**Creative Problem Solving Process Overview**

A Practical Experience for Solving Real Life/School Problems

*by Marion Sebastian*

SENSING PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES -The fuzzy situation or mess. What is the situation that needs improvement?

**STEP 1:** FACT FINDING OR BRAINSTORMING POSSIBLE PROBLEMS: *Use these brainstorming rules*:

**1.**  Think of as many ideas as possible. (The more ideas produced, the more likely useful, original ideas will occur.)

**2.** Criticism is not allowed. (Since creative thinking and evaluative thinking do not occur effectively at the same time, do not allow discussion or criticism at this time.)

**3.** Free-wheeling and wild ideas are welcome. (Silly, off-beat ideas may trigger a great idea which might not occur otherwise.)

**4.** Combination and improvement are wanted. (Group members may hitchhike on the ideas of others by expanding the idea or adding several ideas together in a new way.)

Using the above rules for eliciting responses, what are the pertinent facts that we know about this problem situation which could cause problems? "There may be a problem of..... . As a result......"

**STEP 2:** PROBLEM FINDING: IDENTIFY AN IMPORTANT UNDERLYING PROBLEM- Choose an important problem, which if solved, might solve many of the other problems and would have a positive impact on the situation. SAMPLE FORM FOR PROBLEM QUESTION TO BE SOLVED:

BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_(what evidence do you have that this is a problem)\_\_\_,how might we (or begin -"In what ways might we") \_*(do what)*\_\_\_\_(fill in the blank with a positive, action verb) so that *\_\_\_(Give purpose or why the action needs to happen.)*

*EXAMPLE QUESTION*:Because the class is put on silent lunch so often, in what ways might we reduce the noise from our class in the cafeteria, so that we can have social time instead of quiet lunch? (Other class topics to consider: too much paper on the floor, pencils get lost, etc.)

**STEP 3:** IDEA FINDING: BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS to that one problem stated in step 2. Follow the brainstorming rules in step 1. Try many points of view. What are other organizations or groups who might help solve the problem?

**STEP 4:** SOLUTION FINDING: SELECT CRITERIA to help evaluate the most promising solutions, after you narrow the number of solutions to your best ones. Each criterion (question) should relate directly to your step 2 problem. Use a ranking word in your 4 or 5 questions

*Examples of criteria questions for "having silent lunch so often" might be*

1. Which solution will have the most long lasting effect?

2. Which solution will appeal to the most members of the class?

3. Which solution will be the most acceptable to the teacher?

4. Which solution will most likely help students still enjoy lunch?

**STEP 5:** EVALUATE THE SOLUTIONS by rank ordering them according to each criterion.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Example of solution | Question # 1 | ? # 2 | ? # 3 | *?# 4* | TOTAL |
| 1. Teacher reward whispering students | 2 | 4 | 1 |  |  |
| 2. Student monitor to report to punish | 1 | 1 |  | 1 |  |
| 3. Cafeteria monitor has warning system | 3 |  | 4 |  |  |
| 4. Each talk with only 3 others at table | 4 |  |  | 4 |  |

*Highest number = best solution Lowest number (1) = worst solution for that ?*

**STEP 6:** ACCEPTANCE FINDING: PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE BEST SOLUTION -Elaborate the best solution (the one with the highest total) by preparing a plan to put the ideas to work.

Figure out how to sell the idea...what needs to be done and how to do it...how to overcome obstacles.