

# Steps to a Facilitated Dialogue to Resolve Conflict

Julie Schaffer, Restorative Practices & Mediation Program Manager

Department of Family & Community Engagement

Spokane Public Schools, 2021

# Restorative *Practices*

---

- A philosophy that views conflict through the lens of relationships.
- Grounded in the belief that we are all interconnected
- Strategies and processes that build healthy relationships to prevent conflict and that repair harm and strengthen relationships after conflict occurs.



At Spokane Public Schools, we strive to create a **safe** and **supportive** learning environment for all students and staff. We want all SPS families to feel **connected** to their schools and to feel **understood, heard, and respected**.

Conflicts are a part of daily life and making mistakes is a part of growing and learning. With this in mind, **SPS embraces a restorative approach to conflict**, meaning that we see conflicts and harmful behavior as an opportunity for students and staff to:

- Learn about themselves and each other
- Take accountability
- Develop empathy
- Repair harm and restore relationships
- Identify supports that meet individual needs.



Spokane Public Schools  
*excellence for everyone*

*Excerpt from  
SPS webpage on  
Restorative Practices*



SOURCES  
OF  
CONFLICT

**Basic human needs aren't met (William Glasser)**

- Belonging: being included, connected to others, relationships
- Power: recognition, respect, achievement
- Freedom: choices, we control our lives
- Fun: joy pleasure, play

**Limited Resources**

- Time, Money, Property

**Different Values**

- Beliefs, Convictions, Priorities, Principles

**Impact of Trauma/Chronic Stress**

- Fight, Flight, Freeze Response

# I. REGULATE FIRST

A person cannot engage in a restorative conversation unless they are calm and in their “thinking brain.”

Reflect:

*How do you calm down?*

*How do you help others calm down?*

*What structures are in place in the school/workplace to support regulation?*





Individual conversations with people who were impacted  
(preconferences)

### Multiple Purposes:

- Sharing of perspectives;
- Identify goals and interests;
- Determine if they are a good candidate for a facilitated conversation;
- Explain the process and answer questions/concerns;
- Get buy-in on groundrules;
- Encourage and support;
- Build trust and rapport

# Role of the Participants “Groundrules”

## **To participate in “Good Faith”**

Keep an open mind

Show a willingness to listen to other points of view

Cooperate to solve the problem

## **To show “Common Courtesy”**

Take turns talking and listening. No interruptions

No put downs or inflammatory language



# Set up & Welcome

- *Set up Considerations:*
  - Time of Day
  - Safe/Neutral Location
  - Privacy
  - Realistic amount of time
  - Room Arrangement for comfort/sense of safety
  - Snacks/Water/Tissues
- Welcome all participants; Congratulate them on their willingness to participate
- Explain ground rules and get signatures
- Explain your role as the facilitator



# Role of the Facilitator

1. Monitor ground rules
2. Ensure equal participation / guide the conversation through questions
3. Listen and Clarify / Look for common ground
4. Document and monitor the agreement / Follow Up

# Facilitators do not...

- Offer advice
- Bring up their own experience
- Interrupt (unless necessary)
- Take sides

# Share Points of View

---

What happened?

---

What were you thinking/feeling at the time?

---

Who else was affected by what happened?

---

What do you think is the major problem to solve?

# Identifying Needs and Interests

---

How do you want things to change?

---

What do you need in order to resolve this conflict?

---

What might happen if this doesn't get resolved?

---

What do you want the other person to understand about where you are coming from?  
Do you have any questions for the other person?

# Brainstorm Options

---

What ideas do you have that would help resolve the conflict?

---

What possible solutions would fix the problem?

---

What would need to be different in the future?

---

What could be done to prevent the problem from happening again?

# Evaluate Options

Do you think it will work?

Does it help fix the problem?

Does it address the basic needs that were expressed?

Does it fix the harm?

Is it fair to everyone?

# Write an Agreement

---

What are each of you willing to do?

*Is it balanced, specific, realistic, fair?*

---

Is the conflict resolved?

---

What have you agreed to?

*Ensure understanding*

---

What are you going to tell peers/others about what happened here? Who gets copies?

What is the plan if the agreement is broken?



# Follow up and Prevention

Check in regularly

Create *intentional, structured* opportunities for people to build strong, trusting relationships with one another

# Preparing for a Restorative Talk

1. Be calm
2. Be curious about the student's culture and perspective - Open Mind
3. Suspend judgement - Open Heart
4. Use active listening and supportive language
5. Offer time and personal space

# Restorative Questions

## **1. What happened?**

How were you feeling? What were you thinking?  
Who was hurt by what happened?

## **2. What do you need?**

How do you want things to change?  
How do we fix the problem together?

## **3. What's the plan?**

What needs to be done to make things right?  
What is our agreement for the future?



# Having a Conflict?

**Let's work together  
to make things right!**

## **1. What happened?**

- How were you feeling? What were you thinking at the time?
- Who was hurt by what happened?

## **2. What do you need?**

- How do you want things to change?
- How do we fix the problem together?

## **3. What's the plan?**

- What needs to be done to make things right for everyone involved?
- What is our agreement for the future?

