NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development:
Advanced Course on Emotional & Social Development and Family Engagement

Unique Handouts for Module 10
Module 10: Teaching Problem Solving Skills

NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development: Advanced Course on Emotional & Social Development and Family Engagement
Helpful Supportive Documents

Slides
Mod 10 Handouts
Glossary
Objectives

1. To understand what problem solving is
2. To know the steps to teach problem solving to young children
3. To understand how to use visual supports and strategies in teaching problem solving
4. To understand the importance of involving families/caregivers in the development and implementation of the expectations and rules
5. To be able to articulate the relationship between instructional practices, Foundations for Early Learning and Development, and the North Carolina Professional
Problems Are Everywhere!
Positive Versus Negative Conflict
Environment Matters!

"As a teacher you may teach a class, but each child should still feel uniquely taught."

Robert John Meishan
American Educator
Bert and Ernie at the Movies
Bert and Ernie at the Movies Recap
I Have a Problem....
What Would You Do?
Toddler Rules

If I want it, it's mine
If it's in my hand, it's mine
If I can take it away from you, it's mine
If I had it a little while ago, it's mine
If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way
If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine
If it just looks like mine, it's mine
If I think it's mine, it's mine
If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine
Once it's mine it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what

Author: Unknown
Want to Share?
Problem Solving Steps

1. Calm down (not always needed, but necessary when it is)
2. Clarify/define the problem
3. Brainstorm solutions
4. Decide on a solution
5. Evaluate the solution
6. Try it out
Cool/Calm Down
Define the Problem
Brainstorm Solutions
Evaluate the Solution

What would happen?
Try It Out!

Give it a try!
Clues and Problems
Instructional Practices Checklist

Video Details
Observer Checklist
Teacher Checklist
Problem Solving - Instructional Practices
### Problem Solving - Instructional Practices Recap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide visual reminders about problem-solving steps and possible solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support children as they work through the problem-solving process in naturally occurring situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualize instruction and use different procedures and materials to teach problem solving based on children's individual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use problem solving in interactions with children and model problem-solving steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support children's development by providing specific feedback on progress/growth that they have made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Image of children working together]
Problem Solving - Teaching Standards
Problem Solving - Teaching Standards Recap

- Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

2a, c
4c, e
Visual Supports

http://handstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools#problem
Solution Kit and Cards
Using a Solution Kit
Using a Solution Kit Recap

http://csafal.vanderbilt.edu/resourcs/stratapion.html
Solution Strategies
Solution Strategies Recap
Ongoing/Formative Assessment
Ongoing/Formative Assessment Recap
“Problematize”
Proactive Steps to Teaching Problem Solving

- Anticipate problems

www.csfol.vanderbilt.edu
Proactive Steps to Teaching Problem Solving

- Anticipate problems
- Proximity

www.csfot.vanderbilt.edu
Proactive Steps to Teaching Problem Solving

• Anticipate problems
• Proximity
• Support

www.csfol.vanderbilt.edu
Proactive Steps to Teaching Problem Solving

- Anticipate problems
- Proximity
- Support
- Encourage

www.csfol.vanderbilt.edu
Proactive Steps to Teaching Problem Solving

- Anticipate problems
- Proximity
- Support
- Encourage
- Promote

www.csof.vanderbilt.edu
Family Engagement

Message in a Backpack

Help Your Child Become a Great Problem Solver

Solving Problems With Your Child

http://www.naeyc.org/tyc/backpack
Foundations

North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development

Foundations
## Foundations Subdomains and Goals

### Subdomains & Goals That Are Met When We Teach Problem Solving Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy, Safe, &amp; Proactive</td>
<td>Developing a sense of self-worth</td>
<td>Understanding own emotions and expressing them</td>
<td>Understanding own physical abilities</td>
<td>Understanding own communication skills</td>
<td>Understanding &amp; expressing one's own thoughts &amp; feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical, Social, &amp; Emotional</td>
<td>Children learn through active participation &amp; understanding consequences</td>
<td>Children develop empathy &amp; interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Children develop independence &amp; self-esteem</td>
<td>Children develop independence &amp; social skills</td>
<td>Children demonstrate the ability to think critically &amp; solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language, Literacy, &amp; Mathematics</td>
<td>Children develop language &amp; literacy skills</td>
<td>Children develop math skills</td>
<td>Children develop understanding of concepts</td>
<td>Children develop ability to communicate &amp; express ideas</td>
<td>Children demonstrate the ability to think about different perspectives &amp; perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Subdomains

