

Welcoming a newcomer



Critical Challenge

Critical task Choose the best way to assist with one of the difficulties faced by a newcomer to the class or the community.

Overview This challenge focuses on the difficulties experienced by newcomers to the school or community and the actions that students might undertake to help these individuals feel welcome. The emphasis is on helping students tailor their proposed solutions to the particular difficulties experienced by the newcomer. Students begin by matching cards describing familiar problem situations with a corresponding set of cards describing relevant solutions. They then recall their own experiences on the first day of school and listen to the story, *From Far Away* by Robert Munsch. Students compare their experiences with those of the immigrant child in this story. Students then list the newcomer's difficulties and list possible solutions for each problem. After developing and applying criteria, students generate three possible solutions and choose the best response to a fictional or actual challenge faced by a new student or neighbour. Finally, students role-play their welcoming action.

Objectives

Broad understanding In helping a newcomer to the classroom or community, it is important that the proposed solutions match the difficulties encountered by the person.

Requisite tools

Background knowledge

- knowledge of newcomer's difficulties



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for welcoming act (e.g., solves the newcomer's difficulties, is respectful of feelings, is realistic)



Critical thinking vocabulary

- problem and solution



Thinking strategies

- sorting
- T-chart



Habits of mind

- empathy



Suggested Activities

Preview story

Pre-planning

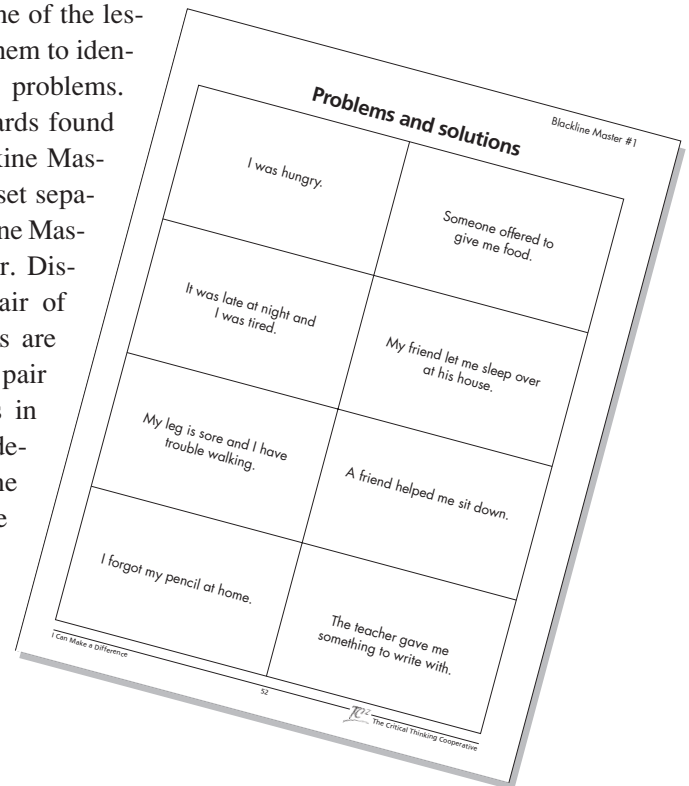
- In Session Two, we recommend using the story *From Far Away* by Robert Munsch to introduce the difficulties that newcomers face when adjusting to a new cultural setting (see References). This story is based on an actual seven-year-old girl's letters describing her early school experiences in Canada after moving from Lebanon. You may prefer to use a different book dealing with the difficulties encountered when children move to a new community or country. The book, *Franklin's New Friend* by Paulette Bourgeois, could also be used to introduce students to welcoming newcomers in the neighbourhood or the school (see References).

Distribute problem and solution cards

Session One

Blackline Masters #1-3

- Prior to introducing the main theme of the lesson, prepare students by inviting them to identify solutions that match various problems. Duplicate and cut out the eight cards found on *Problems and solutions* (Blackline Master #1). For ease in keeping each set separate, duplicate each copy of Blackline Master #1 on different coloured paper. Distribute a set of cards to each pair of students. Announce that the cards are mixed up and you would like each pair of students to organize the cards in some way that makes sense. If desired, read the cards aloud to the class or invite students to read the cards in small groups.



Share sorted categories

- After students have sorted their sets of cards, invite them to share what they have noticed. Draw out from the discussion that half of the cards describe problems and the other half describe corresponding solutions. If they haven't already done so, invite students to match the relevant solution to each problem. Ask students to describe what they know about the concepts of 'problem' and 'solution'. Record these ideas on a chart such as the one indicated on the next page.



sorting



problem and solution

Comparing problems and solutions

Problems . . .	Solutions . . .
• <i>need to be fixed</i>	• <i>are answers to a problem</i>
• <i>are things we don't like</i>	• <i>fix the problem</i>
• <i>happen all the time</i>	• <i>often come from someone else</i>
• <i>happen to everyone</i>	• <i>sometimes come from the person with the problem</i>

Practice matching problems and solutions

- Explain that a good problem solver is able to match the problem with a specific solution. Distribute a copy of *Matching problems with solutions* (Blackline Master #2) to each student or pair of students. Ask students to cut out the ten cards and sort the cards into two piles: problems and solutions. Before proceeding, confirm that students have five cards in each pile. Ask students to print in the small square in each box the letter “S” on the cards in the “solutions” pile and the letter “P” on the cards in the “problems” pile. Once the cards are identified, invite students to match each “problem” card with an appropriate “solution” card.

Blackline Master #2

Matching problems with solutions	
1 I am going to make two new best friends. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>	6 Today a new student came to our class and she seems to be very lonely. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>
2 My friends can't play the game with me because they don't know the rules. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>	7 Maybe some children in the class will help me get around. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>
3 I have a sore leg and can't walk very well. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>	8 I am going to ask other children in the class to play the game with me. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>
4 I am going to say hello to the person. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>	9 My best friend just moved away. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>
5 I am going to practice the game every day after school. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>	10 I always lose when I play games at recess. <div style="text-align: right; border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px; margin-left: auto;"></div>

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Paste matched pairs

- Distribute a copy of *Matched pairs* (Blackline Master #3) to each student or pair of students. Ask students to paste each matched pair of cards in one of the rectangular boxes, ensuring that the “problem” cards are on the left side and the “solutions” cards are on the right side. Review students’ answers, inviting them to explain why the matched solution is likely to solve the problem. The correct pairings are listed on the following page, although the ordering of these pairs will differ.

Blackline Master #3

Name(s): _____

Matched pairs	
Problems	Solutions

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Matched pairs

Problems		Solutions
#9	matches with	#1
#2	matches with	#8
#3	matches with	#7
#6	matches with	#4
#10	matches with	#5

Session Two

Recall students' own experiences

- Ask students to recall what it was like when they first came to school in kindergarten. Guide them in talking about their feelings of uncertainty about how to do things and what was expected of them (e.g., "What problems did you encounter?" "Did you know where you were supposed to go?" "Did you know what you were supposed to do?" "How did you feel?"). List the difficulties they encountered. Invite students to speculate what it would be like to go to school in another country where people did not speak their language and things were much different. Explain that you are about to read the true story of the experiences of a little girl named Saoussan who came to Canada from Lebanon. If you are not using *From Far Away*, introduce the story you have selected to read to the class.

Read and discuss story

- After reading the story, review with students what it was like for Saoussan in her new school. Ask students to suggest some of the things that happened that might have made Saoussan feel badly (e.g., couldn't understand what the teacher wanted, frightened by the Halloween skeleton, peeing on the teacher's lap). Record these in a column under the heading "Saoussan's problems." Invite students to comment on whether or not they think Saoussan's difficulties are very different from their own. Encourage students who have had similar experiences in moving to an unfamiliar setting to share the difficulties they faced. Help students appreciate that Saoussan did not understand many things about the culture in her new country and might have missed life in her own country. Help students to appreciate that she would have felt confused and alone.



empathy



knowledge of newcomer's difficulties

Brainstorm possible solutions

- Invite students to imagine that Saoussan moved to their school and had become a new class member. Ask students to suggest how they might help Saoussan overcome each of the identified difficulties. As shown on the following page, list students' suggested solutions in a column next to the list of problems. Accept all suggestions and encourage several possibilities for each problem.



T-chart

Helping Saoussan

Saoussan's problems	What we could do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>couldn't understand teacher</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>show her what to do</i> • <i>speak to her in her own language</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>couldn't talk with other children</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>smile and show her what to do</i> • <i>use a few words in her own language</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>was frightened by the Halloween skeleton</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>show her pictures of children in costume</i> • <i>take down the Halloween skeleton</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>being scared by the teacher jumping up and down</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>explain things to her in a quiet way</i> • <i>give her a hug</i>

Develop criteria

- Review the list of suggested solutions with students. Ask students to consider how they might decide which of the suggestions would be the best for each of Saoussan's difficulties. Ask students to think of the factors or criteria for deciding between the solutions. If necessary, offer additional obviously flawed suggestions (e.g., tell Saoussan to be quiet, send her home until she learns to behave) to help students generate criteria, such as the following:
- the solution solves the problem;
 - is something that students are able to do (is realistic);
 - respects her feelings.

