

Building a Positive Team Culture

Public and private preschool teams serving children together



Scott Passner

POSITION

Principal, North Brunswick Township Early Childhood Center

SUPERVISION

Supervisor of Support Programs North Brunswick Township Schools

LEADERSHIP

Chair of the New Jersey Principal Association Early Childhood Leadership Committee

spassner@nbtschools.org

What Success Looks Like by the End of Today

01

Identify common sources of workplace conflict.

02

Learn communication and resolution strategies.

03

Explore ways to build positive workplace culture.

04

Build trust across provider lines.

05

Use practical tools to resolve conflict.

06

Center students, staff, and community needs.

Today We Will Cover Culture, Conflict, and Collaboration

- Build a positive team culture
- Recognize and manage staff conflict
- Strengthen public–private collaboration
- Center students, staff, and community



Two Systems, One Classroom

Public preschool

- Public funding and accountability
- District rules and reporting
- Shared space with partners

Private providers

- Private funding and policies
- Provider rules and reporting
- Shared students and classrooms

Every child’s learning, safety, and family trust unite us.

Culture Is Built in Small Daily Moments

- Shared habits shape how work feels
- Every interaction signals what matters
- Trust grows through repeated actions
- Culture is practiced, not posted

Four Habits That Grow Trust Between Teams

Communicate Consistently

Share updates through agreed channels.

Share Credit

Name every partner’s contribution.

Show Respect

Listen before solving or responding.



Naming Where Conflict Tends to Start

- Scheduling: different daily rhythms
- Curriculum authority: unclear decision rights
- Resources: uneven access or expectations
- Perceived status: whose expertise counts



Conflict and Disagreement Are Not the Same Thing

- Disagreement: different views, respectful exchange
- Conflict: tension disrupts working relationships
- Concern: name the issue, not the person
- Repair: restore trust and shared work

A Real Scenario: Who Decides Classroom Routines?

- Lead teacher sets schedule
- Provider assistant proposes adjustments
- Team discusses student impact

Four Steps to Resolve Staff Disagreements

1. Pause before responding
2. Listen to understand perspectives
3. Name the shared goal
4. Agree on next steps



Applying the Four Steps to the Routines Scenario

- Name the concern: inconsistent arrival routines
- Listen for each provider’s constraints
- Agree on one shared routine
- Set a date to revisit results

Communication Norms That Prevent Conflict Before It Starts

- Schedule brief cross-provider check-ins
- Name one point of contact
- Record decisions and responsibilities
- Use shared written agreements
- Clarify changes before implementation
- Revisit agreements when needs shift

Leadership Sets the Tone Staff Follow

- Model respect in every interaction
- Name expectations across both systems
- Address dismissive behavior promptly
- Recognize collaboration publicly



Stronger Teams Benefit Students, Staff, and Community

Commit to One Practice This Month

- Choose one trust-building habit
- Name when and where it starts
- Invite a colleague to support it




Thank You