

# Guidelines

for the Effective Development and Operation of  
MCEA-MCPS District-level

# Collaboration Committees



# 2015





# Table of Contents

## **Establishment of MCEA/MCPS Collaboration Committees**

Enabling Contract Provisions .....	1
Charge to Collaboration Committees .....	2
Expectations of Collaboration Committees .....	3

## **Structure and Committee Membership**

Committee Representation .....	4
MCEA Election Processes .....	5
Roles of CC Co-Chairs .....	6
Relationship with MCEA and/or MCPS CC Facilitators .....	6
Operating Procedures Guidelines .....	7

## **Expectations and Commitments that Guide Committee Work**

Collaborative Compact on School Climate .....	9
Organizational Culture of Respect Agreement.....	11

## **Resources for Supporting and Developing Collaboration Committees**

MCEA Union Business Leave Form .....	
Primer on Interest Based Problem Solving .....	
Developing the Story: Interest Based Problem Solving	
Sample Agenda and Note Template	

# Establishment of MCEA/MCPS Collaboration Committees

---

## Article 6, Section F4b of MCEA/BOE Contract

MCEA/MCPS Collaboration Committees are established under the provisions of Article 6 Section F4b of the MCEA/BOE contract, which reads, in part:

*“The LMCC will develop processes and guidelines for providing non-school-based unit members with the same access to collaborative and shared decision making as their school-based colleagues. To accomplish this, the LMCC is responsible for creating and providing oversight to non-school-based collaboration committees. **These committees are charged with holding ongoing discussions and engaging in collaborative problem solving on matters of interest and concern (emphasis added).** Each collaboration committee is expected to be representative of and accountable to staff and involve staff in the decision-making process.”*

## Article 6, Section F1, 2, 4 of MCEA/BOE Contract

The MCEA/MCPS County-Wide Labor Management Collaboration Committee is established, charged and authorized under the provisions of Article 6 Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the MCEA/BOE contract, which reads, in part:

The Labor Management Collaboration Committee (LMCC), is a district-level joint committee that provides for regular, on-going discussions and decision-making on matters germane to union-management relations and, when appropriate, to the continuous improvement of instruction and school system operations. Both MCEA and MCPS each identify at least four representatives, and no more than six representatives, as permanent members of the committee.

The overall charge to the (LMCC) joint committee shall include but not be limited to the following:

- Interpreting and administering the implementation of the negotiated Agreement
- Discussing any matters of mutual interest or concern and reaching tentative agreements on issues in a timely manner
- Reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of collaboration between MCPS and MCEA

The joint committee will have the following authorities:

a. To establish temporary joint committees to address particular issues. Such committees will report back to the LMCC. The LMCC shall be authorized to establish the membership charge and the tasks of these committees as well as discontinue the joint committees when their work is completed, task forces. The LMCC will review recommendations and implementation plans for final decisions.

b. To clarify language and meaning, correct contradictions or inconsistencies, and remove outdated language. Recommendations for such changes or corrections to the Agreement shall be subject to internal ratification and approval procedures of MCPS and MCEA.

c. To resolve problems arising out of the interpretation or implementation of collaborative agreements and decisions. Where resolution is not possible within the LMCC, the LMCC is authorized to involve a third party facilitator or other problem-solving process to help the parties reach agreement.

d. The committee will develop ground rules that will guide its deliberations.

## **Charge to the Collaboration Committees**

---

In 2013, the countywide MCEA-/MCPS Labor Management Collaboration Committee (LMCC) established the following framework for collaboration committees in understanding their scope of authority. Such committees are charged with:

- Developing and implementing solutions that are within the purview of the department/program
- Making joint recommendations to the countywide LMCC for solutions that are beyond their scope of authority, and
- Reporting back to the LMCC on significant issues on which they are unable to reach consensus.

Collaboration committees can and should request training, facilitation and other forms of assistance from MCEA and MCPS through the LMCC. MCEA has assigned staff to each Collaboration Committee to provide support, working closely with the MCPS Department of Association Relations.

## Expectations of Collaboration Committees

---

In addition to engaging in the kind of collaborative problem-solving and dispute resolution described above (*developing and implementing solutions within the purview of the department/program; making joint recommendations to the countywide LMCC for solutions that are beyond the scope of the individual CC's authority; and reporting back to the LMCC on significant issues on which they are unable to reach consensus*), each Collaboration Committee is expected to:

- Operate with transparency on the CC among participants and within the constituencies it serves;
- Engage in regular two-way communications with constituents: (a) seeking and processing input and feedback from constituents (*all data collection tools should be vetted with MCEA before distributing*) and (b) disseminating information using newsletters, e-mail blasts, phone trees, or other communication tools for constituents;
- Document the work of the CC, both for internal purposes (*agendas, notes, action steps, assignments, maintaining centralized storage of official CC work*) and for external purposes (*while maintaining confidentiality where needed*) in communicating with constituents and with the Countywide LMCC

Each Collaboration Committee serves two groups of constituencies:

1. The MCEA unit members engaged in the work under the content or program area of the Collaboration Committee
2. The MCPS administrators who's responsibilities impact the work of those within the content or program area of the Collaboration Committee

# Structure and Committee Membership

---

## Committee Representation

The size and make-up of Collaboration Committee is determined by the Countywide LMCC based on discussions between the MCEA President and the appropriate Deputy or Associate Superintendent.

