

Keys



For parents and students in the
Fairbanks North Star Borough
School District.

Parents, teachers, students, administrators, and school board members all want the same thing: the opportunity for all students in our community to learn and grow in safe and productive schools. However, sometimes problems arise that need to be resolved; questions need to be answered. The following information is designed to provide keys to effective ways of resolving problems and concerns.

How to use Problem Solving Keys

Problem solving keys are helpful in many situations. Successful problem solving leaves all parties feeling heard and treated respectfully. The discussion is focused on the problem and resolution is reached without attacking or demeaning the parties involved.

Make an appointment with the person involved.

 Calmly tell them you have a concern and want to discuss it to see how you can work on it together. By saying you want to work together, you are showing a willingness to find a solution and to listen.

Try to avoid building defensiveness on either side.

 When people are defensive, it is more difficult to listen with an open mind. While the other person is talking, we tend to concentrate on what we are going to say next or how we can justify our actions. Attacking often adds to the problem and can become the focus more than the original issue. When trying to solve problems, listening is as important as talking.

It's okay to be nervous.

 If you are nervous about the meeting, make notes of the key points you want to cover and go through your list during the meeting.

Build in some positives.

 It is helpful to acknowledge what is going well, not just the specific problem.

Use "I" statements.

 Use "I" statements rather than "you" (which can be perceived as accusatory). Practice filling in the blanks in the following:

When _____ happens, I feel _____ and am concerned about _____.

I'm confused about how _____ is/was handled.

It seems like _____ happened and I am concerned. How do you see the situation?

Stay focused.

 Keep the focus of your concern or disagreement on the action or decision. Criticizing the person doesn't address the problem and creates more tension which can then become a bigger problem than the original issue.

Be aware of possible barriers.

 Think about the various barriers to solving the problem. You can understand that public schools have limitations without giving up on the problem. Flexibility is an important key to problem solving.

Be sure to follow up.

 Finish the meeting with a summary of the discussion and conclusions. This assures everyone understood the results of the meeting in the same way.



Tips for Effective Problem Solving



- ➔ Get involved early in the problem-solving process. It's easier to solve minor problems than major ones.
- ➔ Distinguish between problems that cause "discomfort" and those that may cause "damage."
- ➔ Discomfort problems are relatively minor and may be able to be resolved by the student, with adult help. By trying to solve problems themselves, students learn valuable problem-solving skills they'll be able to use throughout their lives. These tips will help students as well as adults.
- ➔ Potentially damaging problems need immediate adult help and quick response.
- ➔ Be sure you have the facts. Try not to react to rumor or opinion. Get all sides of the story.
- ➔ Think about constructive solutions you can suggest to resolve the situation.
- ➔ Follow the process outlined in this document. Backtracking later may be frustrating for everyone involved.

Steps to Solving Problems

The problem solving process is a series of steps. Use the keys listed on the previous page in each of the steps below.

Step One: Always start with the teacher or other staff person directly involved. The counselor can help arrange a meeting, if you like.

Step Two: If you think the problem has not been resolved, please call or make an appointment with the principal.

Step Three: If you need further assistance, talk to the appropriate assistant superintendent at the school district administrative center, 452-2000, ext. 11430 or 11411.

Step Four: If you are still not satisfied, call the superintendent's office, 452-2000, ext. 11401, and explain your problem. The superintendent will return your call as soon as possible, or you may schedule an appointment.

If these steps are not satisfactory, you may appeal an administrative decision to the School Board, 452-2000, ext. 11400. To discuss your concern with the School Board:

- ◆ Write a letter, email (schoolboard@k12northstar.org), or discuss the issue with school board members.
- ◆ Speak during public comment at a school board meeting. School board meetings are held the first and third Tuesday of each month during the school year. Testimony is limited to three minutes. Meetings are broadcast on KUAC FM 89.9 radio, GCI Cable-channel 14, and audio and video streamed live from the district's website www.k12northstar.org. *When addressing the School Board, please note that libel laws may apply to public criticism of individuals identified by name.*

If you need help resolving a problem or getting information, please call the school district by dialing 452-2000 and the following extensions.

11430	Assistant Superintendent – Elementary
11411	Assistant Superintendent – Secondary
11422	Curriculum
11463	EEO/ Affirmative Action
11301	Finances
11201	Fairbanks B.E.S.T.
11326	Human Resources
11241	Library/ Media
11403	Public Relations
11400	School Board
11489	Special Education
11212	Student Records
11401	Superintendent's Office
11351	Transportation
451-1004 X16600	Nutrition Services



This brochure was designed and distributed by the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District with input from parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators.

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Ms. Tonya Coty, Employment and Educational Opportunity Director
520 Fifth Avenue, 4th Floor, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
(907) 452-2000, ext. 11466 – Fax (907) 452-3172
tonya.coty@k12northstar.org