The principals' associations of Ontario are pleased to welcome you to the second webinar of three webinars in the 2021-2022 year pertaining to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

CATHOLIC PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT | ONTARIO

LEADERSHIP EN ACTION

PRINCIPAL ASSOCIATION PROJECTS

Welcome to the all participants, from ADFO, CPCO and OPC, to this the third year of a three-year series to support school administrators to better serve and support their students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families.

During year one of this series, we explored the themes of understanding ASD; implementing inclusive leadership; and working with parents and caregivers to support students with ASD. In year two, we continued our learning by exploring the themes of how to lead to strengthening executive functioning skills; working in interdisciplinary teams, and how to create conditions for safe and caring schools. All of these webinar recordings and resources can be found on your association webpage for your access and review.

This year, we have already discussed transition planning for students with ASD and their families. Today, we'll take a closer look at working through conflict and in the spring the final webinar will give us an opportunity to explore student voice.

Land acknowledgement (for Toronto)

I acknowledge that I am on the traditional territory of nations within nations including the Anishnabe, the Ojibwe and the Michi Saagiig. This land has been and continues to be home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

I would like to acknowledge the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on the lands on which I gather with you today across Ontario and I thank the past, present and future caretakers of this land. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work and learn on these lands in a community of sharing.

As users of the land, we must continue to work to keep it clean and use it with care so that generations to come can also continue to benefit from the land.

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Help us get to know who the audience is by participating in a few polling questions.

Let's explore who is with us today.

Understanding Conflict as a Catalyst for Change:

Supporting Families and their Children with Autism

Thank you for choosing to be with us today. Janine, Josee and I appreciate the very busy roles that we hold as principals and vice-principals. We are grateful that you are giving yourself permission to take time for your own professional learning.

As mentioned, this year's second webinars explores conflict as a natural catalyst for needed change that can have a positive outcome. Today, through a panel discussion (with a parent, a principal, and a parent mentor) we will explore strategies used to prevent and manage conflicts while supporting students with ASD to develop their full potential and succeed in school.

When we are working through conflict, we are drawing on our leadership influence within the Ontario Leadership Framework to **build relationships**. Specifically today we are focusing on **building trusting relationships**. To build relationships and to work through conflict, the school principal and vice-principal use the **social resources** within the **personal leadership resources** of **perceiving and managing emotions** and **acting in emotionally appropriate ways**. As always, everything we do **to building trusting relationships**, then allows us to have productive dialogue and meetings that will support the **instructional program** of our students with ASD.

Policy/Program Memorandum 140

Incorporating methods of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) into programs for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

This memorandum is intended to strengthen collaborative working relationships between parents, schools, and the community. This collaboration is **essential** for supporting positive learning for students with ASD.

- Development of an Individual Education Plan
- Plan for successful transitions

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

When we have students with ASD in our school, as principals and vice-principals, PPM 140 serves as a reminder of the importance of strengthening our collaborative working relationships between our parents, our staff and the community members who support the transdisciplinary partnerships.

As stated within the PPM, this collaboration is essential for supporting positive learning for students with ASD.

Let's look at the meaning of collaboration….

Collaboration - A Partnership Approach

For collaboration to occur, participants need to feel that their shared effort will result in an outcome that is better than could be accomplished by any one participant, even if the outcome is somewhat different from what each person envisioned at the outset.

Online Applied Behaviour Analysis, Geneva Centre

This partnership approach to collaboration is so important. While we all may come into a meeting or conversation with our own thoughts as to the outcome…it is the shared effort of true collaboration that brings us to an outcome that is better.

We've shared this image of the tree before, and it works well here as a visual for the partnership approach. Like a tree that needs roots and a sturdy trunk for support, a strong collaborative team plans together and builds trusting relationships together. The trust that is developed helps this team plant deep roots and a strong truck. This is needed to ensure when the winds of conflict blow, we have a solid support system to help us through the storm. It is only natural that collaboration with various stakeholders may bring differences of opinions, approaches and conflict. Members in this partnership will trust that they can use this conflict as a catalyst for change and the result may be a better outcome for the student than any one member on the team might have achieved on their own.

