

Conflict Culture Reflection Tool - School Teams

What this tool is and is not:

- This tool is meant to be used to support the “collective reflection to fuel and inform crisis readiness”¹- an element of school crisis renewal.
- Tending to a school community’s capacity to hold and move through everyday ruptures and conflict is essential in fostering a healing-centered culture before, during, and in the aftermath of crisis.
- This tool is best applied to instructional leadership teams or other school-based teams that collaborate over a long time and regularly, although we also welcome adaptations to be used with students in the context of the classroom.
- This tool is not a toy and should only be used within an intentional and lovingly facilitated process. Please review [this document](#) for important questions and caveats to consider **BEFORE FACILITATING A GROUP IN USING THIS TOOL.**

This tool has been gathered from multiple sources and the lived experiences of its authors (Radicle Root Collective and School Crisis Recovery and Renewal) and others - too many to name here. However, much of the concepts and ideas are adapted from [Wildfire Project's Conflict Culture Assessment Tool](#) authored by Joshua Kahn Russell, Lex Barlowe, and Michael Strom. The design and structure was inspired by the assessments found in [Holding Change](#) by adrienne marie brown.

Feel free to use, with credit.

¹ <https://schoolcrisishealing.org/10-pillars-of-recovery-and-renewal/>

(Check the statement in each row that most closely aligns with your experience.)

Acknowledge Tension and Shift the Pace				Row Total: _____
<p>We are attuned to one another and the energy on our team. When tension begins to emerge, each person feels empowered to acknowledge it____(4)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, we practice paying attention to our breathing, taking breaks, moving our bodies, or utilizing other strategies to support us to slow down and stay engaged____(4)</p>	<p>We can sense when the energy on our team shifts. When tension begins to emerge, one of us is usually able to acknowledge it in the moment____(3)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, we are able to utilize strategies to shift the pace of our collaborations but are still working on finding the ones that support us to slow down and stay engaged____(3)</p>	<p>We tend to not be able to sense when the energy shifts on our team. When tension begins to emerge, we are rarely able to acknowledge it in the moment____(2)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, we can recognize ourselves speeding up or shutting down but we don't utilize strategies to support us to slow down and stay engaged____(2)</p>	<p>We are too distracted or disconnected to sense energy shifts on our team. When tension begins to emerge it feels too risky to acknowledge it in the moment____(1)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, the pace of our collaboration either speeds way up or grinds to a halt. We have not tried any strategies to support us to slow down and stay engaged____(1)</p>	
Address Power Dynamics				Row Total: _____
<p>School leadership and those of us who hold the most identity-based power² have a deep capacity for sitting in the discomfort and messiness of conflict. We are able to release control and still stay engaged in a conflict____(4)</p> <p>Our decision-making is participatory and inclusive regardless of whether we are in conflict or not. Those of us with the least amount of institutional and identity based power consistently feel heard and centered in our decision making____(4)</p>	<p>School leadership and those of us who hold the most identity-based power are able to sit in the discomfort and messiness of conflict. We are actively working on releasing control without checking out of the process____(3)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, we are able to include more voices on our team (and outside the team) to be heard and considered. Those of us with the least amount of institutional and identity based power often feel heard and centered in our decision making____(3)</p>	<p>School leadership and those of us who hold the most identity-based power can tolerate the discomfort and messiness of conflict. We still tend to check-out of the process if we don't have control over it____(2)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, our decision-making becomes less participatory and inclusive than when we are not in conflict. Those of us with the least amount of institutional and identity-based power feel less heard and centered when we are in conflict____(2)</p>	<p>School leadership and those with the most identity-based power move quickly to control or "fix" conflict____(1)</p> <p>When we are in conflict, our decision-making becomes rushed and top-down rather than participatory. Those of us with the least amount of institutional and identity-based power are regularly left out of decisions____(1)</p>	

Take Collective Responsibility for Solutions			Row Total: _____
<p>When we are in conflict, we actively practice strategies that resist escalation (self-compassion and self-education, racial and trauma-informed lens, inquiry, etc.). We reach for solutions that address root causes, even if they don't feel good for everyone ____ (4)</p> <p>We have a trusted and agreed-upon list of outside supports for the team (mediation practitioners, facilitators, colleagues, school leaders, etc.) and have a plan to access them if we get stuck in a conflict ____ (4)</p>	<p>When we are in conflict, we have tried some strategies to resist escalation (self-compassion and self-education, using a racial and trauma-informed lens, inquiry, etc.). We can often find solutions that make us feel good, but they don't necessarily address root causes ____ (3)</p> <p>We have a trusted and agreed-upon list of outside supports for the team (mediation practitioners, facilitators, colleagues, school leaders, etc.), but don't yet have a plan for accessing them ____ (3)</p>	<p>We tend to individualize conflict and reach for solutions that only address surface-level or short-term considerations ____ (2)</p> <p>We have access to outside supports for the team (mediation practitioners, facilitators, colleagues, school leaders, etc.), but haven't agreed upon them or created a plan for accessing them ____ (2)</p>	<p>We feel powerless in conflict and avoid or escalate it away from meaningful solutions ____ (1)</p> <p>We automatically turn to those with institutional authority (school or district administration, security guards, social workers, the criminal justice system, etc.) to give us solutions to our interpersonal conflicts ____ (1)</p>
Address Harm			Row Total: _____
<p>When we harm each other, we are consistently able to move through defensiveness to center the impact of the harm. We have the knowledge and skills to center those most impacted in shaping a path forward ____ (4)</p> <p>When we harm each other, we are practiced in non-binary thinking and are able to orient toward asking "why"? ____ (4)</p>	<p>When we harm each other, we often name our defensiveness and are able to support each other to move through it. We are learning the knowledge and skills to center the impact and those most impacted in shaping the path forward ____ (3)</p> <p>When we harm each other, we are able to use non-binary thinking and are still working on consistently asking "why"? ____ (3)</p>	<p>When we harm each other, we can sometimes name our defensiveness. We have not yet learned the knowledge and skills to center the impact and those most impacted in shaping the path forward ____ (2)</p> <p>When we harm each other, we often fall into binaries of "good and bad" and are rarely able to ask "why"? ____ (2)</p>	<p>When we harm each other, defensiveness takes over and we do not center the impact or those most impacted ____ (1)</p> <p>When we harm each other, we move quickly to punishment and taking sides. We often get stuck in shame and assume the worst of each other ____ (1)</p>

