The Interest-Based Approach

**The Mission:** Using the interest-based communication and decision making process to create an environment in which individuals participate fully, feel respected, and receive recognition for the contributions they make.

**The Vision:** An organization in which it is evident that all individuals are honored contributors to the Los Rios Community College District using open, honest, and reasoned dialogue.

A Note from the Chancellor

January 2015

This just might be the most exciting time to be working at a California community college, with presidents, governors and other decision makers focusing on what we do and how we do it. We welcome the attention! Over the last few years, we have faced significant financial challenges. We have weathered the state’s fiscal storm, and now benefit from improvements in the budget. Fortunately, the IBA principles—seeking to understand before being understood, trustworthiness and creativity—have guided many of our processes and enabled us to continue to be successful in our service to students.

The beginning of the spring 2015 semester reminds us that we have yet another opportunity to spread the word about incorporating the IBA principles into our work. Many of you are developing your college’s Accreditation Self-Study reports and working on serving students under the Student Success and Support Program. As we address these and many other opportunities, it is even more vital that we keep our IBA principles and philosophies at the forefront of our dealings and decisions. Let’s remember that each of us adds value to addressing challenges and crafting thoughtful solutions. As we do so, let’s always keep in mind that the relationships are sometimes more important than the issues, and that it’s important to focus on interests rather than positions.

For those of you who haven’t had the benefit of IBA training, I encourage you to enroll in this year’s three-day spring training, scheduled for March 11-13, for your personal and professional growth. The principles of IBA continue to lay the foundation for successful relationships across our District.

-Brian King

REGISTER NOW!!!

Los Rios Community College District
3-day IBA Workshop Training:

**Dates:** March 11, 12, and 13, 2015
Location: Marriott Hotel: 11211 Point East Drive, Rancho Cordova, CA 95742

To attend this training, please email Valerie Carrigan, Training Specialist, DO/HR. at carrigv@losrios.edu

First deadline to apply is Friday, February 6, 2015.

[Can’t do spring? Start thinking about the fall: Nov. 4, 5, and 6, 2015]
Getting Trained

All Los Rios employees are offered an opportunity to be trained in the IBA process at no cost to them. In the past, the District has paid for hotel accommodations for all participants and facilitators who attended the IBA training. The District will continue to pay for the hotel cost up front if you choose to stay at the hotel during IBA; however, your hotel room expense is now taxable and reportable to the IRS and will be reflected on your W2 form as income.

To participate in the next IBA training, take the following steps:

- Discuss IBA with your manager/supervisor and get permission to attend.
- Complete and return the IBA application (indicating meal and hotel stay preferences, and, if applicable, ADA accommodations).
- 36 – 42 participants and 5 alternates are selected each semester and will be notified a week after the application due date.
- Questions? Please contact the HR Training Specialist at 916.568.3106.

**POWERFUL ELEMENTS OF IBA**

**COMMUNICATION**

Even ping pong balls can express emotions! In one IBA exercise, participants are given words representing emotions, such as happy, sad, and excited and asked to draw those emotions on white ping pong balls. This exercise stresses the importance of non-verbal communication and demonstrates how facial expressions reveal emotion without the use of words.

After attending IBA, participants are challenged to be cognizant of their own and others’ non-verbal and verbal communication: expressions, body language, word choices, and assumptions made about what was said and what was meant.

**RELATIONSHIPS**

The interest-based approach is also known as the interest-based attitude. The attitude among the members of a group is as important as the approach taken for the work of that group. The idea is to disentangle the people from the problem. Positive relationships among people in a group are essential to an effective process for addressing issues of substance.

**CREATIVITY**

Successful IBA outcomes are proportional to the degree of flexibility and creativity in the room as people work together to find creative and fair options. Creativity can be summed up as one’s ability to reuse existing ideas in new combinations or contexts. In many cases, these combinations are difficult to visualize because we focus on how things *should* go together. In order to unlock our creative genius to solve problems, we need to adjust how we look at possible options or results. We need to think about what we know in a new way, challenge our assumptions, and suspend judgment until we have generated all the ideas we can think of.

