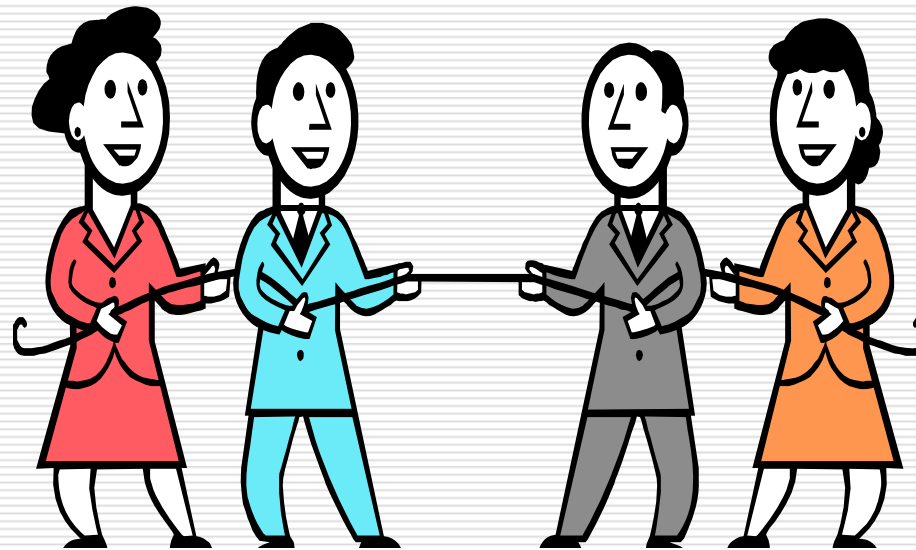


Managing Conflict in Today's Schools



Developed from the Contents of
Reginald Leon Green's

Practicing the Art of
Leadership: A Problem-based
Approach to Implementing
the ISLLC Standards

Chapter 6

Conflict Defined

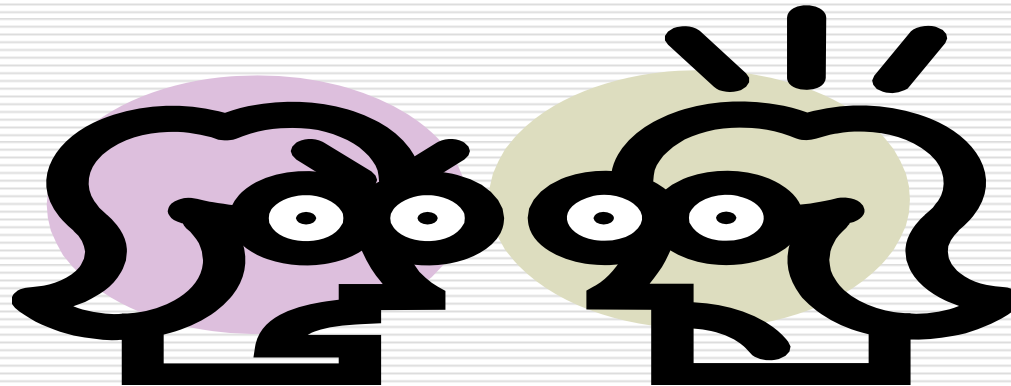
- "The interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and views, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals."

Putnam & Poole (1987, p. 352)

Conflict in Schools

- Conflict occurring in schools is latent and exists because of divergent views and incompatibility of those views.

Owens (1995)



Conflict Occurring in Schools

- Within an individual
 - Between individuals
 - Among faculty members
 - Between groups within the larger faculty
 - Between the school leadership and central administration
-

The Nature of Conflict

- Conflict can be functional or dysfunctional.
-

Functional Conflict

- When conflict is functional, the school benefits; there is a win-win attitude, and harmony exists.

Owens (1995)



Dysfunctional Conflict

- When conflict is dysfunctional, there is a win-lose attitude and hostility is produced.

Owens (1995)



