

# Problem-Solving Party

## Description

Having effective skills and strategies for problem solving is essential in today's world. To add a bit of interest and challenge to learning problem-solving skills, teachers and students can make problem solving the theme for a party in the classroom. To make such a party successful requires much effort. A variety of problem-solving situations that can serve as the entertainment and the action for the party have to be created. Involving students in creating and/or selecting the problems based on what they have learned about a particular topic will motivate them to really look at the main ideas they have been studying and to look for real-world applications and ways to explain what they have learned to their classmates. Encourage students to first focus on the problem-solving situations and then tackle the normal party planning details of date, time, invitations, decorations, and treats. This activity can best be carried out by a small group or a small team.

## Planning

1. Brainstorm and research a number of problem-solving tasks that could be set up in learning stations around the room with one or more tasks assigned to each station. Each station should include clear directions for each problem-solving challenge and whatever resource materials are required to attack the problem presented. Consider providing an answer key for self-checking of accuracy. Remember to prepare a wide variety of problem-solving activities so that early finishers can complete another station. Sketch the floor plan for the learning stations and label each station with a brief list by title of the problem-solving tasks to be placed at each station.
2. Decide the better way to organize the stations:
  - a. One main topic could be the theme for all the problems.  
For example: if the topic is Medieval Times, you could have a math station, a language arts station, a science station, a social studies station, etc.
  - b. Each station could have a different topic (castles, jousting, war/peace, family life, social classes) with activities from each subject area at each one.
3. Examples of problem-solving activities:
  - Math: word or logic problems
  - Language arts: crosswords, word finders, sequence puzzles
  - Science: experiments, laboratory mysteries, model making
  - Social studies: maps, famous people riddles

4. Examples of skills:

Make a table, chart, or graph of the data provided.

Make an organized list.

Make an educated guess and then check references for accuracy.

Identify a pattern or hidden solution.

Draw a picture or diagram.

Work backward.

Work a simpler problem as a warm-up first.

Use logical reasoning and deduction.

Brainstorm ideas.

5. Prepare a detailed list of all aspects of the party that can be used as a checklist for marking off tasks as they are completed.
6. Select a date, time, and place for the party. Be sure to clear arrangements with everyone to be involved in the party or affected by it.
7. Decide on a color scheme and design invitations and decorations for the event around the theme or colors chosen. Think about incorporating some problem-solving symbols or graphics at the stations and around the room. Perhaps math, grammar, science, or social studies symbols could be used. Sketch the party invitation, decorations, and list the food to be served.
8. Design a simple survey that party guests can complete; have them give you feedback on the party theme and the problem-solving tasks.

## **Assessing**

1. Using the outline/checklist, lead a discussion with the participants on what worked and what could have gone better. Identify specific lessons learned.
2. Analyze the surveys completed by your guests. What did they like, and what did they think of the different activities?
3. Using the list of problem-solving tasks and the survey results, write your conclusions.

## **Technology Connection**

Take some movie clips or still photos during the party that highlight the concepts and lessons learned during the problem-solving party. Edit them and create a presentation that can be shared with parents, other classes, and the community via the school website.