

### Learning Guide – Resolving Differences Through Collaboration

This learning guide is designed for use by Professional Learning Communities, instructional/learning coaches, teacher-leaders or as a self-paced study to enhance and support instruction, conversation and critical reflection about creating inclusive learning environments. The conversation guide is intended to be used after viewing the video clip entitled Resolving Differences through Collaboration on this website.



Alberta **Regional** Consortia

#### General Synopsis

[Inclusive schools](#) recognize the importance of welcoming and embracing the involvement of parents in their children's education. Conflict is inevitable and can actually be beneficial. It can lead to brainstorming creative strategies and a better understanding of individuals and their strengths. This video portrays a scenario where parents and school staff are able to communicate about a challenging issue faced by a student, and collaborate to come up with a mutually beneficial solution.

#### Key Understandings

- Conflict develops when people interact and perceive incompatible differences or threats to their resources, needs or values.
- Differences of opinion, or even conflict, are not in themselves a problem. What *is* important is how the conflict is handled when it arises, in order to avoid collateral damage.
- It has been suggested that up to 90% of parent-teacher conflict is due to differing views of a child, or of a child's needs. An important skill to learn is how to narrow this gap in perceptions.
- Good partnerships are a result of good communication and withstand questions, conflicts, debates, and disagreements; provide structures and processes to solve problems and are strengthened when differences have been resolved.
- When working through a parental disagreement listen for concerns and, discuss the issue confidentially with someone. Seek advice from your school administrators. If appropriate, recognize if you made mistakes apologize and try to correct. When it is over, move forward, forgiving yourself and others and using the lessons learned to improve your teaching.
- Share knowledge and [seek collaborative solutions](#) and practices. Resolving differences involves creating an environment that shares knowledge, supports cooperation, communicates, tolerates, provides positive emotional expression and conflict resolution. Collaborative solutions and practices bring out the value of diversity and diverse perspectives as we learn from each other.

For further information on this topic, please see *Support for Implementation Tip Sheet: Resolving Differences Through Collaboration*.

### Continuing the Conversation: Questions for Discussion

1. How did you feel about the situation portrayed in this video clip?
2. Think of a time when a challenging situation/potential conflict arose in your work environment. What did you do to diffuse it? Think about how easily these types of situations can become “stuck” or stalemated, and consider how you would use the key understandings as a means of getting “unstuck. Looking back, what would you/could you have done differently?
3. Consider the statement. *Differences of opinion, or even conflict, are not in themselves a problem. What is important is how the conflict is handled when it arises...*, Considering skills such as communication, listening and knowledge sharing with the purpose of coming to a collaborative solution. Discuss examples of how you/your school currently demonstrate those skills, and/or what you could do to build on them that support collaboration.
4. This video also deals with the theme of collaborating for smooth transitions. In the video clip, the beginning teacher wanted to set a certain tone and get the year off to a good start for all his students, unaware of how his approach would affect his student with high anxiety. Had he come to you seeking help prior to the beginning of the school year, how would you have advised him to prevent the conflict as demonstrated in the video?



*Collaborative Practices* is a term used by Alberta Education to describe many different activities that support a culture in which children and youth are equipped to overcome challenges and experience success in school. The success is apparent when schools, school authorities and their partners work together to provide supports and services in a way that is timely, culturally sensitive and responsive.

Based on an extensive literature review, a provincial research project, and input from teachers, administrators, parents, youth and other education stakeholders, eleven wraparound principles were identified that reflect the Alberta context. Focusing on Collaborative Practices based on these wraparound principles helps schools, authorities and their partners gain an understanding of how to build a culture that supports collaboration, as well as how they can coordinate and access supports and services that address the needs of children, youth and their families within the context of the school and community. For more information and a complete description of the eleven wraparound principles:

<http://ideas.education.alberta.ca/hsc/current-projects/collaborative-practices>

## Research References

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