- **Language, Literacy, & Mathematics**
  - Children develop language & literacy skills
  - Children develop math skills
  - Children develop understanding of concepts
  - Children develop ability to communicate & express ideas
  - Children demonstrate the ability to think about different perspectives & perspectives

- **Physical, Social, & Emotional**
  - Children learn through active participation & understanding consequences
  - Children develop empathy & interpersonal skills
  - Children develop independence & self-esteem
  - Children develop independence & social skills
  - Children demonstrate the ability to think critically & solve problems

- **Healthy, Safe, & Proactive**
  - Developing a sense of self-worth
  - Understanding own emotions and expressing them
  - Understanding own physical abilities
  - Understanding own communication skills
  - Understanding & expressing one's own thoughts & feelings

- **Subdomains**
  - Language, Literacy, & Mathematics
  - Physical, Social, & Emotional
  - Healthy, Safe, & Proactive
Relationship between Foundations and NC Standard Course of Study

**Kindergarten Goal:**

Students can effectively solve problems by defining goals, describing steps, and evaluating alternative strategies in both academic and social interactions.

**Foundations:**

APL-6: Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems.
Relationship between Foundations and NC Standard Course of Study

Kindergarten Goal:
Students can effectively solve problems by defining goals, describing steps, and evaluating alternative strategies in both academic and social interactions.

Foundations
APL-6:
Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems.
Conclusion
Suggested Post-Learning Activity

Notice how many times during the day you are solving problems for children then examine your daily schedule and decide when you will intentionally teach problem solving skills. Decide how you will teach problem solving in a developmentally appropriate way for your children. Write a lesson plan for teaching problem-solving skills. Include books, role play or puppets, etc. What visual supports will you use in your lesson plan to support children in the problem-solving process?

Make arrangements to meet with your co-teacher(s) if you have them and your supervisor to discuss your plans.

Return to your original count of teacher problem solving times and count how many times children can identify a solution other than coming to a teacher for help.
References and Resources
Thank you for completing Module 10. Goodbye!
Pre-Learning Activity Directions

Module 10: Teaching Problem Solving Skills

Effective Teacher Practices for Providing Targeted Social-Emotional Supports: Teaching Problem-Solving Skills

Read the article Preschoolers Grow Their Brains: Shifting Mindsets for Greater Resiliency and Better Problem Solving, by Shelby Pawlina and Christie Stanford. It is attached and is also accessible online at the following link: [http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/V5N3/Preschoolers%20Grow%20Their%20Brains.pdf](http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/V5N3/Preschoolers%20Grow%20Their%20Brains.pdf)

As you read the article, consider these questions:

1. Do you have any AHA thoughts after reading the article?
2. How might a classroom meeting help with problem solving?
3. What do you think about the section on supporting a “growth mindset”?
4. How do you use problem solving in your setting and what challenges do you face?
Challenges, mistakes, and problems are inherent every day in learning activities and social interactions. How children think about and respond to those difficult situations has an impact on how they see themselves as being able to shape their own learning and on how they handle the next problem that comes their way (Hall & Pearson 2003). Building resilience means fostering children’s sense of agency (the knowledge that they are in control of their actions) and self-efficacy (the belief that they are competent and capable) and developing a framework for approaching problems. By supporting children’s developing sense of agency and self-efficacy, teachers give children confidence in their ideas, their understanding of challenges, and what they do to work with those challenges.

As teachers of young children, we use our words as powerful tools for developing these skills (Cimpian, Markman, & Dweck 2007). Noticing and commenting on effort rather than ability makes a world of difference in a child’s sense of agency: “Wow! You have been working on riding the like-a-bike (pedalless bike) every day this week. Do you remember how last week you could only use your tiptoes and walk the bike around the path? Now you can get up speed and glide sometimes! When we practice something, we get better at it and it feels good inside.”

By developing a “growth mindset”—an attitude that allows for possibilities and promotes progress and problem solving—children improve their skills for effectively solving problems every day and in more challenging scenarios (Dweck 2006).

When we hear children respond to challenges with phrases such as “That’s too hard; I want to do something easier,” we know we have some work to do. When children repeatedly come to teachers for help or flounder and...
Fostering Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills in Young Children

When children have episodes of successful learning and of overcoming challenges, they gather evidence that they have the power to influence the outcome of a situation.