Each Collaboration Committee will have one co-chair that is appointed by the MCEA President and one co-chair that is appointed by the appropriate MCPS Deputy or Associate Superintendent.

MCPS management representatives on the CC are determined by MCPS, through the Department of Association Relations, after collaborative discussions with the MCEA President.

During its first year of operation MCEA representation on the Collaboration Committee will be appointed by the MCEA President based on discussions with the MCEA members involved in initiating the CC. After year one, MCEA representation on the CC will be determined by election (see below).

- The CC should include MCEA representatives from each “category” of their constituency, e.g., each job title, each school level, each site, each cluster, etc. No two committee members should be serving from the same school or office unless the constituency is so large that more representatives would be needed from each category.
- Unless the CC constituency group is very large, CC’s should be comprised of no more than 15 members, including both management and MCEA representatives.
- All MCEA-unit members of the CC must be educators from the relevant department/division/office or position classification.
- If an MCEA member switches employment positions mid-term, that person will complete the school year as CC member for the position for which they were originally appointed or elected.
- If an MCEA seat on CC becomes vacant midterm, the seat will be filled by appointment by the MCEA President, upon recommendation from MCEA members on the CC.

## **MCEA Election Process *(after year one)***

After the CC's first year of operation, MCEA representatives to the CC will be determined by election from their constituency. The nominations and elections will be conducted online in the spring for the following year. The election shall be conducted under the direction of the MCEA Co-chair, or his/her designee, with logistical support from the MCEA staff facilitator. All such elections must be conducted in accord with general standards of confidentiality and fairness. Any disputes over the election procedures or results may be appealed to the MCEA Credentials and Elections Committee, no later than five (5) work days following the occurrence or publication of the results. The Credentials and Election Committee shall meet to discuss and rule on the appeal within ten (10) work days and issue a final decision and resolution.

### **MCEA Terms of Office**

- Elected MCEA committee members will serve a **three (3)** year term. However, for the first election cycle (beginning with year two of Committee operations) half of the MCEA seats on the CC will be designated for two-year terms and half for three year terms. This will ensure that terms will be staggered and will provide continuity and stability to the Committee as well as provide opportunity for infusion of new ideas and growth of new leaders.
- MCEA members may serve two (2) consecutive terms.
- The MCEA co-chair will be appointed by MCEA's President each year, based upon the recommendation of the MCEA members on the Committee. The MCEA co-chair is entitled to have served up to two consecutive terms as a CC member before becoming Co-Chair.

The MCEA Co-Chair will hold his/her position for 1 term (3 years) and is eligible to serve two (2) consecutive terms as co-chair.

### **Roles of CC Co-Chairs**

Co-chairs are responsible first and foremost for modeling collaboration and mutual respect. It is expected that they will understand and use the interest-based method as routine practice in the CC. They are to establish and review norms with the members of the CC, ensure that a safe and open environment is established and maintained and manage meetings in an effective and efficient manner.

Co-chairs share the development of CC agendas. It is the responsibility of the Co-chairs to provide an agenda to each member of the CC well in advance of the meeting, establish communication procedures, and ensure that notes and constituent communications occur in a routine and timely fashion.

Co-chairs are responsible for ensuring that rooms are scheduled for the meetings by contacting the MCEA Conference Center Coordinator (Paulette Jackson at [pjackson@mceanea.org](mailto:pjackson@mceanea.org)). There is no charge for use of rooms at the MCEA Conference Center for CC meetings. Room reservations and meeting schedules should be completed prior to August of each school year. Room reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **Relationship with MCEA and/or MCPS CC Facilitator(s)**

MCEA and/or the MCPS Dept. of Association Relations will appoint staff (or consultants) to support the successful operation of the Collaboration Committee.

An initial meeting with the CC Co-chairs and the MCEA and/or MCPS CC Facilitators who are assigned to support the CC should be made as early as possible in the school years. The purpose of this meeting is to assess the level of collaboration that exists within the CC, identify roles and responsibilities of the Co-chairs and CC Facilitator(s), and to determine the level of understanding and use of interest-based problem solving practices. Co-chairs and CC Facilitator(s) should identify and plan for any support and development that the CC needs.

While the MCEA and/or MCPS CC Facilitators may serve as meeting facilitators; they do so in order to model and teach meeting facilitation. On an ongoing basis, it is expected that the role of meeting facilitation will be shared and rotated among CC members.

The MCEA CC Facilitator will assist the MCEA Co-chair in conducting the elections for any open MCEA seats. The MCEA CC Facilitator will gather and store all agendas and notes along with other documents the CC feels are necessary on the MCEA server. All use of MCEA Union Business Leave is subject to approval by MCEA, through the MCEA CC Facilitator.

# General Operational Guidance

---

## Meetings

Meetings should be held at least once a month, for at least 3 hours whenever possible. Additional meetings of CC sub-committees or work groups should be scheduled at the convenience of the committee/work group members.

