity cost is the benefit of shaded seating, the next-best option given up. The $240 is money spent, not the forgone option's benefit.**
4	What trade-off does the council make by choosing water stations, and why can it not add either remaining project?	**It gains convenient water but gives up relief from the sun for spectators. Its remaining $60 and two volunteer hours are insufficient for either project.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our school has one empty classroom after school, but both a chess club and a quiet study group want it at the same time. I would give the room to the study group because a quiet place would help students focus on homework. Scarcity exists because there is only one room for two competing uses. The opportunity cost is the chess club's chance to play together in that room, the next-best use. The trade-off is more space for studying but no room for the chess club at that time.

Accept other plausible rankings of utility in Part 3 if the student explains the choice. The opportunity cost must be the benefit of the next-best option given up, not merely the money spent.