Effort in the face of challenges

Carol Dweck, a professor at Stanford University, is dedicated to researching attitudes about challenges, mistakes, and efforts and how adults influence those attitudes in children. She coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset in her book Mindset (2006). Dweck emphasizes that by developing a growth mindset, people realize that through effort they can grow, learn, and effectively respond to their world. People with a fixed mindset tend to avoid challenges and fear failure and making mistakes—they don’t want others to see them as failures or not smart. This attitude stems from a belief that ability is fixed and that effort is for people who can’t perform (Whimbey & Whimbey 1976, quoted in Costa & Kallick 2008, 8; Dweck 2006). Martin Seligman views these same concepts through the lenses of optimism/pessimism and attribution theory (Seligman [1998] 2006)—the idea that people’s perceptions about themselves influence how, when, and if they tackle problems.

When we authors read about growth mindsets and fixed mindsets, we became intrigued by the idea of promoting the resilience and problem-solving skills of the children in our prekindergarten classroom and influencing their attitude toward challenges and mistakes. We kept the following goals in mind: normalizing challenges and the effort needed to meet them; helping children look at problems from a place of empowerment; building strategies for children to apply in difficult situations; and fostering a community that seeks and supports learning and problem solving through a wide range of experiences. Then we set forth to revamp our classroom language and expand learning opportunities.

Connecting to feelings

We began by talking with children in a class meeting about what it is like to try something hard (like pumping on the swings or learning to ride a two-wheel bicycle) and not be able to do it. Responses ranged from “It makes me sad and not want to do it anymore” and “I just leave” to “I try it a few times and then get my mom to help me” and “If I keep trying it, then I can do it.” These are eloquent examples of the range of mindsets in a preschool classroom.

We talked with children about concepts of resilience—the ability to “bounce like a ball” when they feel disappointed or frustrated, instead of “flopping like a beanbag.” The similes of the bouncing ball and flopping beanbag helped the children understand the concepts and gave them some basic language. Christie explained this idea to the attentive children:

“Flopping like a beanbag usually means we don’t think we can help ourselves, so the problem doesn’t get solved . . . our brains don’t grow. But if we bounce like a ball, we usually think there are some things we can try to fix the problem. That feels good!”

When children don’t succeed in resolving a challenge, they sometimes need a few minutes to feel disappointed. But the sooner they recover from disappointment and move into resiliency mode, the sooner they can solve the problem. When children have episodes
of successful learning and of overcoming challenges, they gather evidence that they have the power to influence the outcome of a situation.

**Setting the stage**

Connecting to the emotional component of learning can make a difference in shifting mindsets (Mayr & Ulich 2009). Over several days we introduced the idea that problems and challenges are chances to “grow our brains,” which makes people feel strong, happy, and excited to learn new things. We helped children connect to previous learning successes and reminded them about the confidence and excitement of learning something new through practice and working hard.

We teachers showed our own enthusiasm for learning new things and brought children’s attention to the times when effort and practice yielded results. Christie said to a child at the easel,

“Remember when you first started school and you didn’t know the letters in your name? Now look at how you have all the letters in order! People really know whose painting this is, because they can read your name on it!”

**The upside of problems**

Our goal was to put a positive spin on the concept of problems and engage children in seeking and working on their own challenges. We created a treasure hunt of sorts, with everyone on the lookout for ways they could grow their brains. The hunt began with brainstorming sessions about things that were hard for some children to do. Children came up with some fantastical ideas (jumping onto the roof of a house, flying an airplane) as well as reasonable and appropriate goals (learning to zip a jacket, walk across a balance beam, play with a new friend).

We focused on physical challenges outdoors because it was an area in which children could readily relate to their past experiences. Their progress would be easy to see. Words like “Remember when you couldn’t . . . but now you can” boosted children’s confidence that with practice and effort, results would come. This area also gave us a framework for building children’s vocabulary, fostering positive attitudes, and promoting problem-solving attention and skills.

**Practice makes better**

We posted a Challenge Choice board outdoors in the shed. It listed ideas for physical challenges the children had come up with together. We added items such as practice with throwing, kicking, and swinging to round out the selections. Each day, children chose activities from the list to try out and practice for a little while. Selections included throwing a Frisbee flat, dribbling a basketball, kicking a soccer ball, pumping on the swings, climbing a tree, and more. Leo, who has cerebral palsy, created challenges and growth opportunities based on his physical capabilities. Initially teachers gave Leo suggestions for activities; but with practice and familiarity with the challenge portion of the day, Leo began to create his own. Rather than practicing kicking a soccer ball, he grew his brain by working on balance and stretching his stride to take giant steps.