After generating the criteria using the first few of Saoussan's problems, encourage students to consider the identified criteria in selecting the best solutions for the remaining problems. Alternatively, suggest a new problem not mentioned in the story (e.g., Saoussan has no books) and invite students to brainstorm possible solutions before selecting the option that best meets the agreed-upon criteria.



criteria for welcoming act

Session Three

Blackline Master #4

Introduce the newcomer scenario

- Using either a real situation, a story book or a hypothetical scenario, present to the class the predicament of a person who is new to the school or community. In the case of an actual newcomer to the school, introduce this discussion while the student is out of the classroom. If using a hypothetical scenario, develop a set of problematic circumstances as suggested by the following example:
- Kamik is eight years old. He has just moved here from a very small town in the far north of Canada. He is not used to living in a community with lots of other people and he misses his friends and the open spaces of his former home. The games he played at his former school are very different from the ones played at our school.

Present the critical challenge

- As a class, identify and make a list of the problems that the actual or fictional newcomer is encountering. Invite students to work individually or with a partner to address the critical challenge:

Choose the best way to assist with one of the difficulties faced by a newcomer to the class or the community.

Explain to students that they should think of three possible solutions to the problem they have identified. If students will need considerable assistance with this task, answer the critical challenge as a class or collectively brainstorm possible solutions for each of the identified problems. Distribute a copy of *Identifying solutions* (Blackline Master #4) to each student or pair of students. Direct them to identify on the top of the sheet the problem they have selected and to draw pictures of and label their three possible solutions. Encourage students to consult the class list of suggested solutions to Saoussan’s difficulties, since some of these ideas may apply to the new scenario. When students have identified and drawn the possible solutions, invite them to consider which of their three

The form is titled "Identifying solutions" and is labeled "Blackline Master #4" in the top right corner. It contains the following sections:
1. "Name(s):" followed by a blank line.
2. "The problem is:" followed by a large rectangular box for drawing and labeling.
3. "Possible solution #1:" followed by a horizontal line.
4. "Possible solution #2:" followed by a horizontal line.
5. "Possible solution #3:" followed by a horizontal line.
6. "The best response to the problem is # because" followed by a horizontal line.
7. At the bottom left, the text "I Can Make a Difference" is written.
8. At the bottom right, there is a logo for "The Critical Thinking Cooperative" with the number "35" above it.

options best meets the agreed-upon criteria. If students are uncertain, guide them in their analysis by posing questions about each option’s fulfillment of each criterion (e.g., Does the first possible solution respect the person’s feelings? help with the person’s problem?). When students have selected their best response, invite them to record its number in the box provided at the bottom of the page and to explain why this option is a good choice (i.e., why it meets the criteria for a welcoming act).

Role-play the solutions

- When everyone has completed Blackline Master #4, ask students in turn to pretend they are the newcomer to their classroom. Explain that the student who is acting as the newcomer does not know what to do in the classroom. Introduce the “newcomer” and identify one of this person’s difficulties. Ask students who addressed this particular problem to role-play a proposed solution. Encourage the “newcomer” to respond in role to the helping action. Invite students to consider how well each helping action meets the agreed-upon criteria. If this challenge involves an actual newcomer, decide as a class while the newcomer is away from the room which, if any, of the proposed actions will actually be implemented and by whom.

Assess decisions

- Assess student’s ability to recognize and select a solution to a newcomer’s problem using the rubric *Assessing problems and solutions* (Blackline Master #5). The sources of evidence and the four criteria for assessment are listed below:

- use the sorting of the cards found on *Problems and solutions* (Blackline Master #1) and *Matching problems and solutions* (Blackline Master #2) to assess student’s ability to distinguish problems from solutions;
- use the paired responses pasted on *Matched pairs* (Blackline Master #3) to assess student’s ability to recognize a relevant solution to a problem;
- use the responses recorded on *Identifying solutions* (Blackline Master #4) to assess student’s ability to propose multiple solutions and select a best solution.