² When we use the term identity-based power, we are referring to the structural advantage that some bodies receive because of systems of oppression (white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism, etc.). These are bodies that are often socialized and read as white, cis, male, heterosexual, rich, able-bodied, and neurotypical, among others.

Apologize and Communicate Boundaries			Row Total: _____
<p>We proactively communicate when we make mistakes and the hurt or harm that may have resulted ____ (4)</p> <p>Our apologies artfully name the impact of our actions. They contain a genuine commitment to repair and shift behavior ____ (4)</p> <p>Our team is practiced in setting and keeping the boundaries needed to rebuild trust after we harm each other__ (4)</p>	<p>We can communicate and take responsibility for our mistakes, but are still practicing the self-reflection needed to be proactive_(3)</p> <p>We are often able to apologize and name the impact of our actions. We make attempts to repair and shift behavior_(3)</p> <p>We support one another to set and keep boundaries needed to rebuild trust after we harm each other_(3)</p>	<p>We wait for others to point out our mistakes and the hurt or harm that resulted ____ (2)</p> <p>Our apologies are often offered hastily or do not contain a recognition of impact ____ (2)</p> <p>We are still working on setting and keeping boundaries in the wake of harm _ (2)</p>	<p>Pointing out mistakes feels too risky on our team_____ (1)</p> <p>We don't apologize or we over apologize to alleviate guilt or return to the status quo _____ (1)</p> <p>We don't attempt to communicate boundaries or we don't understand the need for them in the wake of harm _____ (1)</p>
Create Space to Learn from Conflict			Row Total: _____
<p>We maintain protected time in our collaborations for self and group reflection __ (4)</p> <p>We have agreed upon and reliable processes that we use for learning from conflict and reimagining our approach to the next one__ (4)</p>	<p>We have protected time in our collaborations for regular self and group reflection that we sometimes deprioritize____ (3)</p> <p>We have processes for learning from conflict and reimagining our approach to the next one____ (3)</p>	<p>We tend to treat self and group reflection as "extra" that we incorporate into our collaborations when we have Time__ (2)</p> <p>We believe in the importance of learning from conflict, but we haven't yet agreed on a process to support us _____ (2)</p>	<p>We do not make time for self and group reflection in our collaborations____ (1)</p> <p>We don't believe in the importance of learning from conflict and reimagining our approach to the next one____ (1)</p>
Total score (add up the totals for each row): _____			

Scoring

A. Total Score of 60-45: Flourishing

a. These teams are sustaining the conditions and practices that support a generative conflict culture. We see what is possible when we lean into the moments of tension and have the sturdiness individually and collectively to stay in it with each other. Our conflict emerges largely from our differences in vision, experiences, and strategy and drives our purpose and work forward. Because we have invested in knowing one another deeply and building strong relationships, we rarely have conflict that emerges from interpersonal slights, missteps, or a lack of understanding of one another's perspective. When we do, we have the skills to move through these conflicts quickly. We are clear about where we stand and trust each other enough to disagree about what is important to us as a team.

B. Total Score of 44-30: Emerging

a. These teams are developing their practices and conditions that support a generative conflict culture. We can acknowledge tension or conflict when it emerges, but are still building our skills of engaging in it as a group so that we can generate something new and build deeper intimacy with one another. Our group can hold space for strong emotions in conflict, but some emotions are easier for us to allow to be expressed than others. We are still sharpening our racial and trauma-informed lens as a team. Our default is to move quickly through conflict to reach a resolution and avoid discomfort or hurt feelings, rather than slowing down and moving at the pace that will allow for new possibilities to emerge. We try to address the power dynamics in the room when conflict emerges, but we still often rely on those with the most positional or identity-based power in the group to make decisions and determine a path forward.

C. Total Score of 30-15: Dormant

a. These groups are still responding to conflict in ways that mirror dominant culture. We do not have a shared investment or willingness to try new ways of addressing and engaging in conflict. There is not trust yet in our group for risk-taking to be honored or expected when tension emerges. We need to build our collaboration and communication proficiency and work to establish deeper relationships, which will support us in addressing conflict more generatively.