We were curious to learn who chose challenges independently and who avoided them by choosing activities already mastered. We spoke daily with children about the challenges they were trying, what they were learning, and how they were feeling about all their hard work. Reminding them that learning something new can take a long time and that “practice makes better” supported the process and promoted the “bouncing like a ball” attitude. Pointing out the growth children achieved over time reinforced their efforts. These conversations illustrated how everyone was working on something and learning through their efforts.

After only a few days we noticed a shift in the activities outdoors and the language children used in the classroom.
Fostering Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills in Young Children

What started with a few children commenting “That’s too hard, I want to try something easier” changed dramatically. Shelby reported, “Children were asking each other about how they were growing their brains and sharing with their friends what they had learned to do. They were supporting each other in practicing and recovering from making mistakes as well as finding new challenges for themselves. The words we were saying [about challenges, practice, and mistakes] were beginning to come from the children!”

Annie practiced the monkey bars each day over several weeks, clearly making progress. When she fell, she jumped back up to try again. Her practical application of the concepts of hard work and resilience that we had been discussing gave Annie an “Aha!” experience: “The more you do it, the more you can do it!” she cried. Soon after that, children began generalizing their resilient learning attitude to challenges they were facing indoors and problems with peer interactions. For example, Zella said, “I couldn’t write my last name, but I practiced and now I can.” That’s when we knew we were onto something.

Something for everyone

Our class includes children with a variety of special needs. Four of the 17 children receive speech and language support; two attend regular occupational therapy sessions to address sensory processing issues; two have Individualized Education Programs; one is on the autism spectrum; one has physical disabilities; and two receive psychotherapy for emotional needs. We figured that if building a growth mindset in the face of problems was a good thing for everyone, it would be especially helpful for children with special needs. As Christie put it, “These kids have more challenges than many of us. They need the skills the most. If we can help them see problems, challenges, and mistakes as opportunities to learn, they’re more likely to work at the hard stuff with perseverance and be okay with things not being easy all the time.”

With that in mind, we expanded the conversations to include challenges children encountered in areas aside from physical skills. Extrapolating the concepts from the independent skill building with which the children were familiar and applying them to social problem solving, we teachers constructed a model for solving problems in the

Rationales and Strategies for Supporting a Growth Mindset

**Rationales**

**Everyone makes mistakes.** Children should see mistakes as part of life, not something that derails them. Embracing/normalizing mistakes helps children stay calm and address the issue.

**Making mistakes is an opportunity to do something differently and learn.** Instead of becoming frustrated about a mistake, children can turn it around and think of it as a chance to grow their brain. Learning is exciting, and when mistakes represent chances to learn, then mistakes are exciting too!

**Practice makes better.** Practice doesn’t make perfect. Remember, you’re looking for progress, not perfection.

**Strategies**

**Model resilience and problem-solving strategies.** Articulate your feelings when you make a mistake. Use self-talk to show children how you apply the resiliency model, for example: “Oh, I’m so frustrated that I spilled that milk. But that’s okay, everyone makes mistakes. Maybe next time I won’t put that cup so close to the edge of the table, where my elbow can bump it.”

**Give children opportunities to solve appropriate problems on their own.** When adults keep children from feeling frustrated and confronting challenges, they rob children of opportunities to develop resilience and problem-solving skills. That said, make sure the difficulties are manageable, so children can experience success.

**Avoid using words like fast and easy.** Language like this discourages children from sticking with a challenge and working hard for a lengthy period of time.

**Implement the “Ask three friends to help” strategy.** Encourage children to help each other by asking one another for help before seeking an adult’s assistance.

© Ellen B. Senisi
classroom (see “Problem-Solving Routine”). Over time, the children became accustomed to the routine. Children practiced solving problems in social situations like sharing materials, joining friends in pretend play, organizing turn taking, and a host of other daily challenges. The following example shows some of the language we teachers use to support children when they face challenges, mistakes, and problem-solving situations.

**Problem-solving strategies in action**

Juan was pretending that a curved block was the steering wheel of a fire engine. Milo picked up the block to use for another purpose. In tears, both boys had their hands on it and insisted they had it first. Christie called a “freeze frame” a time-out to review and address the issue at hand: “Whoa! What’s happening here? It looks like you both want to use this block and are pretty upset about this problem. Does this seem like a chance to grow our brains?” The boys agreed, took a deep breath, and shared their perspectives. This was an opportunity to identify the problem and recognize the situation as a chance to learn, thus activating the boys’ sense of agency.