Substitute coverage is provided for MCEA members through the Union Business Leave Bank. Coverage must be requested by using the Form UBL- 430-5. Use of UBL is subject to approval by MCEA. An annual plan for UBL usage, based on the meeting schedule, should be developed in conjunction with the MCEA CC Facilitator and is subject to final approval by MCEA.

Whenever possible, meeting dates/times for the entire school year should be established as early as the prior year's last meeting (June) or during a summer meeting prior to the new school year.

The co-chairs are responsible for reserving meeting locations. When requesting use of MCEA Conference Center space for your CC meeting, be sure to state any amenities needed (*computer, projector, etc.*) To make a reservation at the MCEA office, contact MCEA Conference Center Coordinator (Paulette Jackson, at [pjackson@mcea.nea.org](mailto:pjackson@mcea.nea.org), 301-294-6232).

## New Member Orientation

The CC should provide new members with a briefing on how the committee functions, what the committee does, individual member expectations and responsibilities, how agenda items are identified and planned, how constituent concerns are addressed. Each new member should be paired with an experienced member for initial orientation and ongoing mentoring.

## Establishing and Reviewing an Operating Procedures

The CC should develop a document that outlines how the CC will conduct its work together. This should be established collaboratively and agreed to by the members of the CC. This guide should be reviewed at least annually to make sure that it is still a clear and accurate documentation of agreements, expectations and procedures. The MCEA CC Facilitator can provide samples of other CC Operating Procedures for reference.

## Common Operational Procedures to be Included in each CC Operational Procedures Guide

- All committees will maintain a current Operational Procedures Guide to be reviewed annually
- Meetings will be developed and conducted using an interest-based problem solving approach
- Agendas will be developed by the co-chairs based on input from the committee and with support from the MCEA and/or MCPS CC Facilitator(s) assigned to the committee.
- Notes will be taken in a transparent manner and prior to the end of any meeting will be reviewed and agreed upon by the committee. Notes will be stored on the MCEA Server by the MCEA CC Facilitator.
- A communication strategy will be developed by the committee that allows for two-way communication with the appropriate constituency for the committee. This will be supported as needed by the MCEA facilitator.
- The committee will establish agreements for making decisions that honor a consensus approach
- Participants will attend all scheduled meetings. (Notify co-chairs in advance of schedule conflicts)
- Meetings will start and end on time (even if all team members are not present)
- Committees will adopt and use a set of norms that guide their work together.
- Co-chairs will be expected to report to the LMCC at regular intervals that make sense for the committee, but not less than quarterly.

# Expectations and Commitments that Guide Committee Work

---

MCPS/MCEA/SEIU/MCAAP

## COLLABORATIVE COMPACT ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

*August 2010*

**Preamble:** In order to better ensure a positive workplace, to promote a vibrant learning environment and to further student achievement, the parties (MCPS, MCAAP, MCEA and SEIU) enter into this Collaborative Compact. The parties to this Compact are committed to creating and maintaining a respectful and productive MCPS workplace at all work sites.

**Statement of Purpose:** The purpose of this Compact is to set forth those behaviors that we expect of ourselves and each other in workplace interactions and at all MCPS work sites, regardless of whether those sites are determined to have climate issues as further defined below. Adherence to the standards set forth in this Compact is expected of all stakeholders and representatives, whether site-based or otherwise, who work at or with sites. We agree to work together collaboratively, expeditiously and deliberatively to effectively address climate issues in MCPS sites and to abide by the following Behaviors and Procedures/Processes.

**Expected Elements of Behavior:** The following Elements of Behavior are expected of all stakeholders and representatives working at or with MCPS. We agree to do the following:

1. Recognize that all stakeholders have ownership, stewardship and responsibility for creating a positive climate and resolving climate issues.
2. Adhere to the Expected Behaviors set forth in the *Organizational Culture of Respect Compact*.
3. Assure that the actions of all stakeholders and representatives foster trust, openness/transparency, positive relationships, open communication, collaboration/teamwork, positive morale and effective conflict management and dispute resolution.
4. Encourage all stakeholders to take ownership and responsibility to raise their concerns and to engage in honest, direct and effective communication.
5. Encourage, honor and respect multiple viewpoints with no negative consequences.
6. Assume good intentions of other stakeholders.
7. Communicate with all stakeholders through multiple mediums in a timely manner.
8. Involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process appropriate to the scope of authority within the individual site.

9. Handle issues, problems and/or disputes face-to-face through dialogue at the lowest level possible using expected behaviors and agreed-upon processes and procedures as set forth in this Compact.
10. With regard to leadership at individual sites:
  - a) Hold meetings at the beginning of each school year with the Administrator, Elected Faculty Representative (EFR) and Elected Supporting Services Representative (ESR) at sites that have them.
  - b) Develop leadership team meeting agendas jointly with input from all staff.
  - c) Ensure the use of facilitative leadership skills at all meetings.
  - d) Ensure that leadership teams develop, in an open and transparent manner and in conjunction with all stakeholders, a process to share, review and analyze the results of the climate survey.
  - e) Ensure that the leadership team develops a plan to address issues identified in climate surveys or any other surveys or forms of feedback.