Single Disciplinary	Multi-disciplinary	Interdisciplinary	Transdisciplinary
Highly specialized in one disciplinary.	People from different disciplines working together, each drawing on their disciplinary knowledge.	Integrating methods and knowledge from different disciplines, using a real synthesis of approaches.	Creating a unity of intellectual frameworks beyond the disciplinary frameworks.
No cooperation with other disciplines.	Not focused on problem solving but requires expert opinions.	Focused on problem framing and solving from disciplinary perspectives.	Solving problems by going beyond disciplinary perspective to involving practitioners, beneficiaries and non-academia.
Development of a new detailed discipline.	Members cooperate in their contributions but do not integrate their perspectives.	Perspectives are integrated with stronger levels of cooperation.	New knowledge is generated through the use of multi and interdisciplinary concepts.
	Disciplinary theory development.	There is a common understanding on methodological approaches, epistemological and ontological perspectives.	Considered as the highest form of integration of all actors in a participatory.

Source: Mumuni et al. (2015)

As part of the transdisciplinary approach, never forget….
Parents are more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when considered equals and participate in an iterative process to identify problems and possible solutions for their child's learning (knowledge is jointly produced to serve mutually agreed goals)

The 12 C's

1. Coordination of efforts (actions support common plan)
2. Conflict management
3. Consensus decision making
4. Caring (patient, client, consumer centered)
5. Consistency (with one another an environment)
6. Contribution (feeling this is being made)
7. Communication
8. Cooperation (empowerment of team)
9. Cohesiveness (team sticks together)
10. Commitment (investing in team process)
11. Collaboration (equality in team)
12. Confronts problems directly

The 12Cs are helpful reminders in any conflict situation.

This is before crisis conflict - it is disagreement - not seeing eye to eye...

Conflict is **a natural and normal part of any human interaction**. Sometimes conflict can be rooted in personal bias and racism (stereotyping). There is nothing unusual about conflict in itself. It is what we do about it when it occurs which is important.

Factors Contributing to Conflict

- Insufficient, wrong or misunderstood information
- Miscommunication
- Differing values
- Concerns about resource allocation
- Historical factors
- Structural factors
- Personal/emotional factors (i.e. trauma)
- Interpersonal factors
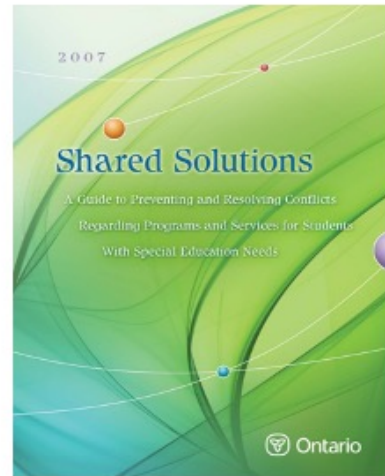
- Insufficient, wrong, or misunderstood information: Conflicts can arise when people have too little or incorrect information or when they misunderstand the information supplied
- Miscommunication: Differences in communication styles may lead the parties to misinterpret the intentions, perceptions, or attitudes of another. As well, the parties may not be aware of the way they come across and the impression they are making.
- Differing values: Differing values may mean that the parties have differing and possibly incompatible goals.
- Concerns about resource allocation: Resources may be perceived as inadequate.
- Historical factors: There may be a history of disagreements and/or real or perceived injustices based on the parties' past experiences.
- Structural factors: Structures exist for parents, schools, and school boards over which they may have little control. This may limit the range of possible solutions for one or more parties.
- Personal/emotional factors: The need for attention, autonomy, control, power, or recognition may influence the behaviour of one or more parties.
- Interpersonal factors: Differences in the way the parties approach conflict resolution may lead to a loss of trust. Cultural differences may cause one or more parties to feel that their point of view is not fully understood.

