COMPARING NEEDS AND WANTS

METHOD
Students identify items presented to them as needs or wants and create a collage of images.

MATERIALS
Part 1:
• Large paper bag
• Assorted common household items
• Item cards (provided, 1 set per student)

Part 2:
• Old magazines
• Scissors
• Glue sticks

INTRODUCTION
We live in a society of abundance. Students are constantly bombarded with messages and advertisements telling them to want and seek more material goods. Even TV shows and movies emphasize the idea that “more is better” and having a lot of material goods should be our goal. At times, it can be hard to appreciate what we already have and to determine what is actually necessary and what we can do without. In this activity, students clarify the things they need versus the things they want.

PART 1: IN THE BAG

PROCEDURE
1. Before class, fill a large paper bag with assorted household items such as a newspaper, pencil, fork, aspirin, potato, light bulb, CD, deck of cards, canned soup, a baseball, bottle of water, gum, cell phone, etc.
2. In class, explain that you will be discussing needs and wants. Ask the students to share what they think defines a **need** and then provide the definition – a need is something you must have in order to survive. Now ask the students to share what they think defines a **want** and then provide the definition – a want is something that you would like to have but you are able to do without. Write both definitions on the board.

3. Take one item out of the bag at a time and ask the students if it is a need or a want. If there are disagreements over an item, ask the students to clarify why they made their choice. You may want to refer back to the definitions on the board. Create two piles of the items in the front of the classroom, one of needs and the other of wants, until you’ve gone through all of the items in the bag.

4. Focusing specifically on the pile of needs, go through each of the items and have the students brainstorm where the different items came from. (Water might be from a well underground, rain, a river or local lake; an ear of corn grew from a stalk growing in the soil; etc.)

5. Have each student take out two pieces of paper and label one piece “Needs” and the other piece “Wants.”

6. Distribute a sheet of Item Cards to each student. You can start by having the students identify the picture on each card and write what it is on the line. (If you’d rather have the students just use the pictures and not label them, that’s okay too.) Then students should cut out each image, including their written description.

7. Remind the students that a need is something necessary for them to live; a want is something they’d like to have but could live without. Instruct the students to separate the Item Cards into needs and wants. The cards that picture a need should be placed on the “Needs” piece of paper and wants should be placed on the “Wants” piece. Finally, the students will paste the images onto the paper. (You may want to check that students have separated the cards correctly before they begin pasting.)

**PART 2: CREATE A COLLAGE**

**PROCEDURE**

1. Have students create a collage by cutting pictures out of magazines. Give each student a piece of paper that has been divided in half with the left side section labeled ‘Things I Need’ and the right side section labeled ‘Things I Want.’ Provide a variety of magazines for the class.

2. Students should look through magazines and/or newspapers to find pictures of items that fit into these categories, cut out the images, and paste them into the appropriate section. (If students have a specific item in mind that they’d like to include but can’t find in a magazine provided, you may want to let them look up an image online and print it.)

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. How can we tell the difference between a need and a want?

   *A need is something we cannot live without; we must have it to survive. A want is something that would make us happy but we can live without; it’s something we wish we had.*
2. Looking at the lists you made, which side has more items?

   *The list of wants has more items.*

3. Where do the things we need (food, air, water, shelter) come from?

   *The things we need come from nature/the environment.*

**MEASURING LEARNING**

Look over the individual students’ lists and their collages to ensure understanding of needs versus wants. Have each student share their collage with the class by holding it up and pointing out the following three things: one item that is a want, one item that is a need, and telling the class where the need comes from. If the student doesn’t know where the need comes from, open it up to the class to brainstorm.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY**

From the book *A Life Like Mine: How children live around the world*, select a couple of the children profiled. Lead a discussion with your class on how the needs and wants of these children might be similar or different from their own needs and wants. You might also compare and contrast how the profiled children’s needs and wants are met when compared to how your students’ needs and wants are met.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Card 1</th>
<th>Item Card 2</th>
<th>Item Card 3</th>
<th>Item Card 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>Faucet</td>
<td>House</td>
<td>Banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle of medicine</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoon</td>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Ice cream</td>
<td>Hamburger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>Light bulb</td>
<td>Headphones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Smoke</td>
<td>iPod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>