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## **Responding to Resistance: Thirty Strategies to Manage Conflict in Your School**

*By William A. Sommers*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Responding to Resistance: Thirty Strategies to Manage Conflict in Your School* by William A. Sommers. *Responding to Resistance* provides a wide-ranging set of strategies that school and district leaders can use to resolve and manage conflict.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individuals, small groups, or an entire team to identify key points, raise questions for consideration, assess conditions in a particular school or district, and suggest steps that might be taken to promote a healthy school culture.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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## Chapter 1

### Foundational Skills

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1. Examine figure 1.1 (page 20) in Response Strategy 1. What are the five types of *fuzzy thinking* and what are effective methods of response?
2. Explain *rules* and *rule-based thinking* as found in Response Strategy 1. What negative effects do you think these rules can have?
3. What are the three options of confronting and clarifying *generalizations* discussed in Response Strategy 1?
4. *Paraphrasing* sends what two messages as noted in Response Strategy 2?
5. What does *accepting responsibility* convey in a conflict as discussed in Response Strategy 3?
6. Response Strategy 4 discusses the phrase, “I don’t know.” Why is it important to use this phrase?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Strategies for Working With Teams**

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1. Examine table 2.1 (page 34) in Response Strategy 5. What are the different stages of deteriorating relationships? What are effective responses to each stage?
2. In Response Strategy 6, what are the four specific steps for reducing conflict when emotional reactions are involved? Do any of them stand out to you? Why?
3. Examine figure 2.1 (page 41) in Response Strategy 7. What are the four basic work styles? Which do you feel is your work style?
4. What are the four pillars of effective teaming in Response Strategy 9? Which do you feel you and your team excel at? Which need work?
5. In Response Strategy 10, what is the advantage of being a dolphin, rather than a shark or carp?
6. Examine table 2.2 (page 51) in Response Strategy 11. What are the differences between cognitive conflict and affective conflict? How does cognitive conflict improve trust and team dynamics?

## Chapter 3

### Strategies for Working With Individuals

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1. Define *emotional blackmail* as found in Response Strategy 13. How can the cycle of demand, pressure, and threat be avoided or defused?
2. What are the five points of the *SCARF* model outlined in Response Strategy 14? How can it help you more thoroughly understand team members and reduce conflict?
3. What are the *three Fs* outlined in Response Strategy 16? How can you use them to reframe negative statements?
4. What are the five behavior patterns outlined in Response Strategy 17? What might be a good way to respond to a distracter?
5. What does it mean to *manage up*? What methods of doing so are outlined in Response Strategy 18?
6. Describe the *FRISK* structure from Response Strategy 19. What is the structure's purpose?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Strategies for Working With Large Groups**

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1. Why is it important to deliver bad news productively? What methods of doing so are outlined in Response Strategy 20?
2. What is the five-step process to principled negotiation found in Response Strategy 21? What benefits does principled negotiation have over hard or soft negotiation?
3. What is *repetitive change syndrome* and how does it relate to the *knowing-doing gap*? What five reasons for gaps does Response Strategy 22 cover?
4. Examine figure 4.1 (page 95) in Response Strategy 24. Why is it important to learn from positive deviants?
5. Examine figure 4.2 (page 100) in Response Strategy 26. Which quadrant is most important to you? Why?
6. Examine Table 4.1 (page 101) in Response Strategy 26. Which of these best practices would be most helpful in your current situation?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Strategies for When Nothing Seems to Work**

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1. In Response Strategy 27, how are polarities like breathing? Why is it important to see both limits and benefits in each side?
2. Examine figure 5.1 (page 106) in Response Strategy 27. Think of a “polarity” scenario that would need balancing. What are the benefits and limits to each side?
3. Have you ever had to terminate an employee? Was it difficult? What, to you, are the most important of the five points listed in Response Strategy 28 (page 109)?
4. Examine table 5.1 (page 111) in Response Strategy 29. Which of these types of abuse, if any, are present in your situation? Based on the table, how is it best to respond to those abuses?
5. Where should you turn if a simple verbal response to abusive language fails to cause change?
6. Describe the *MOVE* acronym in Response Strategy 30. In what sort of situations would it be useful?