

Procedures for Disputes

Dispute resolution will start at the level where the parent has the problem. If it is a classroom or teacher problem, the resolve will start there. If the problem is a school related issue then it will start with the Principal. We will work hard to instill in our staff and school community that there is a "chain of command" for solving problems and issues. We will refer and use this process when practical. It is realized that some issues are of a serious nature and it is appropriate to bypass the "chain of command". Again, we will try to resolve all issues at the appropriate level. If a conflict cannot be resolved by the Principal, then the Principal will refer to the Board of Directors. The SKY Academy Englewood's Board of Directors will resolve conflicts using the following steps.

- Step 1. Informal hearings with the Board of Directors and the party with whom the conflict has arisen
- Step 2. Written notice to the complainant.
- Step 3. Meeting between the Board of Directors and the complainant
- Step 4. Include the matter on the School District Board agenda. This will be a public hearing got resolve the issue.

If the Board of Directors and the School Board are unable to resolve a dispute, then pursuant to Section 1002.33(6)(h), Florida State Statutes, the Florida Department of Education shall provide mediation services. If the Commissioner of Education determines that the dispute cannot be settled through mediation, the dispute may be appealed to an administrative law judge appointed by the Division of Administrative Hearings.

In order to avoid the above mentioned the SKY Academy Englewood will make every effort to train the staff and administration using the following as resources.

Conflict in the schools seems to be a fact of life. People are different and therefore they have different goals and needs. Sometimes these goals and needs come into conflict. The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing. As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth. In many cases effective conflict resolution skills can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes. ("Mind Tools, Essential skills for an Excellent Career") This resource will provide the information that we will use for conflict resolution with parents, students and staff.

The SKY Academy Englewood will use Steven Covey's book, *Seven Habits for Highly Effective People*, as a resource. One of the habits is practicing a "win-win" strategy for conflict resolution. This is in line with the decision making strategy of consensus. Everyone must agree with the solution however, they don't have to like it but they can live with it. We will strive for consensus whenever possible.

The key to successful conflict resolution for our school is to model, teach and learn conflict resolution skills. The SKY Academy Englewood staff will be trained in several models of conflict resolution during professional development activities. The initial training will be followed up with frequent refresher sessions about conflict resolution skills. Benefits of successful conflict resolution

include increased understanding of the situation, increased group cohesion, and improved self-knowledge.

In the 1970s Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict that vary in degrees of cooperativeness and assertiveness. People typically prefer a particular conflict resolution style. It is from this research that the Wellness Academy staff will be trained. Each staff member will be given the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) to identify which style each staff member tend toward when conflict arises.

Thomas and Kilmann's styles of conflict resolution that our staff will use are:

- Competitive
- Collaborative
- Compromising
- Accommodating
- Avoiding

Once these different styles are understood, they can be used to think about the most appropriate approach (or mixture of approaches) for the situation. Ideally an approach can be adopted that meets each situation and resolves the problem, respects people's legitimate interests, and mends damaged working relationships.

A second theory that we will use to train our staff is the "Understanding Theory: The "Interest-Based Relational Approach" (IBR). In resolving conflict using this approach these rules are followed. Make sure that good relationships are the first priority.

Keep people and problem separate.

Pay attention to the interests that are being presented.

Listen first; talk second.

Set out the "Facts".

Explore options together.

By following these rules, one can often keep contentious discussions positive and constructive.

This helps to prevent the antagonism and dislike which so often causes conflict to spin out of control. When using a conflict resolution "tool" make sure that over time people understand that different styles may suit different situations. A conflict resolution process must be used to resolve the conflict. The staff of the SKY Academy Englewood will use this conflict resolution process.

Step One: Set the Scene — use the IBR approach, use active listening then restate, paraphrase and summarize, make sure when you talk use an adult assertive approach rather than a submissive or aggressive style.

Step Two: Gather Information — listen with empathy and see the conflict from the other person's point of view, identify issues clearly and concisely, use "I" statements, remain flexible, clarify feelings.

Step Three: Agree the Problem — mutually agree on what the problem is.

Step Four: Brainstorm Possible Solutions — make sure everyone has had fair input in generating solutions, open all ideas.

Step Five: Negotiate a Solution — use a win-win negotiation that at least to some extent satisfies everyone. Be calm, be patient, have respect.

We realize that conflict in the workplace can be incredibly destructive to good teamwork. Managed in the wrong way, real legitimate differences between people can quickly spiral out of control, resulting in situations where co-operation breaks down and the team's mission is threatened. We will strive to calm situations down, it helps to take a positive approach to conflict resolution, where discussion is courteous and non-confrontational, and the focus is on issues rather than on individuals. If this is done, then, as long as people listen carefully and explore facts, issues and possible solutions properly, conflict can often be resolved effectively. When conflict arises the goal of the Wellness Academy is to keep conflict at a minimum, resolve conflict effectively, make sure all staff knows how to resolve conflict effectively and ensure the preservation of the mission of the school.