



# Seeing Problems as Opportunities

Valuing and Applying Rationality



ALLIANCE FOR  
DECISION  
EDUCATION

## Grade Level

3rd-5th

## Suggested Timing

45 minutes

## Focus Standard

VAR.1 – Embrace decisions as opportunities

## Resources

*What Do You Do With a Problem?*  
by Kobi Yamada

## Impact

When students view decisions as opportunities, rather than as problems to solve, they are better able to exercise agency over the decisions in their lives, and can tackle decisions proactively, rather than reactively. This lesson introduces young people to the idea that sometimes a decision may hold possibilities that they hadn't considered.

## Objectives

- Students will identify big and small decisions they make in their lives in and out of school and how those decisions make them feel.
- Students will identify how a problem may really be an opportunity in disguise.

## Optional Teaching Strategies

- Extend this lesson by asking students to discuss their learning with an adult at home. They could ask the adult about a “problem” they faced in the past and what opportunities were hidden inside.

## Differentiation

- Sometimes, confident students struggle with a closed mindset as they reflect on the past. Bringing together students with different strengths could challenge students to practice active open-mindedness.

## What To Look and Listen For

- Can students identify at least one opportunity hidden inside a past decision or problem?
- Are students using positive, proactive language regarding decision-making in their writing?

## Engage (15 minutes)

Partner your students to discuss a decision or problem they've faced.

### Suggested Prompt:

Think about a challenging decision you remember having to make or a problem you had to solve. Maybe it was related to school, your friends or family, a club or activity you do outside of school, or something else. What was the decision? How did the decision or problem make you feel?

Read *What Do You Do With a Problem?* by Kobi Yamada and lead a brief discussion about the problem the character faces and how the child responds.

### Suggested Prompts & Questions:

- **Pre-Reading:** Today we will be reading a story about a child who suddenly has a big problem to face. The problem feels scary so he tries to avoid it. As we read, we will see how sometimes having a problem to solve can be an opportunity to learn, do, or experience something new.
- **Post-Reading:** Why do you think the problem might feel scary to the child? What happens to the problem when the child ignores it? What might it mean when we say a problem can hold an opportunity? What is an opportunity?

## Apply (20 minutes)

Help your students apply the story to their own lives by discussing some examples of "problems" and brainstorming what opportunities might be inside them.

### Examples:

#### Problem

- Oh no! A big project is due at the end of the week and you haven't started yet.
- If you could go back to that decision or problem, what would you do differently?

#### Opportunities

- You could set up a system for managing your time over the week. That will help you with future projects, too!
- What other opportunities can you think of? You could ask your teacher or another adult for support. Knowing how and when to ask for help is an important skill that even lots of adults are still working on.

Assign your students partners or small groups to find the opportunities inside the decisions or problems they shared with their partner during *Engage*.

### Suggested Questions:

- Why did this situation feel like a problem instead of an opportunity?
- What opportunities might have been hidden inside?
- If you could go back to that decision or problem, what would you do differently?

## Reflect (10 minutes)

Bring students together to reflect on their discussions by sharing:

- An "aha" (something I learned)
- A "wow!" (something that surprised me)
- A "hmmmm" (something I'm wondering about)

Close the lesson by asking students to share advice with their future selves when they are faced with a problem. You could record their responses on chart paper, have students write themselves letters, or create *Decisions as Opportunity* "bumper stickers" with the students' words of wisdom to serve as future reminders.