

Procedure Title: Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedure

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Procedure: CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE FOR EMPLOYEES AND PARENTS

Conflict inevitably arises between individuals and groups. It can present an opportunity for growth and change. Conflict itself is not unhealthy, but when conflict is not resolved, it undermines healthy working relationships. Please take time to work through conflict towards resolution. If you or someone you know is in conflict, we encourage you to take the following steps.

1. When you feel you are in conflict with another person or group—approach that person or group first and seek resolution. *When meeting with a group, you may wish to take a support person with you. Written records will be kept of all meetings that go beyond the immediate parties involved.*
 - a. **If the conflict involves a classroom situation, a difficulty with a teacher, or other pedagogical issues, you should speak with the teacher concerned.**
 - i. If you do not feel there is resolution, then you should take the issue to the Grades or EC Chairperson, either in writing or in person.
 - ii. If you still do not feel there is resolution, then you should take the issue to the Faculty Chairperson, either in writing or in person.
 - iii. If you still do not feel there is resolution, then you should take the issue to the College of Teachers, either in writing or in person.
 - iv. If, after meeting with the College of Teachers, you are still not able to feel resolution, then you should write a letter to the Conflict Resolution Group, describing the situation and indicating possible actions that might help you resolve the conflict.
 - b. **If the conflict involves a financial situation, a difficulty with a staff member, or other administrative issues, you should speak with the staff person involved.**
 - i. If you do not feel there is resolution, you should take the issue to the Administrator, either in writing or in person.
 - ii. If, after meeting with the Administrator, you are still not able to feel resolution, then you should write a letter to the Conflict Resolution Group, describing the situation and indicating possible actions that might help you resolve the conflict.
 - c. **If the conflict involves issues that you have with a group within the school, you should meet with the group.** You may wish to seek a support person to go with you.

- i. If you do not feel there is resolution, you should take the issue to the College of Teachers or the Administrator or the Board (depending on the group involved).
 - ii. If, after this meeting, you are still not able to feel resolution, then you should write a letter to the Conflict Resolution Group, describing the situation and indicating possible actions that might help you resolve the conflict.
2. *Guidelines for writing a letter to the conflict resolution group*
 - a. *State the problem or conflict clearly.*
 - b. *Provide specific examples that support what you are trying to say, including dates and names of those involved, if applicable.*
 - c. *Remember to keep the tone of your letter respectful of all parties involved.*
 - d. *Deliver the letter to school addressed to the Conflict Resolution Group. We ask that email not be used to convey an issue you wish resolved.*
3. *The Conflict Resolution Group meeting*
 - a. This group will be composed of five members: the Administrator, a College of Teachers representative, a Human Resource (non Faculty) Committee representative, a Parent Association officer and a Board representative; all agree to work with the practices of Social Inclusion when appropriate. It is the responsibility of Conflict Resolution members to educate themselves in the practice of Social Inclusion. Individuals wishing to serve in this capacity are those that are good listeners, can remain neutral and provide concise feedback orally and in written form.
 - b. This group will meet on an as-needed basis to discuss any letter given to it regarding conflict issues within the school. All members will be informed of a pending meeting, and any four members of the group are considered sufficient for a meeting. The group will review the letter and gather any further information needed from all parties involved.
 - c. This group may arrange a meeting between the individuals involved in the conflict and two Conflict Resolution members as a way to further understand the issue.
 - d. A timely, written response will be given to the person who wrote the letter as well as to all other parties involved.
 - e. Recommendations from this group may include, but not be limited to, formal mediation, possible school policy changes, personnel recommendations, or written agreements between the parties involved.
 - f. The issue may be brought to other groups within the school. General, organizational themes will be presented, but not confidential information, such as personal information regarding employees of the school or other individuals involved in the conflict.
4. *There may be times when someone will want to write a letter to the school and forgo the other steps in this process. These letters will go directly to the Conflict Resolution Group for a response.*

In all cases, we will try to resolve our conflicts using the Steps to Positive Communication outlined below.

Steps to Positive Communication

Positive, direct communication helps solve problems and builds honest, respectful relationships between people. The following suggestions may help in promoting better communication when talking to others about differences or trying to resolve conflict:

1. **TALK DIRECTLY.** Assuming that there is no threat of violence, talk directly to the person with whom you have the problem. Direct conversation is much more effective than sending a letter, banging on the wall, throwing a rock, or complaining to everyone else.
2. **CHOOSE A GOOD TIME.** Plan a time when the other party is available and there is enough time to talk without interruption. Do not try to talk about a conflict just as the other is leaving for work, after you have had a terrible day, or in front of other people. Do not try to talk with teachers right before a class. Try to talk in a quiet place where both are comfortable and you can be undisturbed for as long as the discussion takes.
3. **PLAN AHEAD.** Think ahead about what you want to say and what you would like to have happen. If it helps, make notes for yourself about what points you would like to make. State clearly what the problem is and how it affects you. Have an open mind about the outcome, but be clear about your thoughts and feelings.
4. **DON'T BLAME OR CALL NAMES.** Try not to put blame for the problem on the other person. Antagonizing by calling names only makes it harder for the person to hear you. Keep the discussion respectful and work toward each taking responsibility for their part in the problem.
5. **GIVE INFORMATION.** Help the other person to understand your experience with the problem and what you see happening. Talk from your viewpoint rather than interpreting their behavior. "You are making noise on purpose to get back at me!" is not as effective as "When you make noise late at night, I can't sleep."
6. **LISTEN.** Relax and do your best to listen to the other. Try to focus on what is being said rather than on what you will say next. Both people should have a chance to be heard. Talk one at a time and give the other a chance to tell his/her story completely. Try to hear not only what the person *thinks* but also what they *feel* about the situation.
7. **LET THE OTHER KNOW YOU ARE LISTENING.** Although you may not agree with what is being said, it is important to show respect for others' opinions, ideas and feelings. If you do not understand what they are saying, ask questions. Repeat the main points back to them to make sure you are hearing them correctly.
8. **TALK IT ALL THROUGH.** Once you begin to discuss the issues, try to get all the information and feelings out in the open. Include even the most "difficult" issues and

those that might seem "insignificant." Agreements between people work best when all issues are discussed openly so that any solution resolves the matter completely.

9. **FIX THE PROBLEM, NOT THE BLAME.** After each person has had a chance to talk about their concerns, work on resolving the issues together. Work on a solution that best meets everyone's needs. Two or more people cooperating on a solution is more effective than one person asking the other to change. Be as specific as possible. "I will turn my music off at midnight" is better than a vague "I won't play loud music anymore."

10. **FOLLOW THROUGH.** Talk about what it means to keep the agreement and what will happen if one person does not follow through with the decision. Agree to check with each other about whether the agreement is working to resolve the matter. *Change does not occur overnight.* Show the other person that you are willing to keep your end of the bargain and give them a chance to do the same. Agree on a realistic timeframe and talk in the future to see if any changes to the agreement are necessary.

Adapted from "How to Resolve Conflicts" from Community Boards of San Francisco, CA.