# Organizational Culture of Respect

*A Compact between the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, MCEA, SEIU and MCAAP September 2005*

In an organizational culture of respect, individuals are aware and understand the impact of their behavior and decisions on others. We expect that the actions and behaviors of all individuals and groups are consistent with and reflect this organizational culture. The actions listed below represent expected behaviors:

- Model civility in daily interactions
- Use collaborative and interest-based strategies rather than positional or adversarial approaches
- Be clear about the level of involvement in the decision making process
- Seek to solve the problem, not apply blame
- Utilize active listening skills
- Encourage creativity and risk-taking
- Seek and respect the opinion of others
- Respect the time and the time commitments of others
- Seek to resolve issues at the level where they occur
- Seek to understand before making judgments
- Acknowledge the professional judgment of individuals in their roles
- Be aware of non-verbal communication
- Use power and authority appropriately and positively
- Be an active and responsible member of the team
- Be responsible for accepting and giving feedback
- Provide and receive feedback constructively and respectfully
- Communicate openly and respectfully

In order to sustain an organizational culture of respect it is critical that all employees have an awareness, understanding, and tolerance of others' interests, viewpoints, culture, and background. This culture promotes a positive work environment that ensures the success of each employee, high student achievement, and continuous improvement in a self-renewing organization.

## Resources to Support Collaboration Committees

---

### Professional Development

MCEA and MCPS can provide support and development to members and Co-chairs of Collaboration Committees on the following:

- Leadership Skills
- Running Effective Meetings
- Interest-based Problem Solving
- Dealing with Difficult Conversations
- Making Team-based Decisions
- Specific, topic-based technical assistance (i.e. Career Lattice)

To request these supports or any other coaching necessary to fully and effectively participate as a member or leader of a CC, contact your MCEA or MCPS CC Facilitator. It is highly recommended that if a CC has not had whole group development on these topics in the recent past that they assess their needs and schedule support in the areas that they feel the need help with.

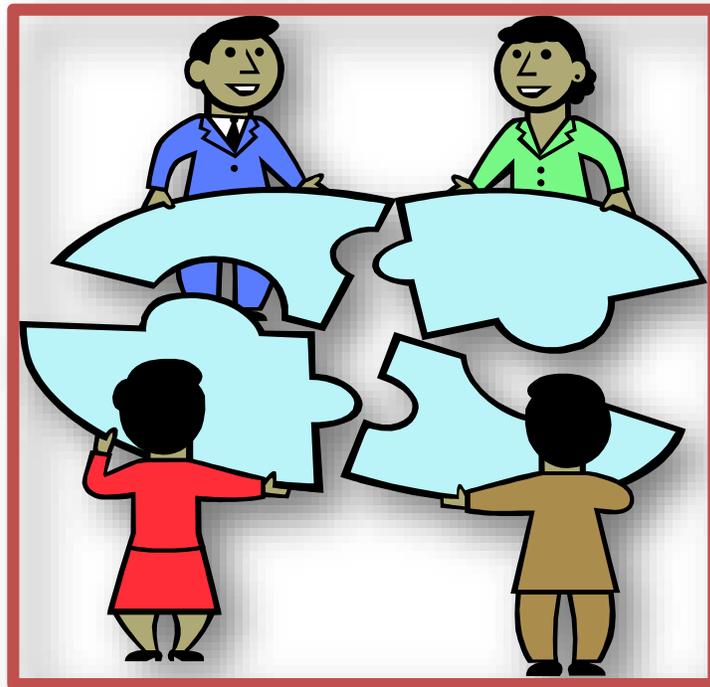
### Readings, Templates and Additional Resources

MCEA has a Resource Binder of extensive readings, templates and additional resources related to collaborative decision-making and interest based problem solving. CC Co-chairs are invited to review the materials and copy any resources that they would like to use with their committee.





# Interest Based Problem Solving

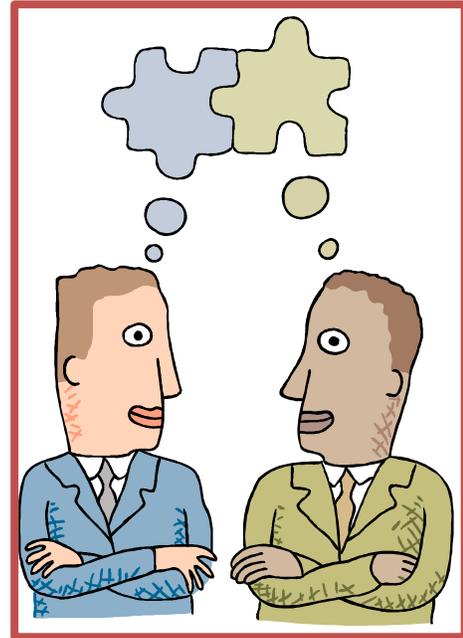


**A Primer by the  
Montgomery County Education Association**



# What is Interest Based Problem Solving?

**“A problem solving process conducted in a principled way that creates effective solutions while improving the relationship”**



