
Problem Solving for Preschoolers

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the Rasmussen University article, “Problem Solving for Preschoolers: 9 Ways to Strengthen Their Skills,” written by Carrie Mesrobian. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Discuss effective strategies for facilitating preschoolers’ problem-solving skills at home and within the learning environment.
- ◆ Identify ways to promote children’s natural curiosities and interests and facilitate their problem-solving skills.
- ◆ Partner with families to support preschoolers’ problem-solving skills at home and within the learning environment.

Activity

- ◆ Read the article.
- ◆ Use the questions below to reflect on effective ways to support preschoolers’ problem-solving skills.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support preschoolers’ problem-solving skills.

Building problem-solving skills in preschool-age children is a foundational duty of all parents and early childhood educators.

Carrie Mesrobian

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ The article highlights nine ways to develop problem-solving skills in preschoolers. These include asking open-ended questions, reading books and telling stories, modeling problem-solving, and using practical, everyday moments. Reflect on your current practice.
 - What strategies do you use to develop children’s problem-solving skills?
 - What questions do you ask that encourage children to think deeply or persist in resolving a problem? In what ways does your use of questioning help children to problem-solve?
 - How do you model problem-solving as you participate in activities with children?
- ◆ How might you partner with families to share these strategies in ways that are practical and relatable? For example, engage in discussing how to model problem-solving as children assist with chores at home.
 - What are some concerns families might have about using these strategies (such as modeling problem-solving skills and asking open-ended questions)?
 - How might you address those concerns and encourage families to try these strategies as they interact with children during everyday moments at home?
- ◆ As mentioned in the article, taking advantage of children’s natural curiosities and interests is one way to promote problem-solving skills. The author added that, because the focus is centered on topics or activities that already capture the child’s interest, the problem-solving aspect is more meaningful and compelling for many children.
 - How can you collaborate with families to learn more about children’s interests and curiosities?
 - How can you be intentional about using this information to engage children in activities of interest and facilitate their problem-solving skills?
- ◆ Partner with families to plan a learning experience based on the children’s interest at your center. For example, plan an investigation of materials or a science experiment in which educators and families co-facilitate children’s problem-solving skills. Note that some family members may feel more comfortable observing as you model strategies while others may want to immediately participate and support children’s problem-solving skills.
 - How can you involve families in developing a learning experience based on children’s interests?
 - How will you encourage families to model problem-solving skills and engage in meaningful interactions with children during the experience?
 - Consider planning a follow-up discussion with families, to learn more about their experience and encourage them to engage in problem-solving opportunities with children at home.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about facilitating preschoolers' problem-solving skills:

- ◆ **Source:** NAEYC
 - ◆ **Article:** Mastery Motivation: Persistence and Problem Solving in Preschool
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/oct2017/mastery-motivation-persistence-and-problem>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article shares practical strategies for supporting preschoolers' problem-solving skills as well as their persistence at tasks. Use this article to share strategies for facilitating preschoolers' problem-solving skills with families.
-
- ◆ **Source:** CECE Early Childhood Videos at Eastern CT State U.
 - ◆ **Video:** Providing Opportunities for Problem Solving and Experimentation
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMIDf4ICVHw>
 - ◆ **Description:** In this video, an educator describes how she purposefully plans experiences to provide children with opportunities to experiment and solve problems. Consider supporting families by sharing this video or your own classroom videos like this one with them.
-
- ◆ **Source:** Scholastic
 - ◆ **Article:** How Your Child Learns to Problem-Solve
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/creativity-and-critical-thinking/learning-skills-for-kids/how-your-child-learns-to-problem-solve.html>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article describes how children learn problem-solving skills as well as strategies to promote children's ability to problem-solve. Use this resource to share with families how children develop problem-solving skills as they ask questions when experimenting and investigating materials.