Types of Conflict

Interpersonal

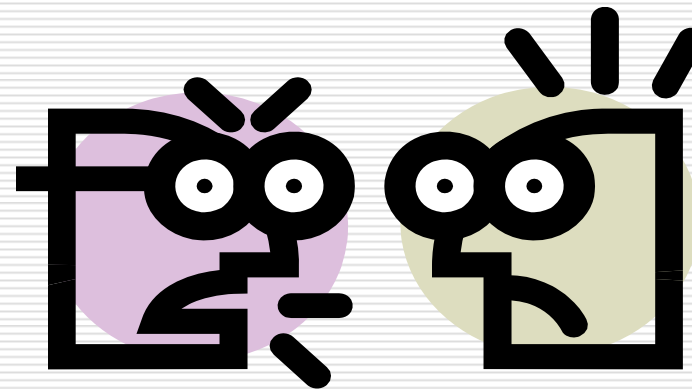
Intergroup

Interorganizational

Role

Types of Conflict

1. Interpersonal--conflict that exists between individuals within a group

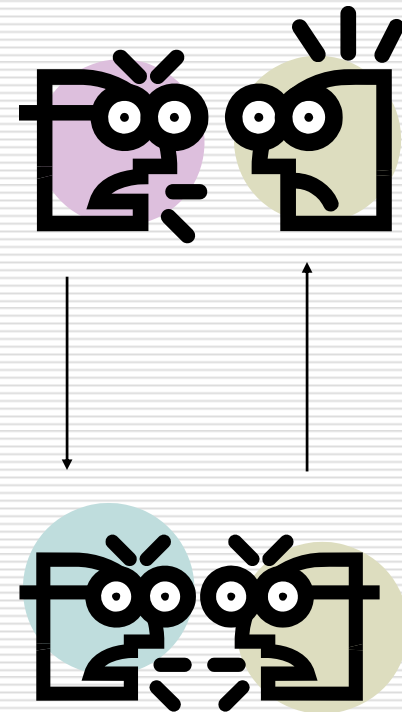


Barge (1994, p. 163)

Types of Conflict

- 2. Intergroup--
conflict that
exists between
two groups within
an organization

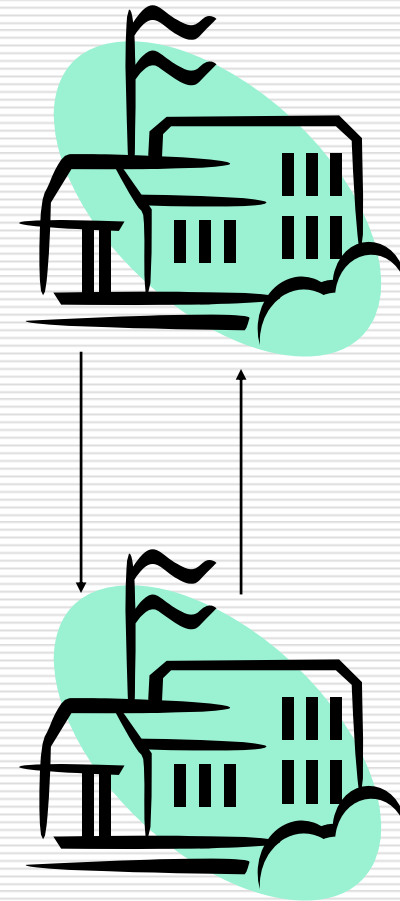
Barge (1994, p. 163)



Types of Conflict

- 3. Interorganizational--
conflict that exists
between two
organizations

Barge (1994, p. 163)



Types of Conflict

- 4. Role--Incompatibilities between the expectations individuals hold for other individuals as they perform various functions in schools
-

Three Main Causes of Conflict

- ❑ Competition for scarce resources
 - ❑ Desire for autonomy
 - ❑ Divergence in goals
-

Conflict Management

A Challenge for School Leaders



Conflict Management Defined

- Conflict management is the process of resolving and minimizing the disagreements resulting from perceived or real differences

Greenhalgh (1986)

Strategies for Managing Conflict

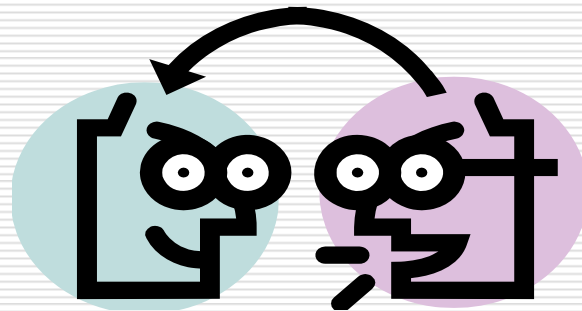
- Avoidance**
 - Smoothing**
 - Bargaining**
 - Power struggle**
 - Problem solving**
-

Strategies for Managing Conflict

- Avoidance--used when the leader wants to maintain a rational climate and avoid hostility (does not resolve the conflict)
-

Strategies for Managing Conflict

- Smoothing--The leader wants to maintain positive interpersonal relationships and attempts to minimize differences of opinion.



Strategies for Managing Conflict

- Bargaining--The leader shows moderate levels of concern for both task and relationship (disputing parties make concessions; neither party wins nor loses completely).
-

Strategies for Managing Conflict

- Power struggle--The leader shows little concern for interpersonal relationships. The major focus is on task accomplishment. Power and force are used to break down the opposition, regardless of the consequences.
-

Strategies for Managing Conflict

- Problem solving--The leader displays a collaborative approach to managing conflict. The primary concern is accomplishing the task in a manner that is rational and allows a positive climate to be maintained.
-

Conflict

- Conflict is an inevitable and all-pervasive element in schools. When it occurs, effective leaders seek to manage it, giving consideration to:
-

Conflict

- The nature of the conflict
 - Its intensity
 - The people involved, and
 - The seriousness of issues
-

References

- Barge, J. K. (1994). *Leadership: Communication skills for organizations and groups*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Greenhalgh, L. (1986). SMR forum: Managing conflict. *Sloan Management Review*, 27, 45-51.
- Owens, R. G. (1995). *Organizational behavior in education* (5th ed.) Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Putnam, L. L. & Poole, M. S. (1987). Conflict and negotiation. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. Roberts, & L. W. Porter (eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 503-548). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
-