## Outcomes

- ✓ Creative solutions that benefit the organization as a whole
- ✓ Durable solutions that everyone is motivated to uphold
- ✓ An improved relationship between the parties

## Definition of Terms

**Issue** - a subject of discussion. The “what; the problem to be solved.

**Interest** – one party’s concern, need or desire behind an issue. The “why” the issue is being raised. (*Interests can be shared or separate*)

**Position** – one party’s preferred solution to an issue. The “how”.

**Option** – a potential, often partial, solution to meet one or more interests.

**Standard** – agreed upon qualities of an acceptable solution.

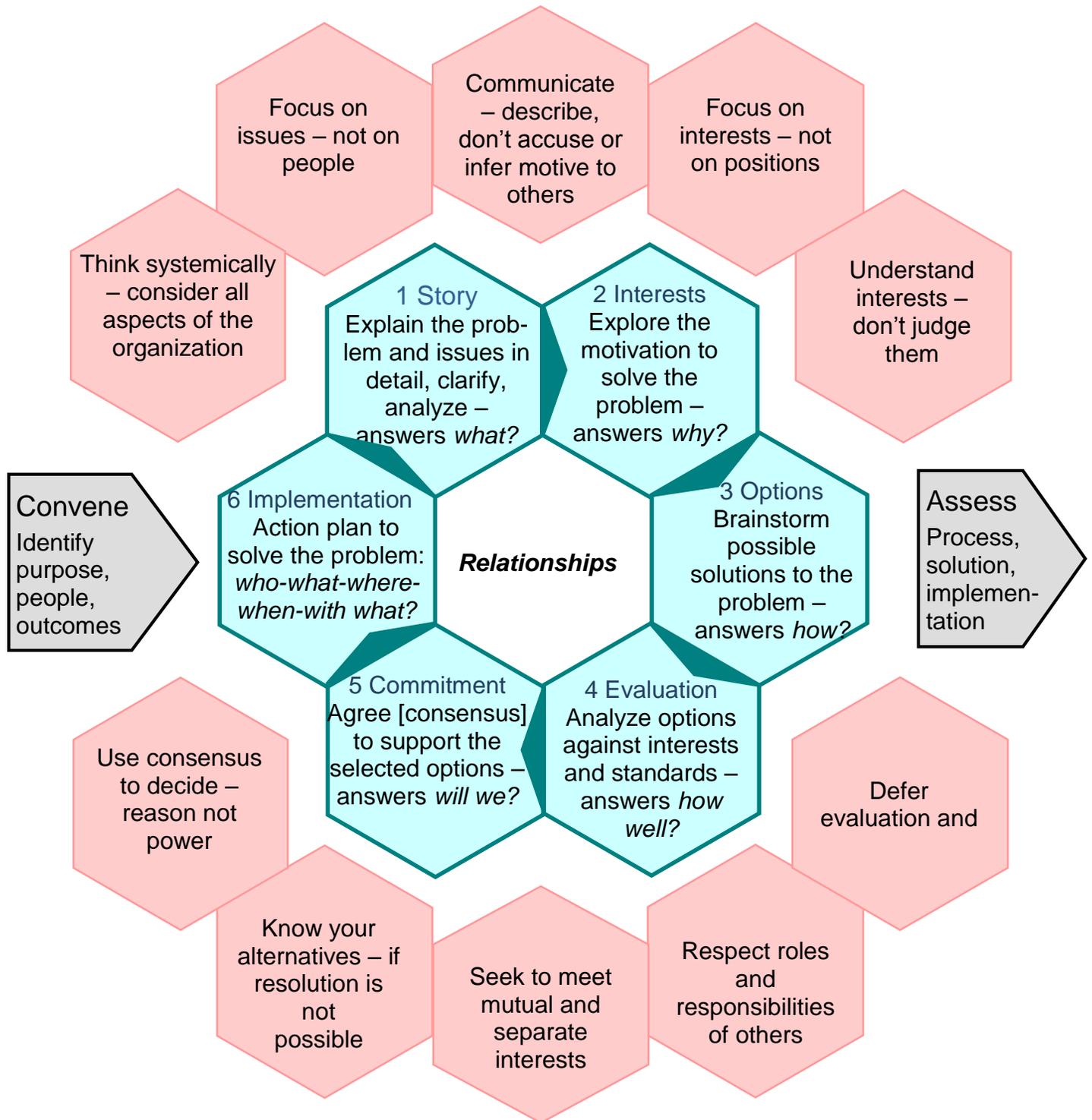


# The Interest Based Problem Solving Process

- 1. Identify and define the issue**
- 2. Discuss all interests behind the issue**  
*Seek to understand, not to judge*
- 3. Establish standards**
- 4. Generate options**  
*Brainstorm, do not evaluate*
- 5. Evaluate each option against the standards**
- 6. Develop a solution that satisfies both sides interests**



# Interest-Based Strategy: Attitudes, Behaviors and Components



An interest-based strategy for problem solving, negotiations and communications involves the six *components* in the inner hexagons plus the *Convening* and *Assessing* components, and relies on the ten key *attitudes* and *behaviors* identified in the outer hexagons. *Relationships* are the context in which all problem solving, negotiations and communications takes place.

