

CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

Teacher Resource

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING?

Gathering information to think through and determine the best solution.

BENCHMARKS

- ✓ **HE.912.R.4.1** Analyze the importance of character and grit to achieve successful outcomes.
- ✓ **HE.912.R.4.2** Generate and apply alternative solutions when **solving problems** or resolving conflict.
- ✓ **HE.912.R.4.3** Describe ways to anticipate, avoid or de-escalate conflicts.

PURPOSE

- ▶ These interactive activities will help your students explore the characteristics of **critical thinking and problem solving** and ways to anticipate, avoid and de-escalate conflicts. Share the suggested introduction with your students, choose one or more of the activities below, and conclude with the suggested wrap-up. Feel free to modify or revisit activities throughout the week to continue reinforcing **critical thinking and problem solving**.



Suggested Introduction:

“You are familiar with using **critical thinking and problem solving** skills to gather information to think through and determine the best solution. These skills help you approach issues logically, think creatively and adapt to new situations. You practice these skills every time you take a test, build your class schedule, pursue a hobby or strengthen friendships. By developing these skills, you prepare yourself to tackle real-world problems with confidence and creativity, setting the stage for future success.”



Activities to Build Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

1 “Conflict De-Escalation Toolkit”

Have students research various conflict de-escalation techniques such as persuasion, compromise, debate and negotiation. Have students break out into small groups to create a “Conflict De-Escalation Toolkit” that outlines strategies for anticipating, avoiding and de-escalating conflicts in a variety of different situations. Have each group present their toolkit to the class and explain the rationale behind the strategies they chose and how these strategies can help resolve conflicts before they escalate. After the presentations, discuss the importance of anticipating conflicts and using proactive communication to prevent misunderstandings.

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GRADES
9–12



Activities to Build Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (Continued):

2 Resiliency Analysis Case Study

Present students with case studies of historical figures who demonstrated character and perseverance to overcome significant challenges. Have students work in small groups to analyze how these individuals demonstrated perseverance, character, and **critical thinking and problem solving** skills to overcome their challenges. Have students identify the specific traits that helped these individuals succeed despite their obstacles. Have students reflect on how they can apply similar traits to their personal challenges.

Examples of historical figures could include:

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Frederick Douglass
- President George Washington
- President Theodore Roosevelt
- Thurgood Marshall
- Harriet Tubman
- General Daniel “Chappie” James

3 Real-World Problem Solving: Career Engagement

Set up an activity where students apply **critical thinking and problem solving** skills to real-world career scenarios. Begin by having students take the “Career Pathway Quiz” on the Get There Florida website (gettherefl.com/future-of-work/) to identify a career cluster that fits their interests. Once each student has a potential career pathway, write a universal workplace challenge on the board (e.g., low budget, tight deadline, team conflict). Have students analyze how they would handle each challenge in their career using their **critical thinking and problem solving** skills. Have students work together to write a plan with 2–3 steps and share with the class.



Suggested Wrap-Up:

“You have explored **critical thinking and problem solving** throughout your childhood. As you move beyond high school, how can you apply these strategies in your everyday life? Remember, by honing your ability to **think critically** and **solve problems** effectively, you’re equipping yourself with tools that will benefit you in college, your career and life. Keep practicing, and you’ll be ready to face any challenge that comes your way.”

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Conflict De-Escalation Toolkit



CONFLICT DE-ESCALATION TOOLKIT

Anticipating Conflict Strategies

Avoiding Conflict Strategies

Conflict De-Escalation Strategies

This is a supplemental document to support the 9-12 Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Teacher Resource.