

## Conflict Resolution Protocols

Use the following protocols to handle concerns before they turn into conflicts. Follow the protocols until an answer or resolution to a problem or concern has been reached.

**Protocol 1. Contact the person(s) involved in the concern or complaint in order to discuss the issue.** For example, if a parent or guardian has a concern with a teacher, the first communication should be with the teacher. If the concern is with a principal, a parent or guardian should first request an appointment to meet with the principal.

- Air and discuss the concern.
- Hold the meeting within five days of the incident or issue that raised the concern.
- Limit the meeting to a discussion of the concern and its possible resolutions.
- Make the meeting time convenient for both parties.
- Keep the meeting room's door open or have at least two or more persons (one school staff member and one parent) witness the discussion.
- Maintain respect on both sides throughout the discussion.
- If closure of the issue was not reached, or if a parent or guardian is not satisfied with the results, then create a written summary of the meeting. Have the person's supervisor to review this summary.
- Use the meeting to bring closure to the concern.

**Protocol 2. Search for a neutral person.** If a first meeting does not resolve a dispute, then invite a neutral person not involved in the dispute who will:

- Review the conflict related to the person or persons who have been involved in the discussion.
- Consult with the parent or guardian.
- Investigate the circumstances surrounding the dispute.
- Prepare decisions on solutions to the issue or issues leading to the dispute.
- Organize a meeting of all parties involved in the dispute and use [Robert's Rules of Order](#) to manage the meeting.
- Have each party suggest possible resolutions to the dispute (and add pre-prepared resolutions, if needed).
- Establish a two-way communication with final decisions related to the dispute between the parties involved in it.

**Use conflict resolution strategies.** Remember that the objective is to resolve a dispute through meaningful communication.

- **Respect**
  - Maintain respect at all times while communicating one's feelings.
  - Accept and respect individual opinions, even if they differ from one's own opinions.
  - Do not look at the situation as a competition or as a power play where one side must win and the other side must lose.
  - Do not jump to conclusions or make assumptions about the feelings or thoughts of others involved in the dispute.
  - Listen carefully without interrupting.
  - Allow time for the other party to speak about the issue when that party has the floor.
  - Thank the other person for listening.
  
- **Two-Way Communication**
  - Communicate the issue and one's feelings assertively, but not aggressively.
  - Focus on the issue, not on one's position about the issue.
  - Listen carefully without interrupting.
  - Allow time for the other party to speak about the issue when that party has the floor.
  - Ask for feedback if it is needed to ensure a clear understanding of the issue.
  
- **Other Strategies**
  - If either side is angry, allow some time for both sides to cool off, then, return to the situation.
  - Focus on resolving the issue that led to the dispute, not on attacking the other person, nor focusing on past or future events
  - Work on developing a shared agreement despite differences of opinion and a solution where both sides can have some of their needs met.
  - Focus on areas of agreement, not on areas of disagreement.
  - Ask for feedback if it is needed to ensure a clear understanding of the issue.
  - Remember that a conflict is resolved only when both parties are in agreement or have their needs satisfied.
  - Smile and thank the other person when an agreement has been reached or when the needs of both parties have been satisfied.

**If a dispute is still unresolved**, a parent or guardian may contact:

- Houston Independent School District's Parent and Community Assistance Office at 713-556-7121 or at [ParentAssistance@houstonisd.org](mailto:ParentAssistance@houstonisd.org)
- Harris County Dispute Resolution Center (to request a mediator) at 713-755-8274 or at <http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/drc>
  - The Harris County Dispute Resolution Center requires 10 days in advance to send a mediator, the service is free of charge, and scheduling can be done online or by phone.

- It is recommended to have the circumstances of the dispute in writing on the day the service is provided.

Some common parent organization-related conflicts are:

- The new principal and the parents have not been able to schedule time to meet together.
- The previous and/or present organization has issues concerning loss of funds, a need of funds to pay for the organization's legal status, some bank accounts being inconsistent with the treasurer's balances, and so on.
- Previous officers of the parent organization do not want to release the organization to new officers and want to use their knowledge as a way to take control of all actions of the organization.
- Disputes arise between or among different religious groups, gender groups, sexual preference groups, racial groups, or age groups.
- Communication issues arise among different groups due to differences in language backgrounds or differences in levels of fluency in English or other languages.

#### Sources:

- Dispute Resolution Center  
<http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/drc>
- HISD Parent and Community Assistance Office, How to Address a Campus Concern  
<http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/71006>
- Procedures for Conflict Resolution  
[http://www.scs.sk.ca/human\\_resources/documents/CONFLICTRESOLUTION-PROTOCOL.pdf](http://www.scs.sk.ca/human_resources/documents/CONFLICTRESOLUTION-PROTOCOL.pdf)
- Steps in Resolution of Conflict  
<http://www.dgf.k12.mn.us/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=5630&>
- Ten Strategies for Conflict Resolution  
[http://www.citizensnyc.org/sites/default/files/public-attachments/workshop/conflict\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.citizensnyc.org/sites/default/files/public-attachments/workshop/conflict_resolution.pdf)

**Simplified Conflict Resolution Steps**

