

To accomplish these objectives, you will complete some or all of these activities:

1. Discuss characteristics of healthy relationships in which trust is evident.
2. Analyze your own characteristics for gaining and maintaining trust.
3. Complete an exercise that illustrates the potential for breakdown in trust.
4. Discuss steps to regaining trust.
5. Write various journal entries about your observations and evaluations of instances in which you see exhibitions of trust.
6. Critically review a conversation, noting characteristics that contribute to or break down trust.
7. Participate in getting-to-know-you-personally sessions.

A CASE STUDY IN TRUST

Hostility Turns to Trust

North Clackamas School District was formed in 1971 by consolidating five smaller districts. Not unexpectedly, many problems were associated with the creation of the new district. During the first year, 1972–73, the teachers voted to strike. They wore black armbands and picketed in front of the administration building during school board meetings. Settlement was reached just hours before the strike deadline, and only because the school board made what they considered to be major concessions. The following year the situation was much the same. Again the teachers wore black armbands and demonstrated; however, settlement was reached at fact-finding (a process that introduced a number of undesirable items into the contract).

During these years of conflict and confrontation, Donald Charles, then assistant superintendent and administration representative to the bargaining table, wrote: "During those two years the Board employed a professional negotiator to represent them at the bargaining table. While that procedure has been widely used and advocated by most observers, the outcome was not good. The negotiator's presence seemed only to make the association more argumentative and unyielding in their demands."

In 1974 the superintendent left the district, and Charles was appointed to replace him. One of Charles's highest priorities was to change the hostile atmosphere that had developed among the school board, administration, and teachers.

At a conference that summer, Charles listened intently to a speaker who suggested that teachers do not want to run school districts, but they do want to be treated with professional respect and to receive fair pay. Following the conference and three days of one-on-one with the speaker, Charles commented, "The proposal that was written and accepted was really so simple that it was kind of embarrassing."

1. Each side would bargain for itself with no outside help at the bargaining table.
2. Each side would have a team of eight.
3. Teachers would bargain only those issues pertinent to people in North Clackamas District.
4. The teams would meet monthly to discuss any problems.
5. By mutual agreement, they could negotiate the contract whenever a problem was found, or when they felt it was desirable.

Betty Drew, past president of the North Clackamas Education Association, who was on the bargaining team when the proposal was implemented, pointed out that the association was working to try to change the confrontational situation by developing another approach. They were not able to get very far, however, until Donald Charles met them halfway.

The proposal was implemented that year—1974; it has been successful since that time. In 1985 Drew stressed that feelings of trust and cooperation between teachers and administrators had deepened and grown stronger over the years (Pheasant, 1985).

Discussion Questions

1. What problems associated with trust might be expected when consolidating five school districts?
2. In this situation, with new teachers coming together for the first time, what would be the advantages of hiring an outside negotiator to be present at the bargaining table? What would be the disadvantages of hiring an outside negotiator?
3. Mr. Charles had served at the bargaining table prior to becoming the superintendent. Did this make a difference in the teachers' willingness to accept his proposal? Did they trust him? What characteristics do you think Mr. Charles might have exhibited at the bargaining table that now allowed the teachers to accept his proposal?
4. Is the proposal simple? In establishing trust, what are the advantages to keeping it simple?