Reasons for Conflict in Special Education

Issues related to the planning and implementation of a student's special education program may be sources on of conflict. As well, poor relationships may develop for a variety of reasons, leading to conflict between parents and educators.

- Planning conflicts
- Implementation conflicts
- Relationship conflicts
- Placement
- Trust
- Cultural differences and practices

Planning conflicts happen when parents and educators do not have access to the same information about the student and/or have a different understanding and ideas about the student's strengths and needs and the special education programs and services that would be most appropriate for the student.

Implementation conflicts happen when parents perceive that plans for special education programs and services have not been adequately implemented.

Relationship conflicts may arise as a result of cultural differences, styles of interaction, breakdowns in communication, and/or a loss of trust between parents and educators.

Cultural Awareness It is important to remember that some behaviours are culturally based and that this can add to communication difficulties when a situation is emotionally charged. Well-documented cultural differences exist in both verbal and non-verbal communication. Volume, tone of voice, response time, maintaining or avoiding eye contact, increasing or decreasing the physical space between speakers, and gesturing during oral communication may all be culturally influenced to some extent. In some cultures, increased volume signals heightened conflict, whereas in other cultures, changes in the amount of physical space between speakers may indicate rising tension. Educators need to work with the communities they serve to understand the cultural bases of behaviours that are demonstrated by students and/or parents. However, it should be remembered that a wide range of behavioural patterns is found in every culture and that not every member of a particular cultural group will display all the behaviours typically attributed to that group. (p. 15)
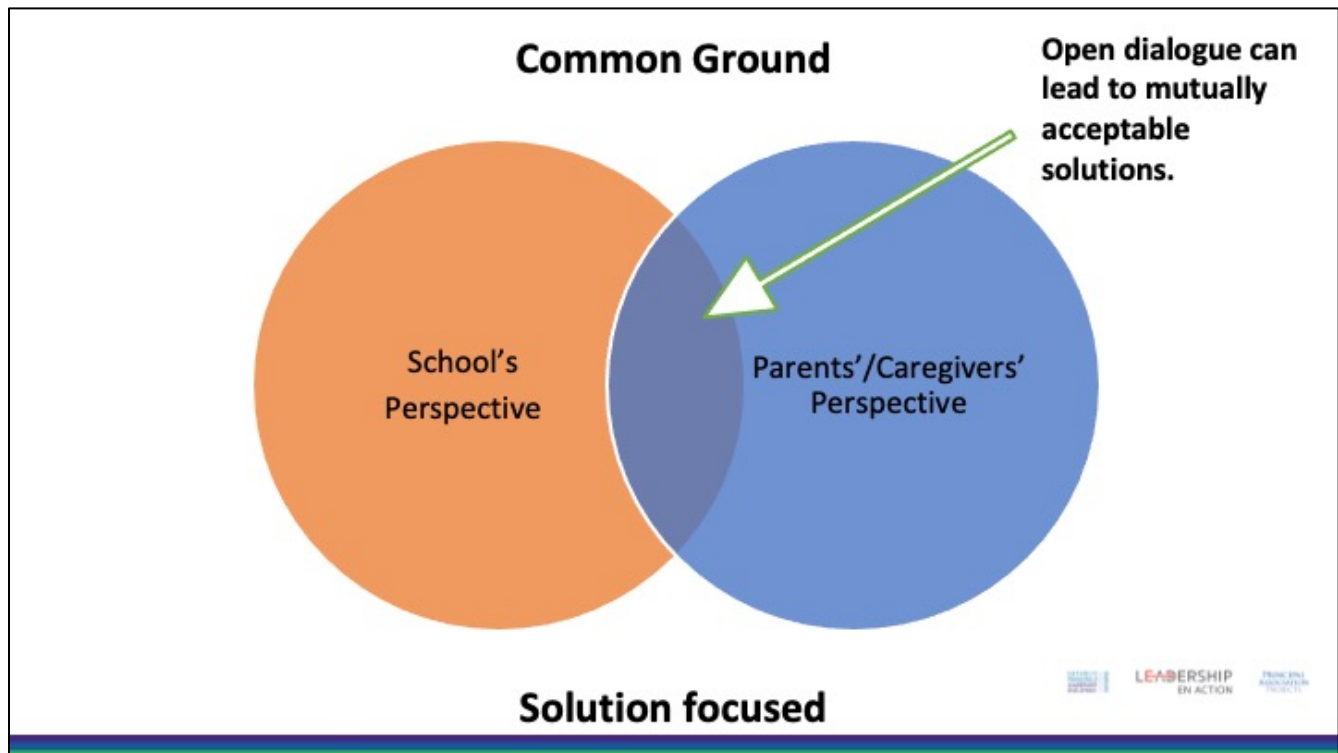
understand the cultural bases of behaviours that are demonstrated by students and/or parents. However, it should be remembered that a wide range of behavioural patterns is found in every culture and that not every member of a particular cultural group will display all the behaviours typically attributed to that group. (p. 15)

