CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

Teacher Resource

WHAT IS CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING?

Gathering information to think through and determine the best solution.

BENCHMARKS

✓ **HE.3.R.4.2** — Identify different solutions and potential outcomes when problems arise.

✓ **HE.4.R.4.2** — Describe strategies to resolve conflicts. Clarification: Compromise, agreeing to disagree and civil discourse.

✓ **HE.5.R.4.3** — Compare conflict resolution methods to identify potential solutions. Clarification: Negotiation, give and take, and analyze pros and cons.

PURPOSE

▶ These interactive activities will help your students explore the characteristics of critical thinking and problem solving and how to gather information to think through and determine the best solution to a problem. 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:

"Today, we are going to explore critical thinking and problem solving. Critical thinking requires us to ask questions, look for clues and gather information to think through the best solution to a problem. Problem solving means coming up with smart ways to fix problems and challenges. These skills build your responsible decision-making skills, make you a strong thinker, and allow you to tackle challenges independently and with confidence!"

Activities to Build Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:

1 Resiliency Reading Connection

Share the story *Who Was Amelia Earhart?* by Kate Boehm Jerome from the Resiliency Reading List. This story takes readers through Amelia Earhart's incredible life and highlights her ability to think critically and problem solve. Have students summarize the challenges Earhart faced and how she used these skills to demonstrate resiliency. Visit **buildresiliency.org** to learn about other books listed on the Resiliency Reading List; each title has a corresponding Family Reading Guide.

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

2 What Would You Do? Scenario Card Game

Create scenario cards with different conflicts and solutions. Divide students into small groups and have them select a card. Each group should identify possible solutions and discuss potential outcomes for each scenario.

Possible scenarios could include:

- Two team members are working on a history project and have a disagreement on how to present the information. What are ways to compromise?
- Your lab partner accidentally records data that is incorrect during a science experiment but does not want to redo the experiment. He or she suggests keeping the incorrect result to save time. What are possible ways to fix the mistake without wasting too much time?
- You are preparing a presentation for a class project; right before the presentation you realize a few of your slides are missing. Some members suggest quickly rebuilding it while others want to give up. How can you approach the group while staying calm and working efficiently under pressure?

3 Problem-Solution Presentation

Divide students into three groups to represent each level of government (national, state, local). Provide students with a problem specific to their assigned level of government. Students will then develop a solution to the problem and present it to the class. Students will use ==critical thinking, problem solving== and civil discourse to arrive at a group consensus.

Examples of problems could include:

- National – interstate highway repair
- State – funding for schools
- Local – park in an urban area

Suggested Wrap-Up:

"Today, we have explored the characteristics of ==critical thinking and problem solving== and practiced gathering information to think through and determine the best solution. ==Critical thinking and problem solving== make you better at figuring things out, trying new ideas and working with others. The more you practice these skills, the easier it will be to handle tough situations. Remember, every problem is a chance to learn and grow!"

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