IEP Facilitation

Effective collaboration and shared problem solving through facilitation

Arizona Department of Education
Dispute Resolution

LET'S TALK ABOUT WORST CASE IEP MEETINGS...

1. What rules- explicit or implicit- did group members violate during the worst meeting?
2. I would be ecstatic if this training could help me to figure out to do when...
3. My worst fear as a facilitator of an IEP meeting is...
4. What behavior did various people exhibit as the group became ineffective and/or dysfunctional?

http://www.azed.gov/disputeresolution/

WHAT IS A PEA-LED FACILITATED IEP MEETING?

○ A PEA-led facilitated individualized education program (IEP) meeting is one in which:

- A PEA employee, designated as the facilitator, assists the IEP team in developing an IEP that provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to the student

- An IEP is developed by a collaborative team whose members share responsibility for the meeting process and results

- Decision-making and any conflicts that arise are managed through the use of facilitation skills

- Keeps the meeting focused on the student

How does a FIEP culture benefit your PEA?

- Builds and improves relationships among IEP team members and between parents and schools
- Keeps the meeting focused on the student
- Models effective communication and listening
- Provides opportunities for team members to resolve conflicts if they arise
- Supports the full participation of all IEP team members
- No cost to the parties and typically less stressful than formal dispute resolution options
- Is the IEP meeting and thus does not require a separate meeting

Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.
Alexander Graham Bell

"Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure."

~ Confucius

IEP Team

The IEP team <u>must</u> include:

- The child's parents
  - The adult student, if legal rights have transferred
- Not less than one of the child's regular education teachers
- Not less than one of the child's special education teachers
- Individual to explain evaluation results
- A representative of the public school
- The student when secondary transition is being discussed

IEP Team

The IDEA defines parent as:

- A biological or adoptive parent
- A foster parent
- A legal guardian
- An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent
- A surrogate parent

When more than one person meets the definition of a parent, the biological or adoptive parent (when attempting to act as a parent) must be presumed to be the parent unless he or she does not have legal authority to make educational decisions for the child.

IEP Team Meetings

Consensus

What it is:
- A general agreement
- What all teams need to work toward

What it isn't:
- A popular vote where majority rules
- Unanimous
- Unilateral

When consensus is not reached, the decision is made by public agency representative

PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Know the IEP team members <u>and their roles and responsibilities</u>

- If you are a required team member, you are at the meeting for a reason and have a job to do
- No one likes to participate if they do not fully understand their role
- Begins the creation of a true team
- It is the facilitator's responsibility to educate team members about their roles

DURING THE IEP MEETING

Roles and responsibilities

○ As a part of the introduction, each of the team members should state their names and their <u>roles.</u>

For example:

"Hi, I'm Randy. I am Sally's second grade general education teacher. Sally spends most of her day in my classroom. I monitor how she is progressing in the general education curriculum, and what accommodations work for her in my classroom. I am here today as an expert on the second grade curriculum, and can answer questions about the second grade. I will also be the time-keeper at today's meeting."

Break

Prior to the Meeting

Pre-Meeting Interviews with:

- Parent
- School- based IEP team members (which may include non-required team members)
- Student

Purpose of pre-meeting interviews:

- "De-mystifies" the process
- Works to build trust
- Helps to prevent surprises at the IEP meeting
- Helps gather information to create the meeting agenda

Prior to the Meeting

Agenda

- Welcome, Introduction and Roles
- Review ground rules, parking lot, action plan
- The IEP:
    - PLAAFP

    - Measurable annual goals

    - Services/supports

    - Educational placement

- Conclusion
- Procedural Safeguards
- Parking lot, Action plan

The Parts of the IEP

Each student's IEP must include several specific components, each of which is meant to be considered carefully by the entire IEP team.

The IEP has four main parts:

- **Present levels**—What do we currently know about the student and his needs?
- **Measurable annual goals**—Based on his needs, what do we want the student to be able to do next in order to move forward?
- **Special education and related services & supports**—What kind of help does the student need in order to work on those goals and the general curriculum?
- **Educational placement—**What is the least restrictive environment in which the student should be placed in order to successfully access these services and supports and the general curriculum?

  ➢ **This is meant to be a process. Each decision sets up the next part.**

PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Agenda
- Welcome, Introduction and roles
- Review ground rules, parking lot, action plan
- The IEP:
  - PLAAFP

  - Measurable annual goals

  - Services/supports

  - Educational placement

- Conclusion
- Procedural Safeguards
- Parking lot, action plan sheet

PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Establish Ground Rules

I suppose it's too late to establish some ground rules...

Prior to the Meeting

Upon Arrival. . .

