

Snapping Ideas Together

Use this tool to help children problem-solve on their own with little or no adult guidance.

Step 1

This tool can be used spontaneously or as part of a planned interaction. When you notice two or more children in conflict over different ideas about what to play or make, where to go, what roles to adopt in a game or story, or who will do what job, start by saying what you see, e.g., "One of you has an idea to do/be ____ and the other one has an idea to do/be ____."

Step 2

Encourage problem-solving by asking questions such as, "How might you snap these ideas together?" "Could you find a way to snap these ideas together?" "What would happen if you snapped these ideas together?"

Step 3

Listen to what the children say. If they seem stuck, turn or ask the children to turn to the peers around them for suggestions, e.g., ask a nearby peer, "Do you have an idea for how these ideas could be snapped together?"

Step 4

Reflect back to children what you notice in the moment. Ask them to reflect on their process, e.g., "I noticed Eva had an idea to ____ and Iliana had a different idea. You snapped those ideas together! What were you telling your brain as you figured that out?"

Step 5: Optional

During a whole group reflection meeting, you might ask the entire group to consider if they encountered a moment when they had a different idea from someone they were working with. Ask them to reflect on what they did when that happened. You might focus the conversation on developing empathy ("Who has experienced something similar?") or problem-solving ("What is another strategy you could try?").

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Children can solve problems on their own.

Children sometimes find themselves in conflict with a peer or group of peers who have different ideas about what to do, play, or make. *Snapping Ideas Together* is a classroom practice that helps students see themselves as problem-solvers, capable of imagining new possibilities, collaborating, listening to the needs of others, and coming up with novel solutions. The goal of the teacher is NOT to solve the children's problems for them, but to offer suggestions like "snapping ideas together" to validate the different ideas that emerge within any group, and to support children as they navigate making decisions together. *Snapping Ideas Together* conveys the message that problems will arise in any group, that they can be figured out together, and that you are not your idea. It communicates that each person is seen and valued and, together, you will find a way for everyone to get what they need.



Suggested Time Frame

Approximately 5-15 minutes

When and How

Use this tool when you want to encourage children to solve problems on their own. Over time, children will be able to suggest to each other, "Let's snap these ideas together" without your involvement, or you will be able to say to children, "Why don't you try snapping these ideas together and let me know how it goes?"

Tips and Variations

Before snapping ideas together, children need to understand what the other child is suggesting or offering. Often people disagree because they haven't really listened in order to understand one another. Teachers can support children to do this by asking questions such as:

- "Did you hear ____?"
- "Did you notice when ____?"
- "I see how ____ is _____. I wonder what _____ is doing?"
- "Could you ask ____ about their plan?"
- "Do you see ways your ideas might connect?"
- "What's your intention?"
- "I heard you say _____. Did you hear what _____ said?"
- "Could you share your idea with _____?"

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