When working with families / caregivers to support students with ASD, how often have you found yourself in this situation...

Common Ground

School's Perspective

Parents'/Caregivers' Perspective

Open dialogue can lead to mutually acceptable solutions.

Solution focused

Open dialogue can lead to mutually acceptable solutions. Differences in opinion can represent an opportunity. If everyone responds constructively, creative solutions can be found. (p. 14)

Educators are cautioned to reflect on positional power (be it factual or perceived). As this can limit or interfere with shared understanding and resolving conflict.

Successful conflict resolution depends on the ability of all parties to develop a clear understanding of the issues and of the concerns of the participants. Active listening is the key to understanding and plays a central role in all communication. (p. 28)

Finding Common Ground (p. 37)
This approach requires each party to:
✓ focus on the student's strengths and needs;
✓ discuss and explain the assumptions or beliefs that define the problem for him or her;
✓ have a clear understanding of what the issue is;
✓ clearly articulate how he or she sees the issue;
✓ share all information that pertains to the issue;
✓ listen actively and ask open-ended questions to elicit more information, such as "What would happen if...?", "Would you be happy if...?;
✓ be willing to brainstorm to identify possible options;
✓ be willing to identify interests, perceptions, or needs that are common to the parties;
✓ be willing to compromise in order to narrow the scope of the issue;
✓ recognize and accept common ground when it is discovered;
✓ agree to a written plan to implement the agreed-upon solution;
✓ agree to attend a follow-up meeting within a set time frame to discuss how well the solution is working.

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Panel Discussion – Questions / Prompts

*Let the audience know that not everyone will be speaking to each questions - and the panelists have agreed to be interrupted (as necessary) to be mindful of time and/or to let others have a voice

- Introduce yourself - How do you see your role as an advocate?
- I shared a slide on contributing factors to conflict – did any of these points resonate with you? Explain.
- Today, we want to share from your perspective and experience, both how to work as a team that prevents conflict and when conflict does develop – how to use this experience as a catalyst for positive change.
- Let's begin with prevention – please share a strategy that you use when approaching a discussion to prevent conflict
- As humans, conflict is natural and some would say, needed – to move us outcomes that are better when explore together. Do you agree with this statement? Share an example where the outcome was better after a conflict.
- As a principal, I have always said that one of my most challenging roles is communication. Working with students with ASD and their families, there are a lot of stressors that sometimes surface emotions that make communicating that more challenging.
- As a parent, what do you need from school teams?
- As a parent advocate, what would you like to share about communication?
- As a principal, what strategies do you employ to ensure ongoing and effective communication?

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- As a principal, what strategies do you employ to ensure ongoing and effective communication?