- Allow time to select and/or arrange the meeting room.
  - As a facilitator, you may want to establish a specific seating plan.
- Will technical devices be used? Are these in place?
- Interpreter?
- Did you bring copies of the agenda, chart paper, and the ground rules?
  - Additional matters to consider:
    - Location of building resources (bathrooms, etc.)
    - Do you have your needed supplies?
      - Markers and flip charts? Clock/watch? Access to copy machine? Kleenex? Pencils and paper? Water? Snacks? Fidgets?
    - Specific needs of the parties (when accommodations are requested)
- Prepare front desk person for the arrival of participants.

DURING THE IEP MEETING

Arrival of the IEP team members

○ Use your first in-person contact with the parties to begin establishing rapport and setting the climate for a productive Facilitated IEP meeting.

○ If possible, escort the parties into the room and to their seats.

○ Before the formal introduction of roles and responsibilities, introduce yourself, learn their names, clarify again whether you will be using first or last name.

DURING THE IEP MEETING

The opening statement

○ The purpose of a good, succinct opening statement is to:

- Create a safe and positive environment
- Clarify the facilitator's role, the purpose and expectations of the process
- Allow parties to develop trust in the facilitator and the process
- Answer any additional questions the parties may have about the process

○ Refer to "Facilitator Opening Statement Checklist"

DURING THE IEP MEETING

The Parking Lot
- A place to add topics that are mentioned during the IEP meeting that are outside of the IEP
- Reassures the parties that these will be addressed, either at a later date or at the end of the meeting
- Include in project plan sheet
- Examples of parking lot items:
  - Cafeteria/lunch items
  - Playground
  - Kids being "mean"
  - Specific teacher concerns
  - Bus
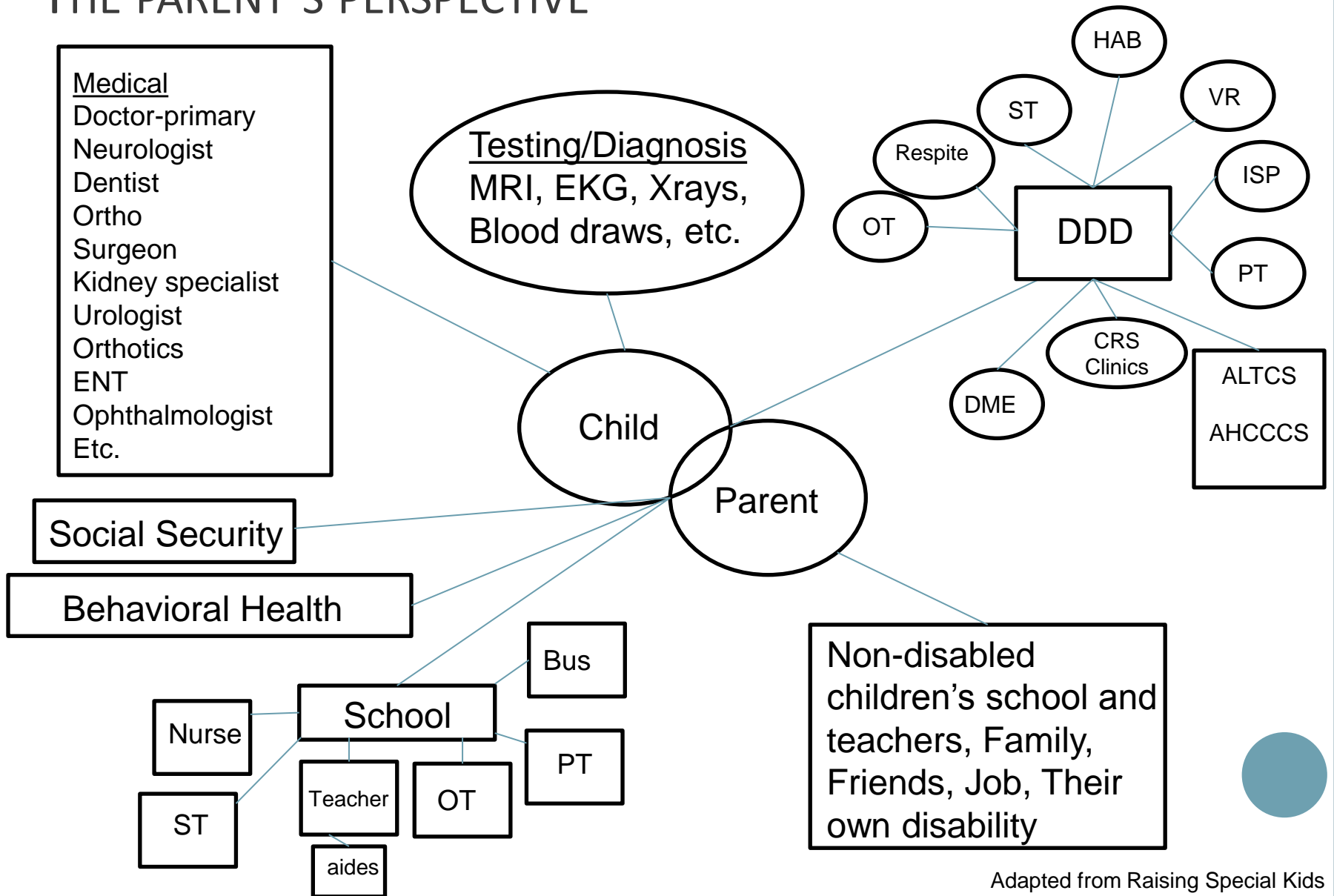 - Nursing and care plan issues

