



Droichead - Framework for Challenging Conversations - Post-primary

The following framework is adapted from Dr. Joe O'Connell's Framework, 2015.

Dr. O'Connell is the former Director of Limerick Education Support Centre.

This framework may be of use in preparation for a professional conversation with a colleague. It highlights four key steps that could be considered when engaging in such a conversation.

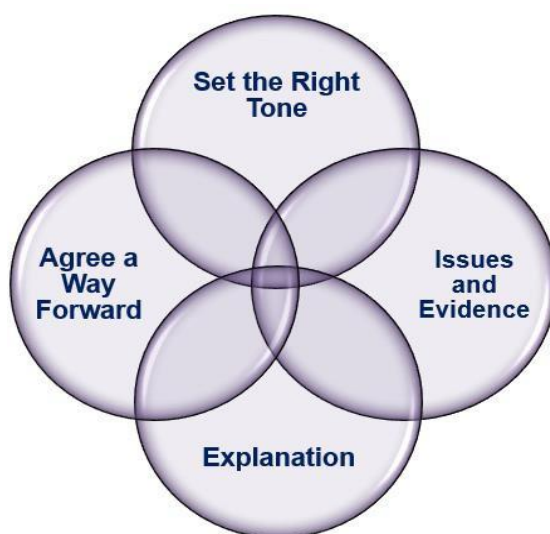


Figure 1: Framework for Challenging Conversations (Source: Dr O'Connell, 2015)

Framework: Step 1

Introduction - Set the Right Tone

- Begin by explaining the purpose of the meeting
- Set out the structure of the meeting
- Agree standards of behaviour required during the meeting
- Adopt a calm and professional manner
- Reassure your colleague about confidentiality (where possible) – both prior to and after the meeting
- Do not be afraid of referring to your pre-prepared script, it will help you stay in control
- Remember to focus on the issue and not the person.

Framework: Step 2

State the Issues and Give Evidence

- Inform your colleague what the issue is, from your perspective, using your knowledge of the situation
- Give specific examples and refer to dates, documents, work, or specific interactions
- Explain the impact the problem is having.

Framework: Step 3

Ask for an Explanation

- Listen to what is being said – professional dialogue
- Keep an open mind and do not jump to conclusions
- Acknowledge your colleague's position and any mitigating circumstances
- Introduce your questions and explore the issues together
- Use your questioning techniques to avoid diversions or too much repetition
- You may have to be firm and keep restating your position
- Stay clear of emotive language and do not respond to manipulative behaviour. Invest in knowing your people.

Framework: Step 4

Agree a Way Forward

- Ask the other person for proposals
- What can be done to improve the issue?
- Lead them through a discussion of the options.

Make a Decision

- Agree a plan
- Agree supports
- Agree a follow-up meeting and/or review
- Document the agreement and give a copy to the teacher.

(Dr O'Connell, 2015)