Next, Christie asked the two boys to brainstorm three ways to solve the problem. In the early stages of practicing the problem-solving strategy, this is more easily said than done. When one is emotionally connected to a problem, it is challenging to think clearly. The emotional centers of the brain hijack the higher-level thinking function necessary for flexible thinking (Goleman 1995, 2005). Additionally, children don’t have a lot of experience solving problems independently, so their toolbox isn’t particularly well stocked; with practice and support, their inventory grows.

“Well, we could take turns. You can use it when I’m done,” offered Juan. Christie held up one finger. “Yeah, or we could see if there’s another [block] so we both have one,” replied Milo. Christie held up two fingers. “What if there is no other block like this one? We need one more idea,” said Christie. “Well . . . I guess . . . um . . . maybe we could do your idea first [let Juan use the block as a steering wheel], then do my idea,” said Milo.

Once the children had identified three strategies (generating the third option occasionally requires adult support), they chose one to try first. “I’ll see if I can find another block,” chirped Milo. Because the boys had practiced using this problem-solving format, Christie urged them to choose Plan B from the two remaining strategies, in case the first solution didn’t work. “Well, then I’ll let Milo use it when I’m done. We can set the timer,” declared Juan.

Christie’s follow-up included a check-in with both boys to see how their strategies worked. As it happened, they found another block, so the situation was resolved quickly. “Wow! You worked hard to come up with three ideas, and you found one that solved your problem. Seems like you both grew your brains today!” Christie said with a smile.

**Conclusion**

This classroom is evolving into a radiating culture of resilience and problem solving. Teachers and children regularly identify problems to solve and challenges to overcome. Children offer one another ideas to address

**Problem-Solving Routine**

Anytime a child faces a conflict or a challenge, we start by framing it as an opportunity for growing our brains—“This looks like a challenge, a chance to grow our brains!” We use a lot of expression and excitement in our voices to convey a positive attitude, and we approach the situation as if we (children and adults) are lucky to have another opportunity to practice problem-solving skills.

We guide the children in a problem-solving routine that involves five steps: (1) Identify the problem; (2) brainstorm three ways to handle it; (3) choose one way to try first, and decide on a back-up plan; (4) try out the strategy; (5) evaluate how well the strategy works. Evaluation may simply be a comment from the teacher: “I see you have worked to solve your problem.” With practice and over time, the children internalize this step. The following example shows how the brainstorming strategy works in a dramatic play scenario.

When three girls pretended to be a family, they disagreed about who would be the mom. Stacey wanted to be the mom, as did her friend Quincy. Stacey wanted Quincy to be the grandma. Shelby intervened with the “What are three ways to solve this problem?” routine. The children responded with three options: both girls be the mom (because there are all kinds of families), take turns being the mom, or be the big sister instead. In this way, the children figured out their own solution, with a little coaching from Shelby.
Fostering Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills in Young Children

problems and feel proud when they come up with three ways. When children notice someone struggling and looking sad, they say, “That’s okay. You can do it, just keep trying. Maybe you need three ways to try. Do you want some help?” With increasing frequency, children begin a task with the confidence that they can manage whatever comes their way (Masten & Coatsworth 1998).

There is a pervasive discussion in US education and business circles about the need for students to have twenty-first century skills (Pink 2006; Gardner 2007). Skills such as self-directed learning, flexibility, creative thinking, and problem solving are key components of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) agenda (Metiri Group 2003). P21 is a national organization promoting an education agenda that teaches the 4 C’s—“critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation” (P21, n.d.). For educators, this begs the questions, “How do these skills relate to early childhood learning? What can we do at the early childhood level to prepare children (and adults) for the changing expectations in our culture?” Building a mindset that enables children to see themselves as problem solvers capable of addressing whatever challenges present themselves is foundational in supporting these skills.

References

PreschoolFirst.com
For infant, toddler, and preschool programs... and their families

• Research-based assessment links to curriculum goals
• 3,300 developmentally-appropriate learning experiences enrich any program
• Formative assessment reports meaningful developmental progress
• High-quality curriculum supports school readiness

All at the affordable price you’d expect from a non-profit with a thirty-year history of involvement with children.
### Instructional Practices to Promote Problem Solving

**Observer Checklist**

To what extent does the teacher/staff person:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Occasion-ally</th>
<th>Not yet</th>
<th>Not observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explicitly teach problem-solving steps?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engage children in generating solutions to common classroom problems?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide visual reminders about problem-solving steps and possible solutions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Support children as they work through the problem-solving process in naturally occurring situations?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Note problem situations and use those as examples during group situations to talk about how to problem solve?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Comment on and recognize children who have been “good problem solvers” and help children reflect on their own use of problem solving?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Individualize instruction and use different procedures and materials to teach problem solving based on children’s individual needs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Use problem solving in interactions with children and model problem-solving steps?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Support resilience by reinforcing it is okay to make a mistake and providing specific feedback to children regarding their willingness to persist when something is difficult?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Support children’s development by providing specific feedback on progress/growth that they have made?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Instructional Practices to Promote Problem-Solving

**Teacher/Staff Self-Assessment Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent do I:</th>
<th>Almost always</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Not yet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explicitly teach problem-solving steps?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engage children in generating solutions to common classroom problems?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide visual reminders about problem-solving steps and possible solutions?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Support children as they work through the problem-solving process in naturally occurring situations?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Note problem situations and use those as examples during group situations to talk about how to problem solve?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Comment on and recognize children who have been “good problem solvers” and help children reflect on their own use of problem solving?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Individualize instruction and use different procedures and materials to teach problem solving based on children’s individual needs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Use problem solving in interactions with children and model problem-solving steps?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Support resilience by reinforcing it is okay to make a mistake and providing specific feedback to children regarding their willingness to persist when something is difficult?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Support children’s development by providing specific feedback on progress/growth that they have made?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Module 10: Teaching Problem Solving Skills

‘Instructional Practices Observed IN Teaching Standards’
for Administrators

Problem Solving

Practice 1: When I observe a teacher explicitly teach problem-solving steps....

What early learning and development standard is the teacher addressing?

- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children form relationships and interact positively with familiar adults who are consistent and responsive to their needs (ESD-3)
- Children develop awareness of their needs and the ability to communicate their needs (HPD-6)

What teaching standards is the teacher demonstrating?

- Standard III: Teachers Know the Content They Teach
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

Practice 2: When I observe a teacher engage children in generating solutions to common classroom problems...

What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?

- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children participate in conversations with peers and adults in one-on-one, small, and larger group interactions (LDC-2)
- Children demonstrate the social and behavioral skills needed to successfully participate in groups (ESD-5)

What teaching standards is the teacher demonstrating?

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

Practice 3: When I observe a teacher provide visual reminders about problem-solving steps and possible solutions ...

What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?

- Children actively seek to understand the world around them (APL-2)
- Children identify, manage, and express their feelings (ESD-6)
### Problem Solving

**What teaching standard is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 4:** When I observe a teacher support children as they work through the problem-solving process in naturally occurring situations...

**What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?**

- Children form relationships and interact positively with other children (ESD-4)
- Children recognize and respond to the needs and feelings of others (ESD-7)
- Children recall information and use it for new situations and problems (CD-2)

**What teaching standard is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 5:** When I observe a teacher note problem situations and use those as examples during group situations to talk about how to problem solve...

**What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?**

- Children identify, manage and express their feelings (ESD-6)
- Children participate in conversations with peers and adults in one-on-one, small, and larger group interactions (LDC-2)

**What teaching standard is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard I: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership
- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students

**Practice 6:** When I observe a teacher comment on and recognize children who have been “good problem solvers” and help children reflect on their own use of problem solving...

**What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?**

- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children express positive feelings about themselves and confidence in what they can do (ESD-2)
- Children identify, manage and express their feelings (ESD-6)

**What teaching standards is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 7:** When I observe a teacher individualize instruction and use different procedures and materials to teach problem solving based on children’s individual needs...
### Problem Solving

**What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?**

- Children persist at challenging activities (APL-9)
- Children understand communications from others (LDC-1)
- Children develop awareness of their needs and the ability to communicate their needs (HPD-6)

**What teaching standard is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard III: Teachers Know the Content They Teach

**Practice 8:** When I observe a teacher using problem solving in interactions with children and model problem-solving steps...

**What teaching standard is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 9:** When I observe a teacher supporting resilience by reinforcing it is okay to make a mistake and providing specific feedback to children regarding their willingness to persist when something is difficult?