THE IEP MEETING CONCLUSION

- Briefly summarize decisions
- Action Plan Sheet – Including items from the Parking Lot
- Procedural Safeguards Notice

THE PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Medical
Doctor-primary
Neurologist
Dentist
Ortho
Surgeon
Kidney specialist
Urologist
Orthotics
ENT
Ophthalmologist
Etc.

Testing/Diagnosis
MRI, EKG, Xrays,
Blood draws, etc.

HAB

ST

VR

Respite

ISP

OT

DDD

PT

Child

CRS Clinics

DME

ALTCS

AHCCCS

Parent

Social Security

Behavioral Health

Non-disabled children's school and teachers, Family, Friends, Job, Their own disability

Bus

Nurse

School

PT

Teacher

OT

ST

aides

Adapted from Raising Special Kids

HOW DO WE HELP PARENTS BECOME ACTIVE MEMBERS?

- A parent is their child's best advocate. An advocate speaks out for another. An advocate is not an adversary.
- What should families know about IDEA to be effective advocates?
- What should families know about your school/district to be effective advocates?
  - Policies and procedures
  - Staff organization hierarchy
  - Problem solving process

How are you teaching parents to be positive, effective advocates for their children?

How are you involving parents in your school/district?

Cultural sensitivity

There are 2 significant levels of cultural competence:

1. The first level is a basic understanding of certain beliefs, dynamics, and customs that can greatly influence the lives of individuals within certain cultures.

   - This is not to say that all of these customs or beliefs apply to all individuals within a particular culture.

   - However, such an understanding "opens cultural doors" to relationships, and leads to the second level.

2. The second level is exploration of individual and unique issues.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication involves three components:

1. Verbal messages- the words we choose

2. Paraverbal messages- how we say the words

> "I didn't SAY you were stupid."
> "I didn't say YOU were stupid."
> "I didn't say you were STUPID."

3. Nonverbal messages- our body language

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In all of our communications we should strive to send consistent and clear verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal messages, and hear and correctly understand messages someone is sending to us.

Effective listening- more than simple hearing

- Keep the focus on the speaker
- Listen with care, empathy, and curiosity
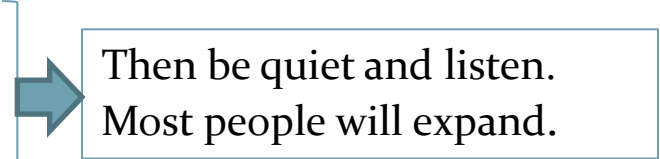- Demonstrate understanding

Empathy is trying to understand a situation from another person's perspective. It is not sympathy which is only being nice and agreeing with their values and beliefs.
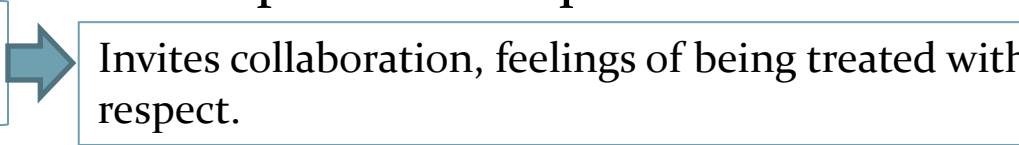
"I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen."

~ Ernest Hemingway

Reflective listening skills

- Paraphrase for clarity
- Acknowledge feelings- emotional labeling
  - It seems like…
  - It sounds like…
  - It looks like…

  → Then be quiet and listen.
  Most people will expand.

- Inquire to learn- ask open-ended questions
  - What…?
  - How…?
  - ~~Why…?~~

  → Invites collaboration, feelings of being treated with respect.

- Effective pauses
- Minimal encouragers
- Mirroring
  - Insinuates similarity.
  - Repeat the last three words (or critical 1-3 words) or what someone just said.

CONFLICT

Our society's view of conflict is brought into focus with this definition from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

1. Fight, battle, war
2. A competitive or opposing action of incompatibles
3. A difference that prevents agreement

CONFLICT:

BEGINNING TO LOOK AT CONFLICT IN A NEW WAY

- Conflict is a natural part of human social life.
- Conflicts occur when real or perceived differences between individuals (or groups) impede parties from meeting their needs, values, or goals.
- Conflict in and of itself is neither negative nor positive.
- Conflict can be destructive when it is not resolved.
- Conflict can be positive when parties are able to manage their differences and can resolve issues constructively.

Seven types of Conflict

- One of the first steps in resolving conflict is to understand what the conflict is actually about

- Most conflicts will have one or more of these elements as root causes. Generally, a solution to conflict will match the cause.
  - DATA
  - RELATIONSHIP
  - VALUES
  - RESOURCES
  - HISTORY
  - STRUCTURE
  - PSYCHOLOGICAL

  - ❖ Activity
  - ❖ Role-play

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING VS. BEING POSITIONAL

- All people are involved in problem solving on a daily basis

- For many of us our repertoire of negotiating skills is limited. Out of habit and lack of knowledge about alternative strategies ,we try to solve problems by stating and then sticking to our position.

- When we insist on our position as a way to solve a problem- one party will be satisfied and the other will be dissatisfied

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING VS. BEING POSITIONAL

Problem solving from positions is limited because:

1. It is inefficient. Haggling, attempting to convince, resorting to tactics such as stonewalling or holding out often results in multiple meetings, stress for participants.

2. Produces unwise agreements. When we bargain from 2 positions- yours and mine- we are only considering 2 possible solutions.

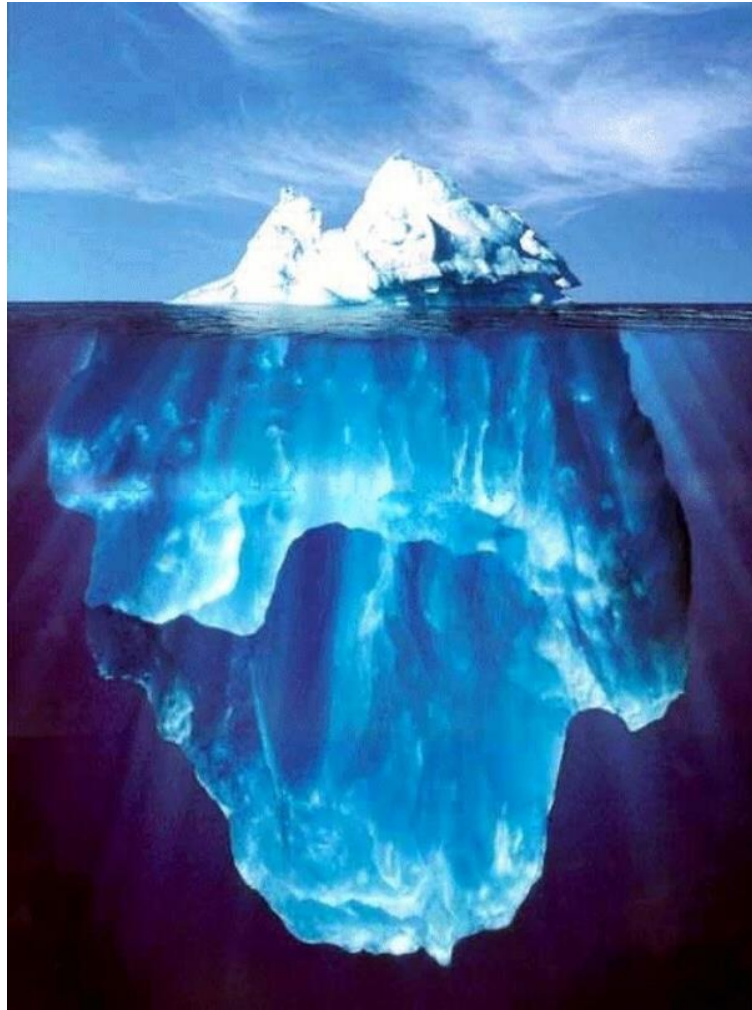3. Can be hard on relationships. Can create stress, anger, resentment.

Figure out your and their interests!

UNDERSTANDING THEIR POINT OF VIEW - POSITIONS AND INTERESTS

- Rather than negotiating from opposing positions, encourage parties to identify problems in terms of INTERESTS.