## Interest-Based Strategy: Problem Solving, Negotiations, Communications

---

### Key principles:

- Focus on issues not on individuals
- Use reason rather than power
- Focus on interests not on positions.

### Critical assumptions:

- The most effective solutions to problems are reached with all affected parties involved in making

the decision — and in determining the implementation of the solution.

- The parties are in a relationship with each other and will continue in such a relationship. Therefore, group decisions must consider the relationship aspect of a problem and its solutions just as much as the content aspect.

***An interest-based strategy seeks a good solution, not just an agreement.***

## Interest-Based Strategy: Components

---

### Story

- Describe problems and issues in detail
- Honor perceptions of others
- Clarify
- Seek perceptions, texture, background
- Describe, don't characterize or blame
- Record for group memory

### Interests

- Frame Interests, not positions
- Look for underlying motivations
- Discover your Interests *and* their Interests
- Understand Interests – don't judge them
- Challenge assumptions
- Prioritize

*Key Point:* In an interest-based strategy the parties *always have the ability to say “no,”* but they *have the responsibility to explain* their objection in terms of their interests.

### Options: Brainstorming possible solutions

- Build on others' Ideas.
- *Reserve judgment.*
- *Aim for quantity.*
- Imagine wildly.
- May be partial solution

- I believe that I understand you
- Whether or not I prefer this decision, I support it because...
- It was reached openly and fairly **and**
- It's the best solution for us at this time

### Evaluation

- Analyze Options in light of Interests
- Similar Options can be combined
- Many techniques available
- Identify tentative solutions

### Implementation

- What will be done?
- Who will do each action step?
- When will each action be done?
- Where will the action be done?
- How will the actions be monitored?
- How will progress be verified?
- How will the plan be adjusted if needed?

### Commitment: Consensus

- A decision in which all members of a group can agree on the result
- I believe that you understand me

Content developed through a collaborative effort of  
NEA and North American Association of Educational Negotiators

# Principles of Conflict Resolution

## **Separate the people from the problem**

*Be soft on the people and hard on the problem*

## **Focus on interests, not positions**

*When positions look incompatible, look at interests.*

## **Generate options for mutual gain**

*Work for a win/win solution*

## **Assure a fair process**

*Process is just as important as the outcome*

## **Practice direct communication**

*Talk with others, not about them*

# Conflict Resolution Models

<b><i>Soft Positional</i></b>	<b><i>Hard Positional</i></b>	<b><i>Interest Based</i></b>
<i>Participants are friends</i>	<i>Participants are adversaries</i>	<i>Participants are problem-solvers</i>
<i>The goal is an agreement</i>	<i>The goal is victory</i>	<i>The goal is a wise outcome, reached efficiently and amicably</i>
<i>Make concessions to cultivate the relationship</i>	<i>Demand concessions as a condition for relationship</i>	<i>Separate the people from the problem</i>
<i>Be soft on the people and the problem</i>	<i>Be hard on the people and the problem</i>	<i>Be soft on the people, hard on the problem</i>
<i>Trust others</i>	<i>Distrust others</i>	<i>Proceed independently of trust</i>
<i>Change your position easily</i>	<i>Dig into your position</i>	<i>Focus on interests, not positions</i>
<i>Make offers</i>	<i>Make threats</i>	<i>Explore interests</i>
<i>Disclose your bottom line</i>	<i>Mislead as to your bottom line</i>	<i>Avoid having a bottom line</i>
<i>Accept one-sided losses to reach agreement</i>	<i>Demand one-sided gains as the price of agreement</i>	<i>Invent options for mutual gain</i>
<i>Search for the single answer: the one they will accept</i>	<i>Search for the single answer: the one you will accept</i>	<i>Develop multiple options to choose from, decide later</i>
<i>Insist on agreement</i>	<i>Insist on your position</i>	<i>Insist on using objective criteria</i>
<i>Try to avoid a contest of wills</i>	<i>Try to win a contest of wills</i>	<i>Try to reach a result based on standards, independent of will</i>
<i>Yield to pressure</i>	<i>Apply pressure</i>	<i>Reason and be open to reason: yield to principle, not to pressure</i>

Reprinted from *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fischer and William Ury, 1981.

# Perceptions Exercise

How old is the woman in this portrait?



From Conflict Management Inc. 1998.

# The Concept of Partisan Perceptions

**People tend unconsciously to interpret information pertaining to their own side in a strongly self-serving way...**

**While we systematically err in processing information critical to our own side, we are even worse at assessing the other side...**

Extensive research has documented an unconscious mechanism that enhances one's own side, "portraying it as more talented, honest, and morally upright," while simultaneously vilifying the opposition. This often leads to exaggerated perceptions of the other side's position and overestimates of the actual substantive conflict.

