Grade 6	Strand: Problem Solving

Lesson Title: **Weighing Our Options**

Problem Solving Competency

My partner and I can identify our needs and concerns.
We can identify options that we feel will work for us and work cooperatively toward a solution.

Social Competencies	Positive Identity
Peaceful Conflict Resolution Interpersonal Competence	Personal Power Self-esteem

What's it about?	Big Idea
Effective conflict resolvers use their creative and critical thinking skills to identify options and imagine possibilities for solutions that meet the needs of both partners.	The development of options that meet the needs of both partners is fundamental to effective problem solving.

Building on Prior Learning and Experience

In the previous grades, students practised using a problem solving process in combination with identifying, choosing and using tools for problem solving.

Getting started

Whole group

This section of the lesson focuses on the identification of options.

Activate students' thinking by sharing the following scenario or selecting an alternate one more relevant to the group.

> It's recess time. In the collection of outdoor play equipment, only one basketball remains. Two students rush to the ball and grab it at the same time. They start to argue and pull the ball back and forth between them. Other students get involved, and the noise level goes up. When the teacher asks about the problem, the students each respond that they had the ball first. The teacher is frustrated because so much of the equipment has been lost at recess, and there always seem to be arguments over the few items left. The teacher tells the class that because of so many disagreements, no one can take any play equipment out at recess for the rest of the week.

Invite students to share their reactions using a prompt such as:

Choose a word that names or describes the feeling that the two students, the teacher, and some other students in the class may be experiencing. Turn and talk to your elbow partner.

Provide students with additional information about the situation.

> One of the students really wanted the basketball, because it was an effective strategy for staying out of problem situations at recess. The other student loves basketball, plays at every recess, and has lost 2 of the class basketballs, by throwing them on the roof during a game of keep away.

Invite students to consider their reactions to the additional information.

How might this additional information affect the way you see the situation?

How might the teacher's approach to solving the problem create even more problems?

Invite students to share their thinking with an elbow partner.

Activate discussion using questions such as:

How did the teacher's approach for solving the problem address the needs of the students involved in the disagreement?

What effect might the teacher's decision have on the other students in the class?

What might it be dangerous to think of options for solving a problem without keeping in mind the needs and concerns of the people involved?

Note: Take a Break

This lesson can be addressed over two days as time constraints and learners' attention span dictate.

This may be an appropriate spot to summarize learning and continue with the remaining activities at a later time. The scenario from the Getting Started segment of the lesson could be revisited briefly to ensure a smooth transition into the second part of the lesson.

Working on it

Whole group

The focus for this section of the lesson is creating and analyzing options.

Option 1

Introduce the following task to students using a prompt such as:

You will work in small groups to create and perform a scene that shows an alternative solution to the scenario about the playground equipment. You will begin by developing a number of options. You
will then analyze your options to determine how they meet the needs and concerns of the partners and any other people who may be involved in or affected by the situation.

Activate students' thinking by posing questions such as:

Whose needs were met by the teacher's solution to the problem with the playground equipment? How/when did the students involved give up their power to create options and work together toward a solution?

What will we need to consider when creating options that allow the students to remain in charge of managing the situation and working toward a solution?

Briefly discuss some of the responses.

Activate students' thinking using a prompt such as:

Before we begin to work on our scenes, let's develop a short checklist to help us determine which options might be most effective.

Work with students to develop a list of criteria, statements or questions that will assist them in analyzing the effectiveness of options.

If students struggle to generate ideas for the checklist, the following statements/questions can be used to support their thinking.

Think about each of the partners in the conflict and imagine yourself in their situation.

What anxieties, needs, or difficulties might need to be considered?

How does the option meet the needs of both partners?

Is the option a reasonable possibility?

What might happen if the partners cannot find an effective solution?

Allow time to generate ideas for criteria and address questions about the task.

Small group

Students will work together to develop and analyze options for resolving the problem.

Teachers circulate to ensure that groups have considered the criteria and are ready to perform or explain their preferred option.

Option 2

Note: If Option 1 is too challenging for a group of students, a set of prepared options can be used as an alternate approach or as a scaffold to Option 1.

The *So, What Else Could We Have Done?* resource provides a variety of options addressing a range of criteria for effective solutions.

Responding: Talk About it, Write about it, Represent it

Whole group

Option 1 Students perform/explain their scenarios.

Option 2 Students recall a problem they faced in the past and use the criteria to develop a more satisfactory solution.

Sharing

Whole group

Option 1   Students observe the scenes or listen to the explanations to identify the solution and criteria that have been addressed.
The checklist can be revised to reflect new thinking coming from the activity.

Option 2   Volunteers share their new and improved solutions.

Revisiting

- naturally occurring situations where there is an opportunity to use the criteria proactively to build effective solutions
- classroom meetings
- identifying and analyzing options for win-win situation opportunities in the media or in fiction
- identifying situations where people involved in conflict give up their power to manage a problem and turn it over to someone else
(e.g., small claims court, parental decision etc.)

Feedback about the learning

How might what we learned about today be helpful to you?
What would you like to find out?

Resources you may need:	**Suggested links to the Ontario curriculum** *This lesson will directly support learning in the following areas of the Ontario curriculum.*
- A method to make questions visible for student reference *So, What Else Could We Have Done?* Resource for Option 2	**Health and Physical Education** Living Skills Strand– Personal Skills, Interpersonal Skills and Critical & Creative Thinking Skills **Healthy Living Strand** – Personal Safety and Injury Prevention *This lesson will provide a context for learners to* *apply, practise and/or consolidate learning from other areas of the curriculum.* **Language** Oral Communication Strand – Listening to Understand, Speaking to Communicate **Arts** Drama Strand – Creating and Presenting, Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing

Suggested links to Learning Skills and Work Habits

Responsibility

Sample Behaviour: takes responsibility for and manages own behaviour.

Collaboration

Sample Behaviours: responds positively to the ideas, opinions, values, and traditions of others; works with others to resolve conflicts and build consensus to achieve group goals; shares information, resources, and expertise and promotes critical thinking to solve problems and make decisions.

Initiative

Sample Behaviour: recognizes and advocates appropriately for the rights of self and others.

Self-regulation

Sample Behaviour: assesses and reflects critically on own strengths, needs and interests.