- An interest is the underlying need or concern that a party is trying to have satisfied.

- When we go beyond the position to uncover the needs and concerns, we create an opportunity to explore a variety of options of possible solutions that may not have been previously considered.

UNCOVERING INTERESTS

The following questions may help someone move from declaring a position (want) to identifying and explaining an interest (need).

o How will this make things better for the student?

o What makes this especially important to you?

o What problems do you think the student will have if you don't get what you are asking for?

o Please tell me how you reached that conclusion.

o What is your biggest concern about things remaining as they are?

o What important things would you like the other team members to know that might help them better understand how you feel?

❖ How can we best satisfy everyone's motivating interests?

❖ Role-play

DISCUSSION TO RESOLVE ISSUES CONSTRUCTIVELY

Gather
information

Organize
information

Select the best approach
and reach agreement
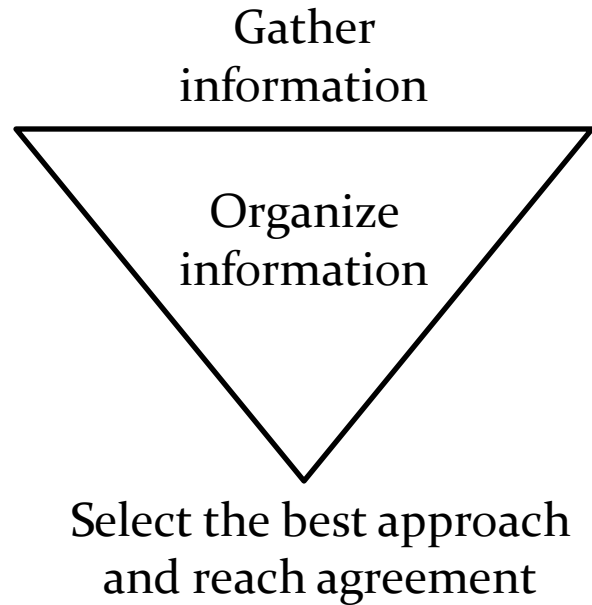
❖ All conversations are a series of discussions where participants are opening and closing on different topics, building agreements as they go.

Tools for gathering information

- Ask problem-solving questions that are open ended
- Make a proposal
  - To start the discussion
  - "I wonder" strategy
  - Ask for a suggestion for others to consider
- Brainstorm/List
  - To provide a short inventory of ideas for the group to consider
  - To produce as many ideas as possible without evaluating
- Clarify
  - Check for understanding before you ask the group to make decisions or evaluate the ideas.

TOOLS FOR ORGANIZING INFORMATION

o Combine duplicates

o Highlight advantages & disadvantages
- To point out important features of each alternative
- Pros vs. Cons

o Advocate
- Have team members give the strengths and rationale of a specific option.

Tools for Selecting the best approach and reaching agreement

○ Quick agreement
  - Reach quick agreement on things you believe have general support.
○ Build up/eliminate
  - Include or delete components of different options to create a more widely accepted solution.
○ Both/and
  - Avoid either/or decisions or win/lose solutions.
○ Gauge consensus
  - Check how close the group is to consensus.

  ❖ Role-play

GENERAL FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

- Paraphrasing
- Acknowledge their points and feelings.
- Use humor (if it is not at the expense of any party)
- Ask open-ended questions to generate participation.
- Remind participants to reserve judgment while generating ideas/listening to information.
- Boomerang
- Reframe
- Perform a relevancy check
- Ask/say what's going on

HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- Breaking guidelines for respectful communication
- Intense emotions
- Non-stop talkers
- Quiet people
- Blamers
- Cultural and value differences

❖ Role-play

DEALING WITH IMPASSE

- During an IEP meeting, the parties may reach a point when they are no longer moving toward agreement.
- The following guidelines can be effective in overcoming impasse:
  - Identify impasse
  - Review what has been achieved
  - Provide information
  - List in the parking lot for later discussion
  - Explain if no consensus reached, PEA rep. must make decision for team
  - Discuss mediation

STRATEGIES FOR BREAKING IMPASSE

○ Physical techniques
  - Take a break/recess/walk
  - Food

○ Focus on the process
  - Remind them of their earlier promise to participate in good faith and to give the process a chance.
  - Retrace the meeting progress/point out agreements.
  - Encourage them to retain flexibility.
  - Ask parties for additional suggestions.
  - Role-reversal: Have each party describe the other party's point of view.

How do you bring this back to your district/charter?

Contact information

Amy Dill

Amy.dill@azed.gov

602-542-7579

Toll Free

855-383-9801