		Assessing problems and solutions				
		Pre-recognition	Partial recognition	Basic understanding	Extended understanding	Sophisticated understanding
Name: _____	Distinguishes problem from solution	Does not understand what it means to identify something as a problem or a solution.	Understands what is being asked, but has difficulty consistently identifying even very simple examples of problems and solutions.	Correctly identifies simple examples of problems and solutions, but without any explanation.	Correctly identifies problems and solutions and offers a simple explanation of their difference.	Correctly identifies problems and solutions, and correctly states in one's own words the difference.
	Recognizes matching problems and solutions	Does not understand what it means to match a problem with its solution.	Understands what is being asked, but has difficulty consistently recognizing the matching problem and solution when given very simple examples.	Correctly recognizes the matching problem and solution when given very simple examples.	Correctly recognizes the matching problem and solution when given various examples.	Correctly recognizes the matching problem and solution when given less obvious examples.
	Proposes possible solutions	Cannot propose a solution when given a simple problem.	Proposes a solution that seems unrelated to the problem or is otherwise inappropriate.	Proposes a single predictable solution that matches a simple problem.	Proposes two or three obvious solutions that match a problem.	Provides two or more reasonable solutions even with less obvious problems.
	Chooses a best solution	Unable to choose a best solution to an identified problem.	Offers a best solution to an identified problem that is not appropriate.	Chooses a predictable best solution to an identified problem without any explanation.	Chooses a reasonable best solution to an identified problem and offers a simple explanation.	Chooses a reasonable best solution to an identified problem and explains why in light of the agreed-upon criteria.

Reaching the “basic understanding” level on the rubric may be appropriate for many primary students.

Extension

- When a suitable opportunity arises to welcome a newcomer to the classroom or neighbourhood, invite students to identify some of the problems that the person is likely to face and to suggest several possible solutions to each problem before selecting a solution to implement. Stress the importance of being respectful of the person’s feelings when deciding what help to offer.

References

Bourgeois, Paulette. (1990). *Franklin’s New Friend* (illustrated by Brenda Clark). Toronto: Kids Can Press. (ISBN 1-55074-363-5)

Munsch, Robert & Askar, Saoussan. (1995). *From Far Away* (illustrated by Michael Martchenko). Toronto: Firefly Books. (ISBN 1-55037-396-X)

Apply the lessons learned

Problems and solutions

<p>I was hungry.</p>	<p>Someone offered to give me food.</p>
<p>It was late at night and I was tired.</p>	<p>My friend let me sleep over at his house.</p>
<p>My leg is sore and I have trouble walking.</p>	<p>A friend helped me sit down.</p>
<p>I forgot my pencil at home.</p>	<p>The teacher gave me something to write with.</p>

Matching problems with solutions

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>I am going to make two new best friends.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>	<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>Today a new student came to our class and she seems to be very lonely.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>My friends can't play the game with me because they don't know the rules.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>	<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>Maybe some children in the class will help me get around.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>I have a sore leg and can't walk very well.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>	<p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>I am going to ask other children in the class to play the game with me.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>I am going to say hello to the person.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>	<p style="text-align: center;">9</p> <p>My best friend just moved away.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>I am going to practice the game every day after school.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>	<p style="text-align: center;">10</p> <p>I always lose when I play games at recess.</p> <div style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></div>

Matched pairs

Problems

Solutions

Identifying solutions

The problem is _____

Possible solution #1: _____

Possible solution #2: _____

Possible solution #3: _____

The best response to the problem is because _____

Assessing problems and solutions

	Pre-recognition	Partial recognition	Basic understanding	Extended understanding	Sophisticated understanding
Distinguishes problem from solution	Does not understand what it means to identify something as a problem or a solution.	Understands what is being asked, but has difficulty consistently identifying even very simple examples of problems and solutions.	Correctly identifies simple examples of problems and solutions, but without any explanation.	Correctly identifies problems and solutions and offers a simple explanation of their difference.	Correctly identifies problems and solutions, and correctly states in own words the difference.
Recognizes matching problems and solutions	Does not understand what it means to match a problem with its solution.	Understands what is being asked, but has difficulty consistently recognizing the matching problem and solution when given very simple examples.	Correctly recognizes the matching problem and solution when given very simple examples.	Correctly recognizes the matching problem and solution when given various examples.	Correctly recognizes the matching problem and solution when given less obvious examples.
Proposes possible solutions	Cannot propose a solution when given a simple problem.	Proposes solutions that seem unrelated to the problems or are otherwise inappropriate.	Proposes a single predictable solution that matches a simple problem.	Proposes two or three obvious solutions that match a problem.	Provides two or more reasonable solutions even with less obvious problems.
Chooses a best solution	Unable to choose a best solution to an identified problem.	Offers a solution to an identified problem that is not appropriate.	Chooses a predictable best solution to an identified problem without any explanation.	Chooses a reasonable best solution to an identified problem and offers a simple explanation.	Chooses a reasonable best solution to an identified problem and explains why in light of the agreed-upon criteria.

Comments: