

Collaborative Problem-Solving for Equity and Justice: A 6-Step Model

By Paul C. Gorski (gorski@edchange.org)
for **EdChange** and the *Multicultural Pavilion*
<http://www.edchange.org/>

The purpose of this model is to facilitate an organized process for examining, understanding, and responding to complex issues related to diversity and equity in schools. For best results, it is crucial to assemble a diverse team of stakeholders to work through this process.

1. **Problem Identification**

Identify or name the situation and relevant related issues. What is the conflict? What is the source of the conflict?

2. **Perspectives**

Create a list of every person, group, and institution impacted by the incident. How is each of these people and institutions affected by the situation? Be sure to include possible victims, victimizers, members of the community, and anyone else who is touched by the incident directly or indirectly. It may be necessary to make some assumptions for this step, intensifying the importance of incorporating as many voices and perspectives as possible into the process of compiling the information.

3. **Challenges and Opportunities**

With the varied perspectives in mind, what are the individual and institutional challenges and constraints within which the situation must be addressed? What are the challenges based on the individuals directly involved, and what institutional constraints must inform an approach for addressing the situation? What are the educational and growth opportunities presented by the incident, both for the people directly involved and the institution?

4. **Strategies**

Brainstorm approaches for addressing the situation, attempting to maximize the extent to which the negative outcomes of the situation are addressed while simultaneously maximizing the extent to which you take advantage of educational and growth opportunities. Keep in mind the varied perspectives and the fact that any solution will affect everyone differently. This is not the step at which to challenge and critique each other's ideas. Record every idea, no matter how unreasonable it may sound to individuals in the group.

5. **Solutions**

Focus your strategies into a formal plan of action. Keep in mind the varied perspectives as well as the challenges and opportunities. Be sure to come up with at least two or three specific responses, whether they focus on the individual conflict or the underlying issues at an institutional level.

6. **Expected Outcomes**

Name the outcomes you foresee as a result of the solutions you identified. Revisit the perspectives step to ensure a standard of equity and fairness.