**What early learning and development standards is the teacher addressing?**

- Children are willing to try new and challenging experiences (APL-5)
- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children demonstrate a positive sense of self-identity (ESD-1)

**What teaching standards is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 10:** When I observe a teacher supporting children’s development by providing specific feedback on progress/growth that they have made?

**What early learning and development standard is the teacher addressing?**

- Children express positive feelings about themselves and confidence in what they can do (ESD-2)
- Children demonstrate the ability to think about their own thinking: reasoning, taking perspectives, and making decisions (CD-3)

**What teaching standards is the teacher demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students
### Problem Solving

**Practice 1:** When I explicitly teach problem-solving steps...

What early learning and development standards am I addressing?

- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children form relationships and interact positively with familiar adults who are consistent and responsive to their needs (ESD-3)
- Children develop awareness of their needs and the ability to communicate their needs (HPD-6)

What teaching standards am I demonstrating?

- Standard III: Teachers Know the Content They Teach
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 2:** When I engage children in generating solutions to common classroom problems...

What early learning and development standard am I addressing?

- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children participate in conversations with peers and adults in one-on-one, small, and larger group interactions (LDC-2)
- Children demonstrate the social and behavioral skills needed to successfully participate in groups (ESD-5)

What teaching standards am I demonstrating?

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 3:** When I provide visual reminders about problem-solving steps and possible solutions...

What early learning and development standard am I addressing?

- Children actively seek to understand the world around them (APL-2)
- Children identify, manage, and express their feelings (ESD-6)
## Problem Solving

### What teaching standards am I demonstrating?
- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

### Practice 4: When I support children as they work through the problem-solving process in naturally occurring situations ...

### What early learning and development standards am I addressing?
- Children form relationships and interact positively with other children (ESD-4)
- Children recognize and respond to the needs and feelings of others (ESD-7)
- Children recall information and use it for new situations and problems (CD-2)

### What teaching standards am I demonstrating?
- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

### Practice 5: When I note problem situations and use those as examples during group situations to talk about how to problem solve ...

### What early learning and development standards am I addressing?
- Children identify, manage and express their feelings (ESD-6)
- Children participate in conversations with peers and adults in one-on-one, small, and larger group interactions (LDC-2)

### What teaching standards am I demonstrating?
- Standard I: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership
- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students

### Practice 6: When I comment on and recognize children who have been “good problem solvers” and help children reflect on their own use of problem solving ...

### What early learning and development standards am I addressing?
- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children express positive feelings about themselves and confidence in what they can do (ESD-2)
- Children identify, manage and express their feelings (ESD-6)

### What teaching standards am I demonstrating?
- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

### Practice 7: When I individualize instruction and use different procedures and materials to teach problem solving based on children’s individual needs...
## Problem Solving

**What early learning and development standards am I addressing?**

- Children persist at challenging activities (APL-9)
- Children understand communications from others (LDC-1)
- Children develop awareness of their needs and the ability to communicate their needs (HPD-6)

**What teaching standard am I demonstrating?**

- Standard III: Teachers Know the Content They Teach

**Practice 8:** When I use problem solving in interactions with children and model problem-solving steps...

**What teaching standard am I demonstrating?**

- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 9:** When I support resilience by reinforcing it is okay to make a mistake and providing specific feedback to children regarding their willingness to persist when something is difficult?

**What early learning and development standards am I addressing?**

- Children are willing to try new and challenging experiences (APL-5)
- Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems (APL-6)
- Children demonstrate a positive sense of self-identity (ESD-1)

**What teaching standards am I demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
  - Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students

**Practice 10:** When I support children’s development by providing specific feedback on progress/growth that they have made?

**What early learning and development standards am I addressing?**

- Children express positive feelings about themselves and confidence in what they can do (ESD-2)
- Children demonstrate the ability to think about their own thinking: reasoning, taking perspectives, and making decisions (CD-3)

