



INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Challenging Conversations

The School Leaders' Measure

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What is International School Leadership

International School Leadership, a subsidiary of the Ontario Principals' Council provides training and certification program to K-12 school and system leaders around the world, professional consulting services and program customization.

Program Advisory Panel



What is the Ontario Principals' Council?

- A professional association representing elementary and secondary vice-principals and principals in the public education system in Ontario – since 1998
- Not a union – no legislated right to represent
- 5800 members from across the province of Ontario
- Three main roles on behalf of our members:
 - Advocacy
 - Consultation, advice and legal support when necessary
 - Professional learning and training

Learning Outcomes

- How to position yourself to effectively navigate and achieve success through challenging conversations involving various stakeholders
- Consider your intercultural competencies in an international context; international educators need to navigate cultural configurations that rarely align neatly
- Consider skills essential for effectively addressing challenging conversations through the use of current case studies.

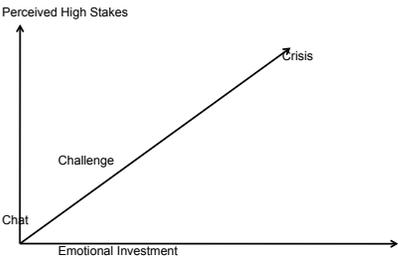


Introduction

- Challenging conversations are, or could be, conflicts.
- They are not always conflicts.
- They are not crisis moments.



Introduction.....



Introduction...

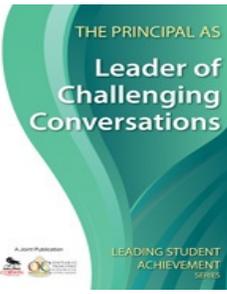
You know you are going to have a challenging conversation when.....



Introduction...



Raffle



Minds On: Anticipation Guide

Agree ??? or Disagree ???



Anticipation Guide...

- While engaged in challenging conversations it is more important to preserve the relationship than attain a goal.
- Most people try to avoid conflict, forget it, or try to get back at the other person.
- By seeking out areas of potential conflict and intervening quickly, people can prevent conflicts from arising.
- Ignoring the drama and setting a professional tone in the workplace will prevent petty complaints from escalating.

Anticipation Guide

- Sixty to eighty percent of all difficulties in organizations come from strained relationships among employees.
- Conflict is one way school personnel get to know each other and understand goals, roles and processes.
- The root of most conflict in the work place is from ineffective hiring practices and poor communication.



Minds On - Reflecting

Think, Pair, Share

- Think of a challenging conversation that you have had recently: What emotions were felt? Was there a plan? What was said and heard? Was the issue resolved? How did it go?
- Share with the person next to you.



It could be worse!

- <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/15101e625123055b?projector=1>



The Inner Challenge

- We all have an inner voice that tells us when we need to have a difficult conversation with someone—a conversation that, if it took place, would improve life at our schools for ourselves and for everyone else on our team. But fear drowns that inner voice—and we put the conversation off. The consequence of not having that uncomfortable conversation is costly.
- – B. Martinuzzi



The Inner Challenge

When you avoid conflict, you give away power.
Don't be afraid to bring up the hard topics.
Face them and invite others to do the same.
When you don't hold others accountable you allow unacceptable behavior to continue.

• J. Ringer



What teachers and leaders do

- Act in ways that consistently reflect the school's core values and priorities in order to establish trust
- Demonstrate respect for staff, students and parents by listening to their ideas, being open to those ideas, and genuinely considering their value
- Clearly define accountability for individual staff in terms that are mutually understood



What teachers and leaders do...

- Promote collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and well being
- Foster open and fluent communication toward building and sustaining Professional Learning Communities



What teachers and leaders do...

- Build upon and respond to individual staff members unique needs and expertise
- Challenge staff to continually reflect and re-examine the effectiveness of their practices

• Leithwood 2012



What teachers and leaders do...

Instead of wishing *they* would change

Start with yourself!



Effective Conversations – The Strategy for Success

GOAL + PLAN/PROCESS + SKILLS



Strategy for Success

- <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/15101e625123055b?projector=1>



Strategy for Success

- 1 • Manage Emotions
- 2 • Plan
- 3 • Listen and Re-state
- 4 • Problem Solve



Strategy for Success...

- 1 • Manage Emotions
 - ❖ How are your buttons being pushed?
 - ❖ What are your assumptions?
 - ❖ Are you feeling disrespected, belittled?
 - ❖ Is fear causing avoidance or reaction?
 - ❖ Reflect and manage your mindset

Strategy for Success...