To an outsider, those caught up in disintegrating partnerships or marriages often appear to hold exaggerated views of each other. Such partisan perceptions can become even more virulent among people on each side of divides, such as Israelis and Palestinians, Bosnian Muslims and the Serbs, or Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

**Partisan perceptions can easily become self-fulfilling prophecies.**

Experiments testing the effects of teachers' expectations of students, psychiatrists' diagnoses of mental patients, and platoon leaders' expectations of their trainees confirm the notion that partisan perceptions often shape behavior. At the negotiating table, clinging firmly to the idea that one's counterpart is stubborn or extreme, for example, is likely to trigger just that behavior, sharply reducing the possibility of reaching a constructive agreement.

Excerpted from "*Six Habits of Merely Effective Negotiators*,"  
Harvard Business Review, Vol. 79, No. 4, April 2001.

# Conducting a Learning Conversation

## Think Honestly

- ▶ Recognize partisan perceptions (yours and theirs)
- ▶ Separate impact from intent

## Act Openly

- ▶ Frame the conversation constructively
- ▶ Explore each other's stories and reasoning
- ▶ Listen actively

## Problem Solve Jointly

- ▶ Separate relationship issues from substantive ones, and deal with both on parallel tracks
- ▶ Explore interests
- ▶ Generate many options
- ▶ Settle differences on the basis of legitimate standards

Excerpted from Conflict Management Inc. 1997

---

## Opening Behaviors: To Get from Positions to Interests

- 🔊 “Tell me more about the situation from your perspective.”
- 🔊 “So if I understand what you are saying...”
- 🔊 “Can you tell me what you are most concerned about in this situation?”
- 🔊 “If I’ve got it right, you are concerned that...”
- 🔊 “If we could do \_\_\_\_, would that help?”
- 🔊 “What is it that is important to you about \_\_\_\_?”

Excerpted from *Conflict Resolution: Strategies for Collaborative Problem Solving*, by Raider and Coleman.

# Active Listening Techniques

## 1. Finding out more information

*Examples:*

- “What are you concerned about?”
- “When did this begin?”
- “How long have you known each other?”
- “Where did you last see your books?”
- “How much money do you think it was worth?”

## 2. Repeating back the information

*Examples:*

- “So you would like her to stop giving you dirty looks.”
- “You’re saying that you don’t know when you first noticed it happening.”
- “So you feel like he owes you \$9.00.”
- “So you would still like to be her friend if she wants to be yours.”

## 3. Repeating back the feelings

*Examples:*

- “You seem angry about all of this.”
- “I get the feeling that you are sad about what has taken place.”
- “You seem frightened about what is going to happen.”
- “You seem mad about the situation.”

## 4. Encourage the other party to speak

*Examples:*

- “Please go on.”
- “Thanks for taking the time to explain this. I appreciate your patience.”
- “Tell me more, I really want to make sure that I understand what you want.”
- “You are really working hard to resolve this. Thanks.”

## 5. Summarize what the other party says

*Examples:*

- “So you are saying you are concerned about these three things: the money, your friendship, and getting your books back.”
- “So overall you seem to be saying that you like her, but you don’t really want to be friends anymore...”
- “The things you want from him are....”
- “You’re saying that the problems you want to talk about here today are...”

Adapted from Conflict Resolution: A Secondary School Curriculum,  
by the Community Board Program Inc., 1987.

# Practice Sheet

<b>Issue:</b>	
<b>Traditional Positions:</b>	
<i>Yours:</i>	<i>Theirs:</i>
<b>Interests:</b>	
<i>Yours:</i>	<i>Theirs:</i>
<b>Options:</b>	

# Notes

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for taking notes. It occupies most of the page's vertical space.



**DEVELOPING THE  
STORY:  
Interest Based  
Problem Solving**

Interest-based problem solving relies on a series of steps, commitments and behaviors that help groups seek a good solution, not just an agreement.

**The Montgomery  
Institute**



A partnership of the NEA Center for Organizing & the MCEA Center for Teacher Leadership

# Develop the Story

---

## Identify and Define the Problems: Checklist

Discuss the problem and develop a question that...

- Includes the subject (*What is the problem about?*)
- Identifies the issue regarding the subject (*What is the issue?*)
- Seeks information (*How might we? How can we? What shall we?*)
  - Cannot be answered with Yes or No
  - Contains no solutions
  - Contains no accusations or inflammatory wording
  - Reach consensus on the form, wording and substance of the question

## Defining the Problem and Issues: Example

**Issue Statement:** Employees are claiming that caseloads of students are being improperly allocated based on favoritism and are demanding that this practice be stopped immediately and that a standard pupil to counselor ratio be used by administration.

- Separate the solution from the problem
  - Result: Employees are claiming that caseloads of students are being improperly allocated based on favoritism.
- Separate the people from the problem
  - Result: Students are being improperly allocated based on favoritism
- Present the issue as a question:
  - Result: Can administration stop the favoritism in the allocation of students?
- Frame as a Joint Problem
  - Result: Can we stop favoritism in the allocation of students?
- Open to multiple solutions
  - Result: What can we do to stop favoritism in the allocation of students?
- Frame objectively
  - Result: What will we do to address the standards for allocation of students?

