

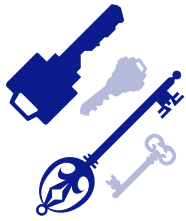
Keys to Effective Problem Solving

For parents
(and students!)
in the Valdez
City 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.

This brochure is designed to provide keys to effective ways to 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 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 the 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 that everyone understood the results of the meeting in the same way.



Key Steps to Solving Problems

The problem solving process is a series of steps. Use the keys listed at left 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.

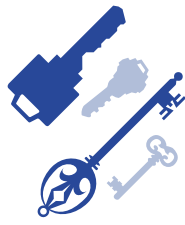
Step Two: If you think the problem has not been resolved, please call or make an appointment with the principal.

Step Three: If you are still not satisfied, call the superintendent's office (907-835-4357) and explain your situation. The superintendent will return your call as soon as possible, or you may schedule an appointment.


If these steps do not resolve the situation, you may express your concern to the School Board by:


- Writing a letter regarding the issue with School Board members.
- Speaking during public comment at a School Board meeting.
- School Board meetings are held the second and fourth Monday of each month during the school year. Testimony is limited to five minutes. Meetings are broadcast on KVAK 1230 AM radio. When addressing the Board, please note that libel laws may apply to public criticism of individuals identified by name.







Keys to 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. The tips in this brochure 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 brochure. Backtracking later may be frustrating for everyone involved.



If you need help resolving a problem or getting information, please call the school district office or school office.

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1112 W. Klutina
Valdez, Alaska 99686
(907) 835-4357

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P.O. Box 627
1009 W. Klutina
Valdez, Alaska 99686
(907) 835-4728

George Gilson Junior High School
P.O. Box 827
357 Robe River Drive
Valdez, Alaska 99686
(907) 835-2244

Valdez High School
P.O. Box 1629
319 Robe River Drive
Valdez, Alaska 99686
(907) 835-4767



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