**What teaching standards am I demonstrating?**

- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
  - Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students
Trade
Say, "Please."
Get a Teacher
Ignore
Play together
Say, "Please Stop."
Share
Wait and take turns.
Ask Nicely
Get a Timer
## Foundations Subdomains & Goals That Are Met When We Teach Problem Solving Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches to Play &amp; Learning</th>
<th>Emotional-Social Development</th>
<th>Health &amp; Physical Development</th>
<th>Language Development &amp; Communication</th>
<th>Cognitive Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk-Taking, Problem-Solving, &amp; Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>Developing a Sense of Self with Others</td>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td>Learning to Communicate</td>
<td>Construction of Knowledge: Thinking and Reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APL-5</strong>: Children are willing to try new &amp; challenging experiences</td>
<td>ESD-3: Children form relationships &amp; interact positively with familiar adults who are consistent &amp; responsive to their needs</td>
<td>HPD-6: Children develop awareness of their needs &amp; the ability to communicate their needs</td>
<td>LDC-1: Children understand communications from others</td>
<td>CD-2: Children recall information &amp; use it for new situations and problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APL-6</strong>: Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems</td>
<td>ESD-4: Children form relationships &amp; interact positively with other children</td>
<td>HPD-7: Children develop independence in caring for themselves &amp; their environment</td>
<td>LDC-2: Children participate in conversations with peers &amp; adults in one-on-one, small, &amp; larger group interactions</td>
<td>CD-3: Children demonstrate the ability to think about their own thinking: reasoning, taking perspectives, &amp; making decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESD-5</strong>: Children demonstrate the social &amp; behavioral skills needed to successfully participate in groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>LDC-3: Children ask &amp; answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attentiveness, Effort, &amp; Persistence</strong></td>
<td>Learning About Feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APL-9</strong>: Children persist at challenging activities</td>
<td>ESD-6: Children identify, manage, &amp; express their feelings</td>
<td>LDC-4: Children speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, &amp; ideas clearly</td>
<td>LDC-7: Children respond to and use a growing vocabulary</td>
<td>CD-8: Children identify &amp; demonstrate acceptance of similarities &amp; differences between themselves &amp; others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESD-7</strong>: Children recognize &amp; respond to the needs &amp; feelings of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Solving Problems With Your Child

Sometimes children have problems getting along with others or following our few, simple classroom rules. When this happens, we work with the child to figure out a solution. Most of the time this works well. Children learn that their teacher is on their side. And they learn an important skill—how to solve problems. You might want to try our Make a Plan method at home.

Get together. Put your child at ease. Choose a comfy space and a time when your child will feel open to sharing his or her ideas.
“I need your help solving a problem. Is this a good time for us to talk?”

Describe the problem. It’s important for you and your child to agree about what the problem is. You may need to work together to pinpoint the exact problem.
“What happened?”
“How did you feel when...?”

Brainstorm solutions. Have an honest discussion. Ask your child to suggest a few solutions and pick one to try.
“We need to make a plan so things go better later. What do you think we should do?”

Write it down. Write the plan on a piece of paper and read it aloud. Invite your child to add drawings or words. This helps a child feel like it really is his or her plan.
“I’ll write down your idea on this piece of paper. Do you want to decorate it for us?”

Revise the plan. Try it out! If the plan does not work the first time, revise it until you find something that works for both of you.
“Did it work today? It did? Hooray!”
“Our plan didn’t work! I guess we need to make a better plan!”

A message from your child’s teacher

Effective Teacher Practices for Providing Targeted Social Emotional Supports
NC Early Learning Network, a joint project of NC DPI and UNC-FPG, 2014
## Problem Solving Ideas

http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools#problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask Nicely</th>
<th>Be Flexible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Ask Nicely" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Be Flexible" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eeney Meeney Miney Mo</th>
<th>Flip a Coin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Eeney Meeney Miney Mo" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Flip a Coin" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Let’s Play Together</th>
<th>Make a New Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Let’s Play Together" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Make a New Choice" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving Ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One More Minute</strong></td>
<td><strong>Waiting 1 minute</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="96x503" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="372x503" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rock Paper Scissors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sand Timer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="135x272" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="386x309" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Set a Timer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Say “Maybe next time…”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="178x729" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="116x466" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving Ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Take a Break</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Image of children taking a break" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talk to a Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Image of a child talking to a teacher" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Image of children trading" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wait Patiently for a Turn</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Image of children waiting patiently" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problem Solving Ideas

- Ask Nicely
- Eeny Meeny Miney Mo
- Flip a Coin
- Playing Using Sand Timer
- Take a Break
- Talk to Teacher
Examine your daily schedule and decide when you will intentionally teach problem solving skills. Decide how you will teach problem solving in a developmentally appropriate way for your children. Write a lesson plan for teaching problem-solving skills. Include books, role play or puppets, etc. What visual supports will you use in your lesson plan to support children in the problem-solving process?

Make arrangements to meet with your co-teacher(s) if you have them and your supervisor to discuss your plans.

Return to your original count of teacher problem solving times and count how many times children can identify a solution other than coming to a teacher for help.
Module 10 – References and Resources