2 • The Plan

- ❖ What is your purpose for having the conversation?
- ❖ What do you hope to accomplish?
- ❖ What information is needed? (policies, procedures, directions)
- ❖ Consult with others
- ❖ Notes to keep you focused

The Plan

Before

- Clarify Issues
- Gather and Confirm Data
- Consider Timing
- Examine any Mitigating Factors
- Anticipate responses
- Consider Possible Supports

During

- Listen for Meaning
- Allow for Emotion
- Remain focused on improving student achievement
- Be open to two-way learning
- Offer support
- Follow the Critical Path

After

- Summarize new Plan
- Renew commitment to success
- Follow-up as appropriate
- Maintain relationships



Strategy for Success...

3 • Listen and Re-state

- ❖ Active listening
- ❖ Be sensitive to non-verbal communication
- ❖ Use the neutral 'third point' to keep the conversation focused
- ❖ Re-state for understanding

The Non-Verbal

- Facial expressions
 - Eye contact
 - Gestures
- Voice – tone, volume, cadence
- Touching – general proximity
 - Social context
- Response of others



Strategy for Success...

4 • Problem Solve

- ❖ Be clear about the issue and the impact
- ❖ Work towards a 'third point' to reach a common goal
- ❖ Conclude in a way that preserves the relationship
- ❖ Develop two or three goals (aligned with school mission and vision) to go forward

How Intercultural Competences Impact All Steps of the Strategy for Success

Educational leadership is a socially bounded process. It is subject to the cultural traditions and values of the society in which it is exercised. It thus manifests itself in different ways in different settings. In this sense it is remarkable that many current debates in educational leadership continue to be couched in general or universal terms without taking into account the particularities of the local cultural context.

C. Dimmock and A. Walker



Intercultural Competences

Intercultural competences are abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other terms, abilities to perform “effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself.”

Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006



Intercultural Competences for Challenging Conversations

- **Respect** (“valuing of others”);
- **Self-awareness/identity** (“understanding the lens through which we each view the world”);
- **Seeing from other perspectives/world views** (“both how these perspectives are similar and different”);
- **Listening** (“engaging in authentic intercultural dialogue”);
- **Adaptation** (“being able to shift temporarily into another perspective”);
- **Relationship building** (forging lasting cross-cultural personal bonds);
- **Cultural humility** (“combines respect with self-awareness”);



Strategy for Success - Reviewed

- 1 • Manage Emotions
- 2 • Plan
- 3 • Listen and Re-state
- 4 • Problem Solve



Applying the Strategy for Success

In this video, a manager is entering into a challenging conversation with an employee. Working in pairs, analyze the behaviour of the manager and employee using the Strategy for Success structure.

One of you should focus on the manager and the other on the employee.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G0lEY1d0c>



Applying the Strategy for Success

- 1 • Manage Emotions
- 2 • Plan
- 3 • Listen and Re-state
- 4 • Problem Solve



The Plan: Scenario 1

You are a new Principal at an International School. Grade Team meetings with Divisional Leaders are scheduled and as you sit in on the meetings you are noticing the discussion is focused on issues that have come up over the week regarding student behaviour, work load and timelines for DRA assessments. The Divisional Leader is noting the concerns and asking the new Principal how these concerns will be addressed. The Principal commits to a meeting during the following week.



What's Your Plan

As the New Principal or the Division Head

Before **During** **After**

The Plan: Scenario 2

You have been hired as an Elementary Principal, to work at a Bilingual School in a middle eastern country. After two weeks at the school, parents have come to your office to request a meeting regarding concerns around their child's teacher. They are very angry and have paid a lot of money for their child to go to your school. They want to know why their child does not have a western teacher as they would like their child to learn proper English. There are interpreters and social workers available to attend the meeting.

What's Your Plan

As the Principal or the Parent

Before **During** **After**

The Plan: Scenario 3

Two months into her new job, Principal Linda has started the evaluation process of returning teachers. The Principal has already had challenging conversations with Teacher Carol and now has to evaluate her. The teacher has disregarded direction from the Principal, continues to implement incorrect and outdated practices which are not supporting student learning and well-being. The teacher has stated that she believes that her program is well organized and that the students are well engaged. Further, the teacher is also engaged in after school tutoring which violates the Ministry laws. During observations, Ms. Linda has experienced rude comments from the teacher and observed practices that are punitive and not supportive of student learning. Neither are looking forward to the post-observation meeting.

What's Your Plan

As the Principal or the Teacher

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Anticipation Guide – Part II

- Please refer to the Anticipation Guide you completed at the start of the session
- Has your 'agree or disagree' stance changed?
- Have you reflected on how nuanced your response may now be in consideration of what you have learned?
- How has your understanding around E.Q. and C.Q. changed?

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In Closing ...

For a leader, there is no trivial comment. Something you might not even remember saying may have had a devastating impact on someone looking to you for guidance and approval. By the same token, something you said years ago may have encouraged and inspired someone who is grateful to you to this day.

(Susan Scott, Fierce Conversations, 2004)