

Managing Team-Based Conflict

While conflict can be inherently intimidating to teachers, it can also be a positive experience that builds individual and group confidence. According to the authors of *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2002), the key to managing conflict is slowing your decisions down. Use the following chart, based on the strategies suggested in *Crucial Conversations*, to think through the next challenging situation that you face with a colleague.

Crucial Conversation Strategy	Your Response
<p><i>Describe the situation:</i> From your perspective, what has caused the conflict that you are currently experiencing?</p>	
<p><i>Identify your motive:</i> What is the real issue that you want addressed? What are you hoping to get out of this conversation?</p> <p>Remember that being honest about your true feelings is the first step towards working this conflict to conclusion.</p>	
<p><i>Make it safe:</i> How can you communicate a sense of mutual purpose to your colleague? What shared goals are you working towards together?</p> <p>Remember that colleagues are much more likely to resolve conflict when they know that you see them as valuable members of your team rather than enemies.</p>	
<p><i>Master your emotions:</i> What stories are you using to explain your colleague's behavior and/or decisions?</p> <p>Remember that the stories you tell are not always accurate pictures of reality. Concentrating on facts guarantees that you are not unfairly or inaccurately judging your peers.</p>	
<p><i>Understand other perspectives:</i> How do you think your colleague views the discontent between the two of you?</p> <p>Remember that successful conflict resolution depends on collaborative—instead of competitive—conversations. Where might there be overlap in your ideas that you can use as building blocks for agreement?</p>	