Interest Based Problem Solving

Navigating a Path to Common Ground in All Situations

Critical Factors in Understanding and Using Interest Based Tools

a) Your ‘emotional intelligence’ mastery serves as the foundation for your success in using an interest based approach to problem solving
b) Your need to ‘win’ (despite the cost) will mask your ability to find solutions that are best for all.
c) All topics/issues and organizations can use interest based problem solving in an affirmative manner if they are willing to practice transparency in a consistent fashion.
d) Advanced active listening skills serve as the foundation for your ability to accurately work with partners in the interest based process.

Definitions

**Issue** = ‘What’ is unsettled or concerning to you

**Interests** = ‘Why’ you are seeking a certain outcome; can include emotionally based needs and levels of importance.

**Outcomes to Interest Based Work** = ‘Satisfiers’; satisfiers are an unlimited number of potential suggestions to any issue and/or situation that may resolve the issue.

Key Steps

- Identify Issue(s)
- Design Ground Rules
- Clarify Interest(s)
- Brainstorm Ways to Satisfy Interests
- Design Mutually-Acceptable Solutions
Sample Ground Rules for Interest Based Problem Solving

Defining Rules of Engagement = Sustained Collaborative Relationships

1. We will define every FACT Committee/group meeting as a ‘safe haven’ where interests and ideas are affirmatively received and fully considered.

2. We will individually use self-control in order to not monopolize the time allocated for our meetings, so that each person serving on the FACT Committee will have the opportunity to provide their ideas, interests and concerns on every topic addressed.

3. We will individually withhold our anger and frustration so as not to blame anyone else for areas of our personal frustration in our collective work together.

4. We will openly share our work in a transparent fashion through the FACT website such that all employees within the Maricopa Community College District can participate in this process and learn the use of Interest Based Problem Solving for as many professional situations as possible.

5. We will discuss in our Committee meetings our best hopes and worst fears about all aspects of our work together and will not continue these types of conversations in isolated settings without the involvement of the Committee as a whole. We will use specific examples of interests and potential satisfiers in order to move our discussions along in as detailed a manner as possible and support the work of our Assistant who is charged with taking minutes and providing all documents in compliance with the Arizona Open Meeting requirements.

6. We will honor FACT Committee meeting schedules, starting and ending on time, as well as coming prepared to each meeting with our individual and subcommittee assignments completed. When feasible we will use technology so that Committee members are able to join meetings from remote locations and still meet their primary professional obligations.

7. We will use the available District budget data when appropriate to consider proposed narrative and handbook language considering the fiscal impact on the intent of the language and concepts being brought forward throughout our FACT Committee work.
Six Thinking Hats for Decision Processes

1. **White Hat:** What information is missing? What don’t you know? What is your analysis of what is happening?

2. **Red Hat:** What is your emotional response to what is occurring? How might others react emotionally to the situation or problem?

3. **Blue Hat:** What might a professional or someone highly knowledgeable say regarding the situation, decision, or problem (e.g. doctors, psychologists, scientists, clergy, etc)?

4. **Black Hat:** What are the negative points regarding the situation? What would a devil’s advocate say?

5. **Yellow Hat:** What are the positive aspects of the situation? What would an optimist say?

6. **Green Hat:** What are the creative options and solutions to the problem?

The Use of ‘Interests’

1. Clearly communicate your ‘interests’ – not positions or posturing; accept others’ interests without using this information to try to convince them to align with your interests.

2. Do not assume your ‘interests’ should be accepted by others or that they are ever more important that any individual’s/group’s stated ‘interests’.

3. Realize that recognition and understanding of ‘interests’ expressed by others does not always equate to acceptance or agreement.

4. Embrace the use of interest based problem solving as a method of ‘joint-problem solving’.

5. Realize that ‘interests’ form the language of relationship clarification, relationship building and the resolution of issues.
Criteria and Satisfiers

In the interest based problem solving process two critical ‘tools’ are used on an ongoing basis. These tools are criteria (or standards) and satisfiers.

Criteria - are the jointly determined ways or standards by which a satisfier(s) is deemed acceptable in relationship to all interests that have been expressed (i.e. available budget or staffing resources).

Satisfiers - these are jointly determined specific ways to address (or satisfy) all interests that have been expressed. A critical aspect of the use of this tool is that most interests have many potential satisfiers.

The above topics/tools form the basis for the primary work done throughout the interest based problem solving process.