

Dear Family,

We are starting a unit on **Problem Solving** with Harmony SEL, our social and emotional learning program. Throughout this unit, students will learn to resolve interpersonal conflict, develop cooperation skills, and practice self-regulation.

Identifying Problems and **Solving Problems** are skills that help children resolve day-to-day conflicts and lay the foundation for healthy behavior throughout their lives. In this unit, students will practice recognizing different perspectives and working together to find fair solutions. As a class, we will focus on the four steps of problem-solving:

1. **STOP** and calm down.
2. **TALK** to understand the problem.
3. **THINK** of possible solutions.
4. **TRY** a solution and see how it works for everyone.

Cooperating and **Being Considerate** both create opportunities for children to teach and learn from one another. By practicing teamwork skills and developing strategies for self-regulation, students will find compatible ways to collaborate while respecting each other's individuality.

An important part of this program is for students to continue discussing and practicing concepts outside the classroom. I'm hoping you can reinforce at home what we are learning in class. Ask your child about these concepts!

Thank you for your involvement. Please contact me if you have any questions about the Harmony program.

Sincerely,

Home-School Connections: Home Activities **Problem Solving Unit**

Your child is learning about **Problem Solving** with Harmony SEL, our social and emotional learning program. The ideas below will reinforce what we are learning in school—there are activities to play, topics to discuss, and behaviors to role-model. These are all designed to fit into your daily routine and provide opportunities to further connect with your child.

Identifying Problems

- Talk with your child about the first two steps to solving a problem (**Stop, Talk**).
- Encourage your child to use calming strategies when they are upset or overexcited.
 - *Strategies include taking deep breaths, counting slowly, thinking of something beautiful, hugging a stuffed animal.*
- Take opportunities when reading stories or watching television that involve a conflict or difference of opinion to guide your child in recognizing each person’s perspective and using words to label the problem. This gives students practice in developing empathy and identifying problems in situations in which they are not involved and possibly already feeling upset.
 - *She is angry because her baby brother tore up her homework, but he really likes to rip and crunch paper. It seems like the problem in this story is that when she leaves her homework on the table, her baby brother can get it and ruin it.*

Solving Problems

- Talk with your child about the last two steps to solving a problem (**Think, Try**).
- Ask your child what it means to compromise.
- Take opportunities, when reading stories or watching television that involve conflict or difference of opinion, to pause and ask your child to think of possible solutions to the problem. Guide your child in thinking about the consequences of these possibilities for each person involved.
 - *If they decided that the playground field should be for the kids who want to play soccer, those kids would be happy. But what about the kids who don’t play soccer and still want to have room to play other games? What would they do?*

Cooperating

- Ask your child what is important when working together.
 - *Including everyone, listening and cooperating, using kind words.*
- Talk with your child about the ways your family cooperates with one another, such as making dinner, washing the car, and putting together a puzzle, and discuss how much fun it can be to work together and how everyone helps to get the job completed.
- Tell your child when you notice him or her using teamwork skills and point out how it is helpful.
 - *I saw that you made sure to give your little sister a turn mixing the dough, too—she’s really excited to help; these cookies we’re making together are going to be delicious!*

Recognizing How Behaviors Affect Others

- Ask your child what it means to “make it work for everyone.”
 - *“Making it work for everyone” is a form of compromise so everyone’s happy.*
- Brainstorm with your child to create a special signal, such as palms facing up/down to indicate “turn it up” or “turn it down,” that provides a gentle reminder to adjust behavior as needed, and help him or her practice doing this.
- Role-play with your child that you are going to work on a project together. Discuss each of your preferences or styles of doing things, and brainstorm ways to compromise and work together:
 - Light on vs. off
 - Music on vs. off
 - Humming, singing, tapping vs. being quiet
 - Moving around vs. being still

An important part of this program is for students to continue discussing and practicing concepts outside the classroom. Thank you for your involvement in reinforcing at home what is being taught in class!