Conflict as a Catalyst for Change: Conclusion
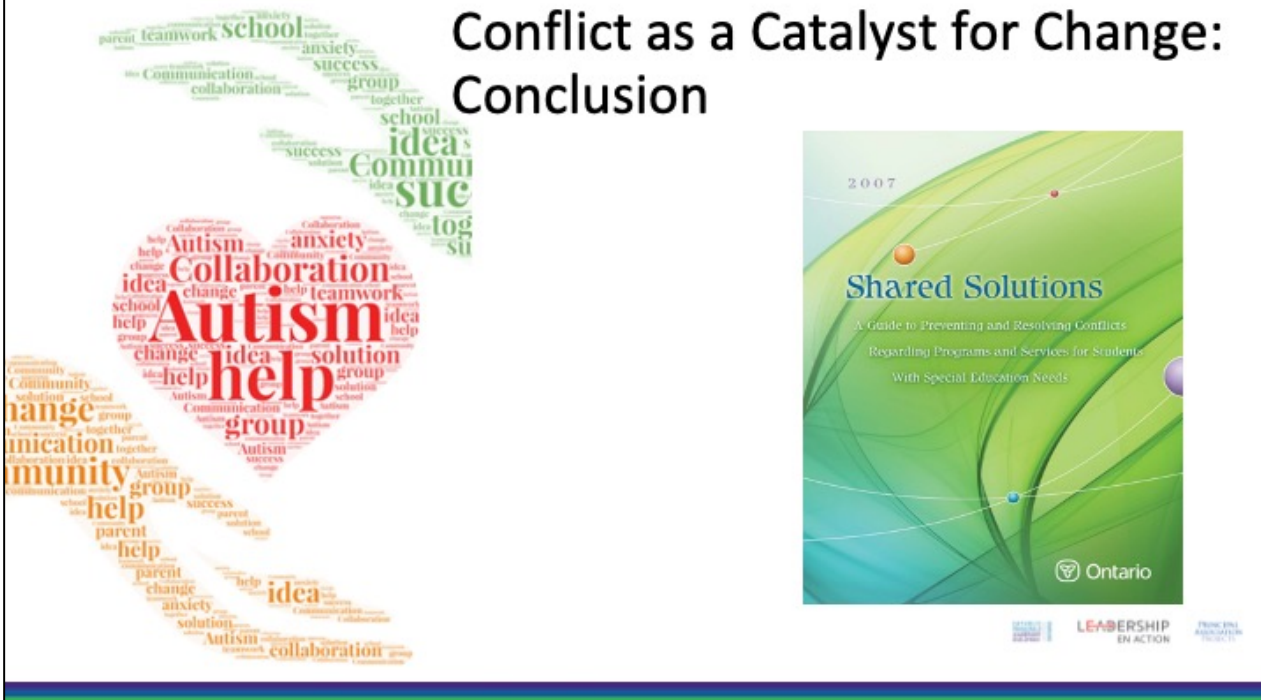
Delivering an education that is appropriate to the strengths and needs of students receiving special education programs and services is the goal of all partners in education. The interests of students with ASD are usually best served when conflicts are resolved promptly, without bad feelings, and with minimal stress for all parties. Conflict resolution approaches are useful and effective tools for achieving such a result.

Learning to apply the conflict resolution approaches and strategies outlined in the Shared Solutions document can help students, parents, and educators to build bridges between schools and families. The goal, as always, is to create a caring, productive, and collaborative environment that enhances the learning experiences of students with ASD and allows them to realize their true potential.

As we heard today, it is important to remember that everyone brings different perspectives, values, and professional responsibilities, as well as different strengths, to the process of conflict resolution. Parents have a wealth of knowledge and valuable information that can assist in the education of their children. Educators have training and experience and are guided by legal obligations and professional standards of practice and ethics. Through collaboration, students, parents, and educators can achieve the best outcome for students.