## Identify the Interests Checklist

- Look for underlying motivations
- Ask yourself:
  - Why is this important?
  - What conditions will be addressed?
- Discover your interests and their interests – which are shared or interdependent?
- Use a framework of interests NOT positions
- Remember – it is easier to reconcile interests than positions
- Challenge the assumptions
- Prioritize – which are most important to address through an interest-based process?

**KEY POINT: Interests are NOT actions, activities or programs BUT the impact of the actions, activities or programs**

## Sorting out Actions, Activities and Programs Checklist of Questions

- If this action, activity or program is implemented, what needs would be addressed?
- Why is a decision on this topic important?
- What would be the results or consequences?
- How will this decision impact the topic that you are addressing?

**Interests** are a primary tool for evaluating the value of options when addressing the problem or issue in the Interest-based Strategies Process. *“The basic problem in decision making lies not in conflicting positions, but due to a lack of understanding of each side’s needs, desires, concerns, and fears. Such desires and concerns are interests. Interests motivate peoples; they are the silent movers behind the hubbub of positions. Your position is something you have decided upon. Your interests are what caused you to decide.”* – Fischer and Ury in Getting to Yes

**Defining and capturing interests is a critical step in Interest-based Strategies.** It is a difficult concept for many people to understand as it is an additional step in most people’s decision making process. Most decision making processes start with a story and then jump to a decision - or at best, options and then a decision. In consensus decision-making processes, developing and understanding interests are very important in reaching consensus. Some feel that adding interests slows down the decision-making process, when in fact, building understanding on the parties’ needs, desires, concerns and fears, leads to consensus decisions. The process also establishes trust and offers the opportunity for creativity in reaching more complete and longer lasting decision on very complex issues. – Jermitt Krage

## Developing the Story: Workspace

What is the problem about? What is the current situation?

Why is the problem or current situation an issue?

How might we? How can we? How shall we?

Why is this important? What issues will be addressed? Which issues may be shared?

What is/are the open-ended question(s) you have developed

# Collaborative Committee Agenda and Notes Template

Date **from** Time **PM** at **MCEA – 12 Taft Court**, Room Location

## Attendance (x denotes attended)

	Co-chair		Co-chair
	member		member
MCEA and/or MCPS Facilitator			

## Meeting Norms

This is where the committee would record their norms and agreements and as part of best practice would revisit at the start of each meeting.

## Agenda

TIME	WHO	TOPIC - Convene
<b>(10 minutes)</b>	<b>Co-chairs</b>	<b>Welcome, convene, assign roles and review norms</b>
<b>NOTES:</b>		
<p><b>3 Minutes: Assign and review roles</b>                      Lead Facilitators:      Co-Chairs:                      Note Taker:                      Time Keeper:                      Process Observer/Key Communications:                      Issue Bin/Action/Agenda:</p> <p><b>2 Min REMINDER</b> Review norms; cell phones and laptops need to be put away; stick to the timeframes – if we agree to extend discussion on topics, then we need to recognize that this limits discussion on other topics that are also important</p> <p><b>5 Min Agenda Review and Proposed Changes</b></p>		

TIME	WHO	TOPIC
Notes:		
<i>Expected Outcome: These would be pre-determined by the co-chairs or the lead for this topic</i>		

TIME	WHO	TOPIC
NOTES:		
<i>Expected Outcome: These would be pre-determined by the co-chairs or the lead for this topic</i>		

TIME	WHO	TOPIC - Break
<b>(15 minutes)</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>BREAK</b>

TIME	WHO	TOPIC –
Notes:		
<i>Expected Outcome: These would be pre-determined by the co-chairs or the lead for this topic</i>		

TIME	WHO	TOPIC – Develop communication message & Adjourn
<b>(20 Minutes)</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Communication Message:</b>
<b>NOTES:</b>		
<p>This is the area that the committee would co-develop the message that would be sent to constituents regarding the meeting.</p>		
<b>ISSUE BIN: WHAT DO WE STILL NEED TO WORK ON – WHAT ISSUES HAVE PRESENTED THAT NEED DISCUSSION</b>		
<p>Here is where the committee can keep track of and prioritize Issues that they want to address, prioritize them and determine which need a full interest-based method applied to them.</p>		

TIME	WHO	TOPIC
<b>(10 Mins)</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Information Items</b>
<b>NOTES</b>		
<p>Here is where committee members or co-chairs can discuss any news pertinent to the committee.</p>		

TIME	WHO	TOPIC
<b>(5 Mins)</b>	<b>Process Observer</b>	<b>Meeting Evaluation</b>
<b>Plus – What worked well for you and why?</b>		<b>Delta – What would you suggest as an upgrade?</b>

**Future Meeting Dates:**

The committee would keep track of meeting dates in this box.

**Future Agenda Items - NOTE TAKER**

In this area, the committee would track what topics are identified as need to be on a future agenda and assign an approximate date.

Item	Who Leads It	Date and Length of Time Needed

**Action Plan – NOTE TAKER**

In this area the committee records the actions items identified in the meeting, assigns who will lead that and sets a timeline for accomplishing the action

**IMMEDIATE**

WHO	TASK	WHEN

**SOON**

WHO	TASK	WHEN

**LONG TERM**

WHO	TASK	WHEN