



Problem Solving Strategies

By Hannah Larsen

A Pyramid to Retention has supported growth in my practice as I introduced strategies for problem-solving to my classroom. By supporting children to independently recognize when there is a problem, navigate the steps to finding a solution, and implement that solution to their situation, an environment of respect and confidence in social situations has been blossoming in our classroom!

The steps to problem-solving used in my practice are supported by a stoplight visual. This visual is posted in multiple areas of the classroom, as well as carried on a lanyard by myself and my co-educator to support naturally occurring situations.

PROBLEM SOLVING STEPS

1. Stop - Figure out what is the root of your problem.
2. Think - What do you need to do, is there a solution from the suitcase (support visual) that will help?
3. Go - Give your solution a try!
4. Reflect - Did it work? Is there something else you should try?



These steps are enriched by an additional visual referred to as the solution suitcase. This visual accompanies each stoplight with six potential solutions that apply to the majority of socially related problems in our classroom. On our lanyards, we carry the same six solutions for children to try.



SOLUTIONS SUITCASE

- Get a timer
- Trade
- Use kind words
- Ask for help
- Wait and take turns
- Say "Please stop"



Problem Solving Strategies

The solution suitcase has been a successful addition to our classroom. I have found success when I pick two solutions and invite the child to make a choice to identify what they feel will work best for them. The velcro on each visual has encouraged children to take a solution directly to a situation, instilling confidence in their ability to solve a problem. Not only does it support children in tackling the problem, but it supports all children involved. Peers collaborate to use the strategies building on each other's solutions, "First we can trade, and then we should use a timer!" as well as, respecting the strategies of one another to become part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

Acting out problems with figurines, reading through social stories, role-playing situations, and playing games were strategies I used to support teaching the steps. Within each of these activities, we were able to experiment with each step of our Problem-Solving approach.



With success in the classroom and my practice, I extended the learning by inviting families to incorporate the strategies and visuals into situations at home. Resources were sent to each family, including visuals for the Stop Light and solutions related to problems that may occur for the child at home. To further support families I printed a few copies of each visual and made them accessible for families to take them on their way in or out of the center. Through conversations with parents, I have learned that they are finding success at home too! Children are independently carrying out the steps, using the language to support their solutions and showing resiliency to keep trying solutions until the problem is solved.

I am so glad to be growing my practice and part of a strategy for growing confidence, respect and resiliency in our youth. These are the solutions that work for my classroom, I invite you to create what works for yours!

Respectfully,
 Hannah Larsen
 ECE and Pyramid Model Educator, Mighty Oaks Academy