What is an Advocate?

We will now hear from Stephane Beaulne, Ph.D. Nipissing University.

ADVOCACY: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Stephane Beaulne, Ph.D.

Nipissing University

CONTEXT

- Parents and caregivers are expected to advocate for their children in a multitude of situations.

- It begins early with navigating their children's physical and emotional well-being.

- They come to rely on their children's physicians, their family, and the informal network of friends facing similar circumstances to help them steer safely through the early days of parenthood.

CONTEXT

- Parents often reported they felt blamed for their child's academic and behavioral difficulties and expressed concern that teachers were unaware of the student's services and accommodations listed in the IEP

- Parents voiced a desire for the IEP meeting to be more collaborative in nature so they could be equal contributor

- Parents have noted strong parental involvement often depends on individual teachers, not the school system as a whole

CONTEXT

- Some of the professionals placed blame on families who did not follow through with suggested supports at home, others recognized that not all parents have the necessary time, knowledge, or skills to facilitate supports at home

- Education professionals often do not view parents as equal partners

- Education professionals desired families who supported their guidance about how to work with the child with disabilities, but did not value families who provided too much input on the supports they felt their child needed

AUTISTIC ADVOCACY KEY POINTS

- Advocacy is about making changes to policy and practice that will improve the lives of the population you are advocating for

- Advocacy is active support of a cause, idea or a policy – a set of organized (planned) activities designed to influence the policies and actions of others to achieve positive changes for autistic children... based on the experience and knowledge (evidence) of working directly with their parents, all the professionals and autistic adults.

AUTISTIC ADVOCACY KEY POINTS

- Self-advocates typically view autism not as a disease that needs to be treated or cured but as form of neurodiversity that should be "embraced and accommodated."
  - They focus their advocacy efforts on reducing stigma around autism and promoting increased opportunities and accommodations for autistic people.
- Parents of autistic children with severe disabilities are more likely to view autism through a biomedical lens and to support the development of behavioral and medical interventions to treat symptoms of the condition

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AUTISTIC ADVOCACY KEY POINTS

- Some parents embrace the idea of autism as form of neurodiversity while some self-advocates reject the concept of neurodiversity and support the search for a cure to autism

- Autism advocacy has been dominated by organizations founded by parents or other family members of autistic children

- Self-advocacy organizations have been described as being run "by and for" autistic people
    - They have been sharply criticized by some parents for failing to recognize challenges faced by others within the broader autistic population—particularly those with severe intellectual disabilities and high support needs—and for opposing policies aimed at addressing those challenges

WHAT ADVOCACY DOES?

- Advocacy usually offers credible positive alternatives.
- Advocacy aims to change specific policies affecting people, directed at those who have the power to influence others' lives: the goal is institutional change.
- Advocacy requires clear goals and measurable objectives.
- Advocacy is a long-term process rather than a one-off event, and is not an end in itself.
- Advocacy is based on evidence from research work and experience ("experience/evidence based advocacy").

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EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY

- **Evidence-based Advocacy**

  Advocacy is defined as the continuous and adaptive process of gathering, organizing and formulating information and data into an effective argument, which is then communicated to policy-makers through various interpersonal and mass media communication channels.

EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY

- **Steps in Evidence-Based Advocacy**
  Conduct a situation and contextual analysis

- Comprehensive collection, organization and preparation of evidence using quantitative, qualitative and blended strategies

- Identification of specific priority goals and issues

- Identification of target audiences

- Potential facilitators of collaboration include a number of educational practices, family-centered practices, and collaborative practices

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

- Meaningful collaboration to occur, caregivers value receiving information from educators

about their child's progress, being provided opportunities to participate in decision making, and incorporating the needs and desires of the family when developing interventions

- Caregivers of children with ASD want their children to have teachers who show genuine respect for their children, possess the training and skills necessary to successfully support their children's appropriate behaviors, and continually search for new knowledge and resources to update their skills

FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICES

- Facilitating effective family–school partnerships requires that educators be family centered as they develop interventions. Being family centered refers to approaches to interventions where goals are established in true partnership with families.

