Maintaining Professional Relationships with Colleagues
Resource Bundle

I. Maintaining Professional Relationships with Colleagues Resource

II. References
At times relationships with colleagues can be difficult due to differences in opinion, years of experience, roles in the school, etc. Use the following principles to improve the situation if communication has become contentious or unproductive.

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<th>Principles</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Reflective Question</th>
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| Operate with an asset-based perspective | • Be open-minded and suspend judgement.  
• Ask clarifying and probing questions¹ to better understand someone else’s actions, beliefs, or perspective in a situation.  
• Identify the strengths that your colleague brings to the table (e.g. years of experience, enthusiasm, relationship-building, content expertise).  
• Find common ground, and use it as a starting point for discussing differences in opinion. | To what extent have I consciously identified the strengths and experience my colleague brings to this situation? |
| Engage in reflexivity | • Reflect on the context of the situation. Identify your own position and level of perceived power in the situation².  
• Be aware that the content of your message and how it is communicated may impact others in ways that were different from what you intended.  
• Consider how others could interpret your words, tone, and actions.  
• Identify and focus on the things you can control and contribute when partnering with colleagues. | How could others interpret my actions, words, and tone? |
| Build rapport | • Take the time to get to know your colleagues personally.  
• Recognize the effort and ideas of your colleagues as you work alongside them.  
• Uphold your promises and fulfill your responsibilities to develop trust.  
• Be responsible by proactively resolving an issue with a colleague and speaking directly with him/her. | What actions have I taken to get to know my colleague and recognize the work they’ve done? |

Professionalism concerns can also arise when we develop friendships with our colleagues. Observe this principle to maintain professionalism when working with colleagues with whom you’ve developed close friendships.

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| Maintain professional boundaries | • Keep interactions professional. Don’t gossip about students, colleagues, or employers.  
• Consider how others could interpret your words, tone, and actions.  
• Refrain from discussing personal information that is not appropriate for a work or school setting³.  
• Periodically reflect on your relationships with colleagues. Consult with different colleagues or school leaders to determine if you’ve maintained professional boundaries. | In what ways has our friendship disrupted or enhanced the positive culture or professional work environment for peers and/or students? |

¹ Some questions could be: Can you explain or unpack that idea/comment more? To make sure I understood you correctly, are you saying (paraphrase statement)? How did you decide upon that course of action?, What is the connection between… and…?
² The number of years teaching, length of time at a school, subject and grade level, committee positions held, and the relationships that a teacher has built are all factors that can lead to a perceived difference in power.
³ Discussing personal topics after hours, off-location with friends is acceptable.


Hoy, L. K., Bradley, J., & Horwitz, J. (2012). Does your school have a Doug Franklin? teachers can be the most important resource in the building. *Journal of Staff Development, 33*(1), 50


