

healthy interactions

RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT



HEALTHY INTERACTIONS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER FOR EDUCATORS

Understanding Conflict Workshop for Schools

The Understanding Conflict Workshop, based on the Alberta Teachers' Association's (ATA) Healthy Interactions Program, is being made available to schools. Healthy Interactions is an interest-based process for handling conflict concerns. The concepts taught in this two-day workshop are based on the Healthy Interactions approach and focuses on individual skill building. The workshop requires two full days but does not

have to be booked on consecutive days. Many schools book day one in one month and day two the following month.

If you have questions about this workshop or wish to book Understanding Conflict for your school, please contact Joyce Sherwin in Edmonton at 1-800-232-7208 or Cynthia Malner-Charest in Calgary at 1-800-332-1280.



In this issue

Understanding Conflict Workshop for Schools	1
Understanding Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation in Alberta	2
Healthy Interactions PD Activity: Flower Petals	2
Important Dates	4



Understanding Conflict Workshop Agenda

- Part 1: Understanding and Defining Conflict
- Part 2: Core Conflict and Complicating Factors
- Part 3: Positions to Interests
- Part 4: Clarifying Skills, Active Listening and Paraphrasing

- Part 5: Reframing and Overcoming Opposition
- Part 6: Dealing with Anger
- Part 7: Establishing a Safe and Positive Environment for Conflict Resolution
- Part 8: From Solutions to Action



Healthy Interactions PD Activity: Flower Petals

THINK and WRITE

On a blank sheet of paper, draw a flower with at least ten petals.

Use the flower petals to write one- or two-word answers to the following questions. Do not repeat any words for questions 1 to 3.

1. What motivates or encourages a teacher to grow as a professional? (Use three or four petals)
 2. What do you believe is most important to leadership for learning? (Use three or four petals)
 3. Describe the characteristics of a leader you admire or respect. (Use remaining petals.)
- Continued on page 4



Understanding Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation in Alberta

ATA Member Services staff receive many telephone calls from teachers and principals regarding the process of teacher growth, supervision and evaluation. Not understanding the process can lead to assumptions and misperceptions, which often lead to issues of conflict.

The provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5 deals with accountability and continuous professional growth. The provincial policy ensures that a teacher's professional practice is under ongoing supervision.

The Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy defines the process and the Teaching Quality Standard defines the competencies for professional practice. Principals have a critical role in the process and must perform their supervision and evaluation duties as outlined in the *School Act* and Policy 2.1.5.

The provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy

reflects a philosophy about supervision and evaluation based on teacher growth rather than teacher deficiency. The policy takes seriously the professional nature of teaching. All teachers are responsible for students' learning, and the model embraces collegial collaborative work as the key to progressively changing teaching practice and supports the organization of schools into learning communities.

In a nutshell, Policy 2.1.5 is based on teacher competence and professional growth. Teacher growth plans are expected of all teachers.

Principals are required to supervise teachers and when there is a concern about the teacher's teaching, to conduct an evaluation. Teachers who hold a probationary contract or interim certificate will be evaluated in accordance with the *School Act*.

For teachers on continuous contracts, the philosophy is one of assumed competency unless through the process of supervision the principal has reason to believe that the teaching of the teacher may not meet the Teaching Quality Standard. Supervision is a

Continued on page 3





fundamental component of the policy and is pivotal to its success.

Supervision must be characterized by a climate of trust and support. It is a continuing process of communication and a shared responsibility. Supervision is a collegial collaborative process that allows for input and sharing of relevant information. The ultimate goal is optimizing the learning for students.

Principals and teachers must be thoughtful about supervision processes. Although principals in Alberta are expected to be a visible presence in the classrooms of the school, a wide variety of classroom walk through models, heavily marketed in the USA, are not appropriate in Alberta. Models of supervision must be assessed with the following criteria in mind:

1. Do they have the ability to meet real needs?
2. Do they achieve their stated goals?
3. Do they have potential for abuse?

Using an oversimplified walk-through process for supervision, such as placing a check mark next to a descriptor on a list, does little to improve instruction or professional growth. Adopting approaches that reduce supervision to electronic data gathering on a handheld device or checklist may be regressive and

counterproductive. The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA)* in Alberta provides individuals with access to information collected about them. It places severe restrictions on how personal information can be collected, stored and used. Any data gathering that occurs during the process of teacher growth, supervision and evaluation needs to be scrutinized in regard to privacy legislation. Methods also need to be reviewed through the filter of trust building. Often trust is eroded when ill-considered supervisory methods are adopted and teachers feel they are a target or the subject of harassment rather than a respected colleague.

Working with teachers collaboratively as a professional learning community, where professionals are able to share expertise with one another, is a more effective way to improve teaching practice and develop the capacity of the professionals in the school setting. Instructional supervision and teacher evaluation are complex processes that require reasoned judgment and are best achieved in an atmosphere of openness.

The Code of Professional Conduct for ethical professional practice protects and nurtures the collegial relationships that give strength to the Alberta education system. Any

process of supervision and evaluation must respect the code.

Respecting the code means that principals are protected from unfair discussions that undermine their authority, and teachers are protected from unsupported evaluation that damages them professionally. The code requires openness and transparency through the involvement of the individual being criticized in the discussion.

The code requires that any written report on the professional practice of a colleague be given to the colleague prior to submitting it to anyone else. Individuals who participate in unacceptable practices know that they are acting unethically by the standards of the profession.

If an evaluation is to be conducted, then the process for that evaluation must be in accordance with the provincial Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy 2.1.5. This means that upon initiating the evaluation, the principal shall communicate, in writing, explicit reasons for and the purpose of the evaluation, the process, criteria and standards to be used, the timelines to be applied, and the possible outcomes of the evaluation. It also means that the content of the teacher's professional growth plan must not be part of the evaluation process



unless the teacher agrees or makes this request.

If the evaluation determines that the teacher's teaching does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard, a written notice of remediation is issued to the teacher.

The notice of remediation describes the required change in behaviour or practice that does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard. It also outlines strategies that the teacher is expected to pursue, applicable timelines and the consequences of not

achieving the required changes. The principal may stipulate that remediation strategies outlined in a notice of remediation replace the obligation of the teacher to develop and implement an annual professional growth plan.

Careful scrutiny and reflection, as well as thoughtful honest discourse about supervision and evaluation processes by educators, may reduce the potential for conflict and damage to collegial relations. Teachers and principals are encouraged to call Member Services if they have questions or concerns regarding the process of teacher growth, supervision and evaluation. Getting clarification and advice may be helpful in terms of preventing or resolving conflict. Calls to Member Services are confidential. Phone 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta).

Continued from page 2

4. Review the words you have written inside the petals. Which word best describes the most important element for inspiring teacher professional growth? Write it in the middle of the flower.

DISCUSS

In small groups, discuss the following:

1. What words did you write in the middle of the flowers and why?
2. What are some common commitments or courtesies that should be respected for teacher growth, supervision and evaluation processes to be successful?
3. What can we do to build trust and how can conflict be avoided during ongoing supervision or evaluation processes?

LARGE GROUP SHARING



NOTE

Registration forms for workshops are available online at www.teachers.ab.ca

IMPORTANT DATES

NOV 1 – 2, 2011
Understanding Conflict
Two-day workshop
Calgary

JAN 16 – 19, 2012
Healthy Interactions
Facilitator training
Calgary

2012
Understanding Conflict
will be offered at some
Teachers' Conventions

AUG 20 – 21, 2012
Understanding Conflict
Two-day workshop
Edmonton

AUG 20 – 23, 2012
Healthy Interactions
Facilitator Training
Edmonton

