



# School Council Tip Sheet

## *Resolving Conflict*

In any decision-making process, there is potential for conflict to develop. People may find it difficult to work together because they have different values and interests or because their personalities and attitudes are not compatible. Conflict that is not properly handled can have a negative effect on Council activities, reducing productivity and affecting the morale and confidence of Council members. However, well-managed conflict can help to clarify issues, create new opportunities for discussion and strengthen relationships among members.

**Acknowledge that there is a problem.** Clarify and clearly state the concerns, needs and interests of the people involved in the dispute.

**Emphasize the ground rules.** Adopt a positive tone and a problem-solving attitude. Set ground rules that will help maintain a courteous, respectful environment for discussion (i.e. speakers may not be interrupted, everyone has an opportunity to speak on the issue, etc.).

**Look for areas of agreement.** Start by helping members find common ground. Identify areas of agreement, before addressing the differences.

**Affirm the value of different opinions.** Discuss the fact that different opinions are natural in a group. Help members separate the opinion from the person holding the opinion, and do not allow personal attacks. Focus on the problem, not the person.

**Listen to everyone's point of view.** Let Council members express their opinions and perspectives. People will be more willing to discuss alternatives if you acknowledge and legitimize their right to hold particular points of view, even if you don't agree with them.

**Define the conflict clearly.** Make sure you understand the issue causing the conflict and that you are focusing on the right problem. Try to identify any assumptions, expectations, misinformation or lack of information that may be influencing members' opinions. Many conflicts can be resolved by improving communication and explaining issues carefully.

**Create solutions.** Identify a range of options for solving the problem. Invite others in the group to help resolve the conflict. List the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

**Choose a solution.** Choose the best solution and follow up to make sure that it is carried out.

### Questions?

[ocdsb.ca](http://ocdsb.ca) | [communications@ocdsb.ca](mailto:communications@ocdsb.ca)  
613-721-1820