

Conflict Management: Creating Partnerships for Finding Solution



Conflicts often occur when parents and school staff are searching for ways to resolve problems that a student is having in school and/or out of school. It is important for school staff to develop skills in conflict management as well as a problem solving process that families, parent leaders, and school staff can use. The process should provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the process – whom should teachers and/or parents contact if there is a problem that they are concerned about? Where do they go next if the problem is not settled?
- How can families and school staff work together to define the problem and identify solutions to ensure that students' rights, opinions, and needs are respected?
- How can the school staff provide families with strategies and resources to help their children?
- Are school staff, students, and families aware of the school violence prevention policies and programs?
- How can school staff and parent leaders reach out to hard-to-reach families as well as work together with families who are more active in the school to meet needs such as recruiting volunteers, organizing after-school and tutoring programs, grant writers for funding projects, website and newsletter tasks, and other areas?

Putting It All Together

1. **Define the problem in terms of needs.** The student needs, the family needs, and the school needs. Thanking a parent for coming to you as a concerned parent communicates understanding and acceptance. Defining a problem by expressing your needs allows for positive resolutions. In a calm and respectful tone, calm an angry parent by acknowledging their concern with reflective listening phrases such as: "You seem upset about this issue." I can see that you are very concerned about your child."
2. **Brainstorm and record possible solutions.** Think outside the box and resist making judgmental statements such as "That will never work." Expand on each other's ideas; some of the best ideas come from adding to or going beyond ideas that have been contributed. Use phrases

such as: “So from your point of view, it seems that...”, “I want to be sure that I heard you right.”, “So what you’re saying is...”.

Select a Solution(s) that meets the needs of all parties involved. The following guidelines can be helpful in evaluating what proposed solutions will be selected:

- Clarifying what each solution is actually proposing.
 - Expressing which solutions look best for the student.
 - Exploring which solutions coincide.
 - Jointly deciding on one or more solutions.
3. **Plan who will do what, when and where.** Write out the agreement that has been reached by both parties. Include details of who is responsible for completing what tasks, where the task is to be performed, and when it is to be completed.
 4. **Implement the Plan.** Ensure that the plan is being implemented on schedule.
 5. **Assess how well the solution is working** and make modification as needed. Building trust and respect requires ongoing two-way communication.

Additional Resources:

Parents and Teachers: Turning Conflicts Into Partnerships

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/parent-teacher-conflicts-into-partnerships-mark-phillips>

Packed with tips from principals and teachers, checklists, and an invaluable resource section, **Beyond the Bake Sale** reveals how to build strong collaborative relationships and offers practical advice for improving interactions between parents and teachers, from insuring that PTA groups are constructive and inclusive to navigating the complex issues surrounding diversity in the classroom.