- In a family-driven paradigm, schools understand that the family has expert knowledge, gained from experience or training, and are therefore entitled and expected to contribute the effective interventions for their children

COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

- Collaborative practices are the intentional efforts of educators to create effective partnerships with families.

- Practices that intentionally build relationships based on trust, that demonstrate an attitude of respect toward families and welcome their input, and that invite caregivers to be full partners in the educational decisions of their children fall into this category.

WHAT ARE YOUR S.M.A.R.T. OBJECTIVES?

- Communication objective(s) ⬚ What do you want to do? ⬚ These actions are outputs that you monitor Program objectives(s) ⬚ What do you want the policymakers to do? ⬚ These actions are outcomes that you evaluate Two types of objectives

- Are your objectives... ⬚ S pecific ⬚ M easurable ⬚ A chievable ⬚ R elevant ⬚ T ime-based

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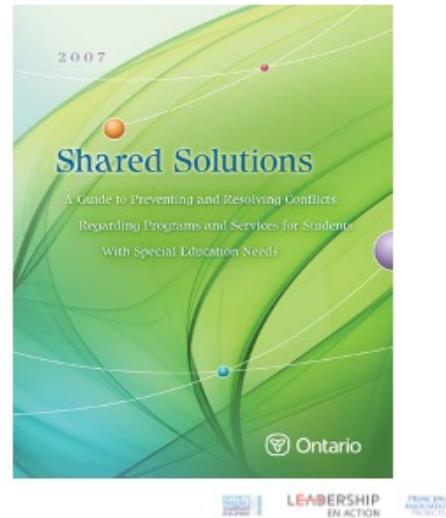
- **A FOCUS ON THE STUDENT** The student's progress and well-being must be the primary focus of all discussions between parents and educators. The goal of any conflict resolution strategy must be to ensure the student's academic, social, and emotional development by providing him or her with the most appropriate programs and services.

- **MUTUAL RESPECT** All parties should treat others as they themselves would like to be treated.

- **ACCESSIBILITY** All information relating to programs and services should be freely available to all involved, with transparent and user-friendly protocols and procedures for obtaining the information. It is also important to provide barrier-free access for students and parents to facilities and accommodations such as translators or sign-language interpreters.

- **RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY** All parties should refrain from making judgements about others based on culture or ethnicity, social or economic background, religion, or gender.

- **BALANCING POWER** Parents and educators have different responsibilities when it comes to educating students. For both parties to carry out their respective mandates effectively, each must acknowledge the role, responsibilities, and rights of the other.

- **FAIRNESS** Processes for resolving issues must be fair and equitable. All parties must feel that their own views and those of others have received a fair hearing and have been adequately taken into account in the outcome.

- **TRANSPARENCY** All communication should be open and all information freely available to all involved.

Final words
and
Thank you!

- Quick polls – Please respond to the following questions
- Survey – Please complete the survey at the end of this webinar. You will also receive it by email .
- Glossary, references and some resources will be made available in a PDF format and emailed to you tomorrow.

Webinar three -
What about student voice: How do we incorporate the identities and lived experiences of students ASD - This third and final webinar provides an opportunity to explore student voice and the importance of incorporating culturally relevant and responsive leadership that includes their unique identity and lived experiences. (English – March 22; French – March 30)

References

Webinar 1 - Building a Tree of Support: A guide to successful transition planning

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Resources
Transition Guide

Shared Solutions

Webinar 2 - Understanding Conflict as a Catalyst for Change: Supporting Families and their Children with Autism

Bowman, K. S., Suarez, V. D., & Weiss, M. J. (2021). Standards for Interprofessional Collaboration in the Treatment of Individuals With Autism. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 1-18.

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