**TOP 10 REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO ATTEND IBA**

10. You think *compromise* is your best option in negotiation or conflict resolution.
9. You’re fighting with your colleague about who gets the ________ (choose one: office with the window, classroom, new computer, course assignment, last brownie...).
8. Meals and snacks are provided at IBA. We’ve heard that some people just go for the food!
7. Dressing in casual clothes is mandatory at IBA. Jeans and tennis shoes!
6. Once you complete IBA, you can add the accomplishment to your resume.
5. For some, attending IBA has been life changing.
4. “What happens at IBA, stays at IBA.” Find out what that means!
3. IBA is valued so highly at Los Rios that managers/supervisors will approve their employees’ attendance for this 3-day training and faculty are allowed to get subs for their classes.
2. You recognize the value of life-long learning to improve the skills you have to offer to those around you—both professionally and personally.
1. You will meet and get to know colleagues at all different levels from around the Los Rios District.
Los Rios Community College District continues to promote the interest-based approach as the preferred way to do business in the District. When the approach was adopted in 1993, it was on the heels of a small collective bargaining miracle. The entire 100+ page Los Rios College Federation of Teachers–Los Rios District collective bargaining agreement was renegotiated along with the first “golden handshake” program in a decade and a new assignment preference system for adjunct faculty—all in three days of negotiating! This minor miracle was made possible by the two bargaining teams having the courage to try something new (an interest-based approach).

After the first, successful bargaining effort, representatives from the Los Rios Management Association (LRMA), the Los Rios College Federation of Teachers (LRCFT), and the Los Rios Supervisors Association (LRSA) got together and agreed that the interest-based approach was too valuable to be limited to collective bargaining. From this desire to share the approach, the IBA Steering Committee was born. The committee developed the training curriculum that is used to train all Los Rios employees in the interest-based approach.

Two shipwrecked colleagues floated in a lifeboat at sea, quarreling over their limited rations and supplies.

“You’re drinking a lot of water. We need to conserve if we’re going to survive out here for long.”

“You should talk. I saw you gobbling up beef jerky when you thought I was asleep. I’m thirsty because I’m the one in full sun without a hat!”

“Maybe you should be more resourceful and make something to cover your head!”

If negotiators view themselves as adversaries, anything one says about the problem will sound like a personal attack.

To survive, these two colleagues will want to disentangle the problem from themselves as people. They will want to identify each other’s needs: shade, medicine, water, and food. They will want to go a step further and treat the meeting of those needs as a shared problem, along with other problems like keeping watch, catching rainwater, fighting off sharks, and getting the lifeboat to shore. Seeing themselves working side by side to solve a mutual problem will enable them to reconcile their conflicting interests and to advance their shared interests.

However difficult our personal relations may be, you and I become better able to reconcile our various interests when we accept that task as a shared problem and face it jointly. We must deal with people as human beings and deal with the problem separately. This is not something we do once and then forget about. We have to continually work at it.

Learn how to do this (and much more) at the 3-day IBA training!

[Adapted from Fischer and Ury, Getting to Yes.]

The IBA Secret Spice Recipe

Are you cooking up a big meeting or whipping up a new project? Try adding the IBA special spice recipe to the mix and satisfy the hunger of your colleagues:

Ingredients:
- 1/2 tablespoon of rationality
- 1 tablespoon of truthfulness
- 1/3 tablespoon of legitimacy
- 1 tablespoon of reliability
- 1/4 cup of relationship building
- 1/3 cup of understanding
- 1/2 cup of clear communication
- 1/3 cup of creativity
- 1/4 cup of cooperation
- 1 cup of commitment

Directions:
Combine all ingredients and pour the mixture into your soup of discussion, pasta of ideas, or marinated meat of your meetings.
Developed in the ’60s by psychologist Ellis Paul Torrance, the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) sought to identify a creativity-oriented alternative to IQ testing. One of the most iconic elements of the TTCT was the Incomplete Figure test.

Directions: You’re given a shape to the left; complete the image.

An example: