

Chapter 7

Communication and Collaborative Partnerships

Teaming/Collaborations

Effective teaming is critical to the success of the delivery of services by both certified teachers and paraprofessionals. Effective teaming requires that team members share a common vision for achieving their mutual goal-delivering educational services to meet the need of all children. The beliefs they have about curriculum and instructional practice support this vision. If one member of the team's beliefs are consistent with an education model supporting conventional instruction and the other member of the team's beliefs are consistent with an educational model supporting reform instruction, it is going to be difficult for the team to work together.

Communication serves as the foundation for teaming. It involves the exchange of information between parties, and should help both parties assist the child in learning. Effective communicators reach out beyond themselves to the people with whom they are working. Good communication is "other-focused," not "self-centered". Much of the failure to communicate can be blamed on failure to understand and respect people's feelings, and unwillingness to cooperate, or a needless show of authority.

How You Act In Conflicts

(10/26/82; Comstock Memorial Union, Moorhead State University, 1995)

The proverbs listed below can be thought of as descriptions of some of the different strategies for resolving conflicts. Proverbs state traditional wisdom, and these proverbs reflect traditional wisdom for resolving conflicts. Read each of the proverbs carefully. Using the following scale, indicate how typical each proverb is of your actions in a conflict.

- 5 = very typical of the way I act in a conflict
 4 = frequently typical of the way I act in a conflict
 3 = sometimes typical of the way I act in a conflict
 2 = seldom typical of the way I act in a conflict
 1 = never typical of the way I act in a conflict.

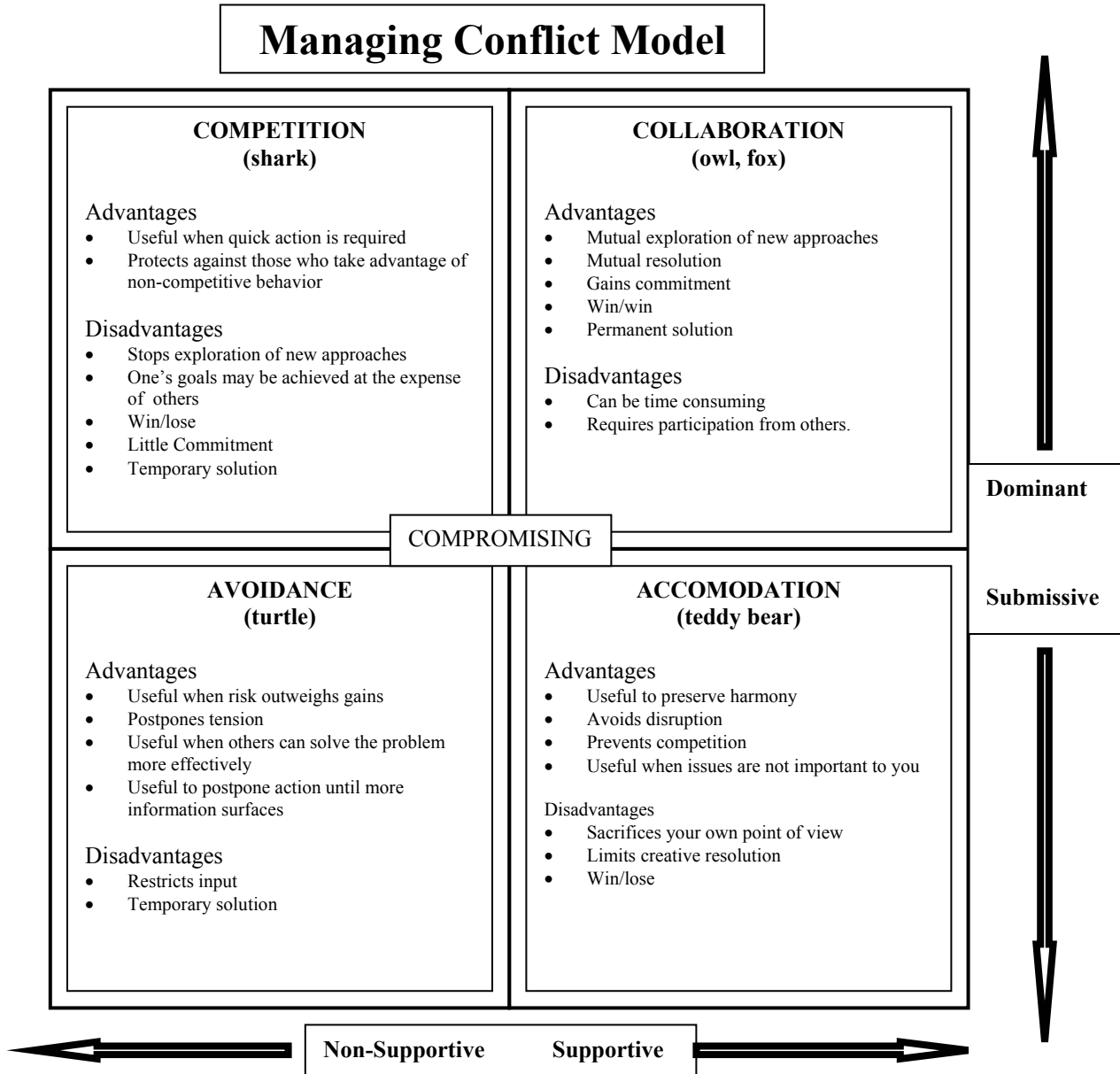
1. It is easier to refrain than to retreat from a quarrel.
2. If you cannot make a person think as you do, make him or her do as you think.
3. Soft words win hard hearts.
4. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.
5. Come now and let us reason together.
6. When two quarrel, the person who keeps silent first is the most praiseworthy.
7. Might overcomes right.
8. Smooth words make smooth ways.
9. Better half a loaf than no bread at all.
10. Truth lies in knowledge, not in majority opinion.
11. He who fights and runs away lives to fight another day.
12. He hath conquered well that hath made his enemies flee.
13. Kill your enemies with kindness.
14. A fair exchange brings no quarrel.
15. No person has the final answer but every person has a piece to contribute.

- ___ 16. Stay away from people who disagree with you.
- ___ 17. Fields are won by those who believe in winning.
- ___ 18. Kind words are worth much and cost little.
- ___ 19. Tit for tat is fair play.
- ___ 20. Only the person who is willing to give up her or his monopoly on truth can ever profit from the truths that others hold.
- ___ 21. Avoid quarrelsome people, as they will only make your life miserable.
- ___ 22. A person who will not flee will make others flee.
- ___ 23. Soft words ensure harmony.
- ___ 24. One gift for another makes good friends.
- ___ 25. Bring your conflicts into the open and face them directly; only then will the best solution be discovered.
- ___ 26. The best way of handling conflicts is to avoid them.
- ___ 27. Put your foot down where you mean to stand.
- ___ 28. Gentleness will triumph over anger.
- ___ 29. Getting part of what you want is better than not getting anything at all.
- ___ 30. Frankness, honesty, and trust will move mountains.
- ___ 31. There is nothing so important you have to fight for it.
- ___ 32. There are two kinds of people in the world, the winners and the losers.
- ___ 33. When one hits you with a stone, hit her or him with a piece of cotton.
- ___ 34. When both give in halfway, a fair settlement is achieved.
- ___ 35. By digging and digging, the truth is discovered.

Scoring

Withdrawing	Forcing	Smoothing	Compromising	Confronting
___ 1.	___ 2.	___ 3.	___ 4.	___ 5.
___ 6.	___ 7.	___ 8.	___ 9.	___ 10.
___ 11.	___ 12.	___ 13.	___ 14.	___ 15.
___ 16.	___ 17.	___ 18.	___ 19.	___ 20.
___ 21.	___ 22.	___ 23.	___ 24.	___ 25.
___ 26.	___ 17.	___ 28.	___ 29.	___ 30.
___ 31.	___ 32.	___ 33.	___ 34.	___ 35.
___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL	___ TOTAL

The higher the total score for each conflict strategy, the more frequently you tend to use that strategy. The lower the total score for each conflict strategy, the less frequently you tend to use that strategy.



Conflict Strategies: What are you like?

Different people use different strategies for managing conflicts. These strategies are learned, usually in childhood, and they seem to function automatically. Usually we are not aware of how we act in conflict situations. We just do whatever seems to come naturally. But we do have a personal strategy; and because it was learned, we can always change it by learning new and more effective ways of managing conflicts.

When you become engaged in a conflict, there are two major concerns you have to take into account:

1. Achieving your personal goals – you are in conflict because you have a goal that conflicts with another person’s goal. Your goal may be highly important to you, or it may be of little importance.
2. Keeping a good relationship with the other person – you may need to be able to interact effectively with the other person in the future. The relationship may be very important to you, or it may be of little importance.

How important your personal goals are to you and how important the relationship is to you affect how you act in a conflict. Given these two concerns, it is possible to identify five styles of managing conflicts:

The turtle (withdrawing): Turtles withdraw into their shells to avoid conflicts. They give up on their personal goals and relationships. They stay away from the issues over which the conflict is taking place and from the persons they are in conflict with. Turtles believe it is hopeless to try to resolve conflicts. They feel helpless. They believe it is easier to withdraw (physically and psychologically) from a conflict than to face it.

The shark (forcing): Sharks try to overpower opponent by forcing them to accept their solution to the conflict. Their goals are highly important to them, and relationships are of minor importance. They seek to achieve their goals at all costs. They are not concerned with the needs of others. They do not care if others like or accept them. Sharks assume that conflicts are settled by one person winning and one person losing. They want to be the winner. Winning gives sharks a sense of pride and achievement. Losing gives time a sense of weakness, inadequacy, and failure. They try to win by attacking, overpowering, overwhelming, and intimidating others.

The teddy bear (smoothing): To teddy bears the relationship is of great importance while their own goals are of little importance. Teddy bears want to be accepted and liked by others. They think that conflict should be avoided in favor of harmony and that people cannot discuss conflicts without damaging relationships. They are afraid that if the conflict continues, someone will get hurt, and that would ruin the relationship. They give up their goals to preserve the relationship. Teddy bears say “I’ll give up my goals and let you have what you want, in order for you to like me”. Teddy bears try to smooth over the conflict out of fear of harming the relationship.

The fox (compromising): Foxes are moderately concerned with their own goals and their relationships with others. Foxes seek a compromise: they give up part of their goals and persuade the other person in a conflict to give up part of her/his goals. They seek a conflict solution in which both sides gain something – the middle ground between two extreme positions. They are willing to sacrifice part of their goals and relationships in order to find agreement for the common good.

The owl (confronting): Owls highly value their own goals and relationships. They view conflicts as problems to be solved and seek a solution that achieves both their own goals and the goals of the other person. Owls see conflicts as a means of improving relationships by reducing the tension between two persons. They try to begin a discussion that identifies the conflict as a problem. By seeking solutions that satisfy both themselves and the other person, owls maintain the relationship. Owls are not satisfied until a solution is found that achieves their own goals and the other person's goals. And they are not satisfied until the tensions and negative feelings have been fully resolved.