



1- How to Avoid Conflict With Your Colleagues

There are politics and problems in every work environment. On an elementary school campus, tension between colleagues almost always crops up in the Teacher's Lounge. This is where teachers let down their hair, ask each other for help, air their grievances, and share conversations over lunch. In other words, there are countless potential pitfalls to be navigated when you're making copies, checking your inbox, or even just walking through the lounge.



Avoid teacher's lounge drama with these practical tips that will keep your nose clean and your stress levels lowered

Tips for Successful Interactions in the



Maximizing Your Positive Impact Outside the Classroom

One of the best parts about teaching is that moment when you close your classroom door, and it's just you and your students and the tasks at hand. You have control, you have autonomy, and you are the master of your domain.

If only that sense of power could translate to all of your on-campus interactions! The teacher's lounge represents a veritable land mine of potential problem areas as you interact with the office staff and your colleagues from around the school.

But with a little proactive preparation, you can minimize the damage and perhaps even foster some goodwill between yourself and your co-workers.

- **Make best friends with the school secretary.** - This was one of the first tips I heard when I became a teacher and now I know why. The secretary's desk is the true seat of power in an elementary school organization. She can be your closest ally or your worst enemy, with the ability to make favors happen for the teachers who show her the most respect. So whip out the home-baked cookies, thank-you cards, and daily smiles if you want her on your side, and trust us - you do.



- **Eat lunch in the teacher's lounge.** - It can be tempting to spend your minuscule lunch break in the classroom checking a few quick tasks off your To Do list. But despite the sometimes solitary nature of teaching, camaraderie still matters, and your colleagues want to get to know you and feel you're part of the team. Sharing a meal and a few light personal stories is one of the easiest ways to foster a feeling of friendliness with your co-workers. You don't have to do it every day. But every so often, show your face and have a seat.

- **Hang with the right crowd.** - Whether you know it or not, the teacher's lounge has cliques and who you eat lunch with actually matters. One reason it matters is because hanging with the negative, complaining crowd can bring your own attitude down into the dumps fairly quickly. Choose to spend your time with the teachers who are cheery, effective, and solution-oriented. Related to this, outside observers (i.e. the principal) can start to perceive you as part of the "problem crowd," even if you don't share their pessimistic attitudes. Surround yourself with the best and let this positive aura build upon your reputation around campus.



- **Participate in staff events.** - Even if it's not your usual style to do pot luck breakfasts and monthly happy hours, you could force yourself to partake in one interaction at least once a month. If you opt out completely, it sends the message that you aren't part of the school's team spirit. We realize that teachers are meant to teach, not bring donuts for each other. But we still feel that participating in these activities counts for something in the teacher's lounge. It's worth offering a low level of effort every so often, if only because you never know who you might need to ask for a favor down the line.
- **Be a tidy and respectful neighbour.** - Clean up your dishes, leave the copy machine as you found it, don't let your food rot in the fridge, smile at the people you encounter, remember birthdays. Everyone's busy in the teacher's lounge, but consistent rudeness or coldness will come back to haunt you eventually. Better safe than sorry!



- **Watch your words.** - Avoid raunchy, political, or overly personal stories in the staff room. You never know who's listening or who you might offend. Plus, teachers gossip. Only utter words that you wouldn't mind seeing published in an all-campus newsletter because you can assume any juicy tidbits will be repeated and misconstrued whether you like it or not.
- **Be kind to all.** - The most effective teachers I've seen are the ones who went out of the way to befriend and support every adult on campus, not just the classroom teachers. I'm talking about the recess supervisors, the custodians, the librarian, the aides, and the bus drivers. The school is a community, and the more goodwill you can build with the adults around you, the more help you will receive on a daily basis from the people who keep the school running.

Do you see a theme here? The overriding principle here is to foster positivity and goodwill in the teacher's lounge at every opportunity. It may seem easier to keep your head down and keep to yourself. But in reality, it's better to make emotional deposits with your colleagues on a daily basis because you never know when you'll need to ask for help and make a withdrawal.