

# Leveraging Conflict Management Tools to Sustain an Inclusive Parent-School Partnership

Presented at *Planting Seeds: Growing an Inclusive and Informed Community*, the 9<sup>th</sup> National Symposium on Dispute Resolution in Special Education by:

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# Agenda

- Session Objectives
- Advanced Communication Concepts
- Advanced Conflict Concepts
- Parent-School Conflict Management Tools

# Session Objectives

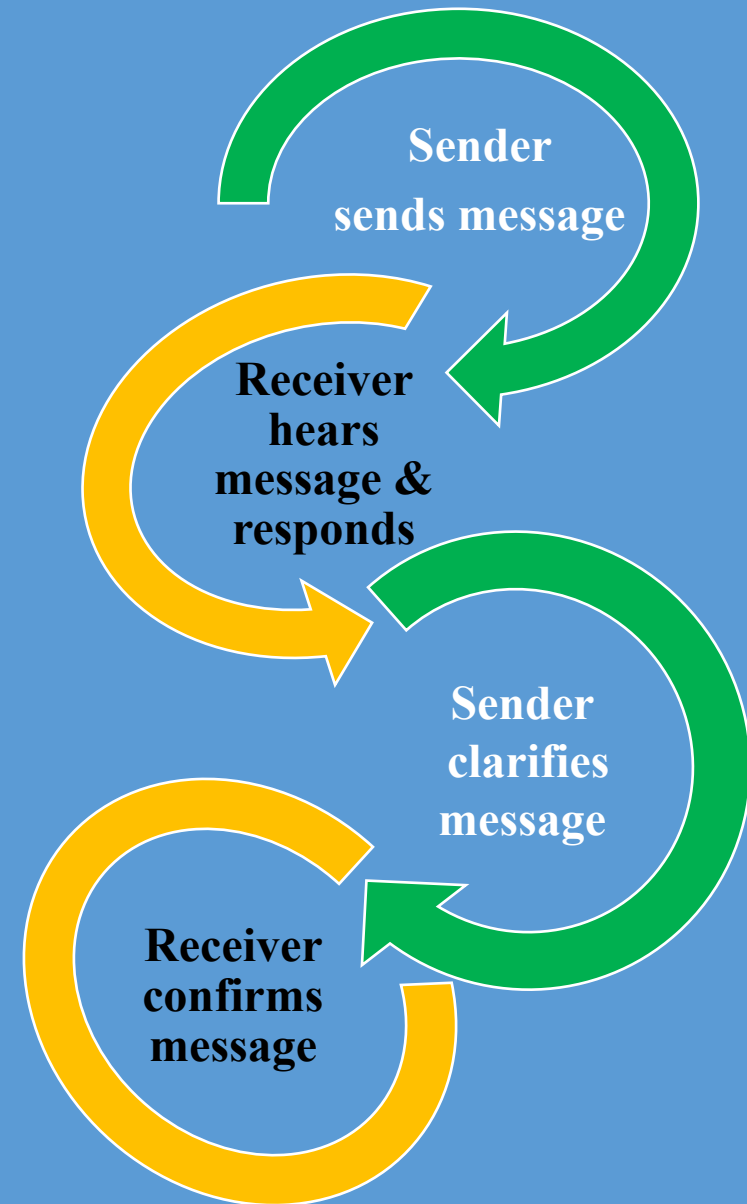


- Develop awareness of how you communicate and handle conflict
- Learn the factors that impact communication
- Build knowledge of conflict management tools
- Understand how an effective conflict management program can help sustain an inclusive parent-school partnership

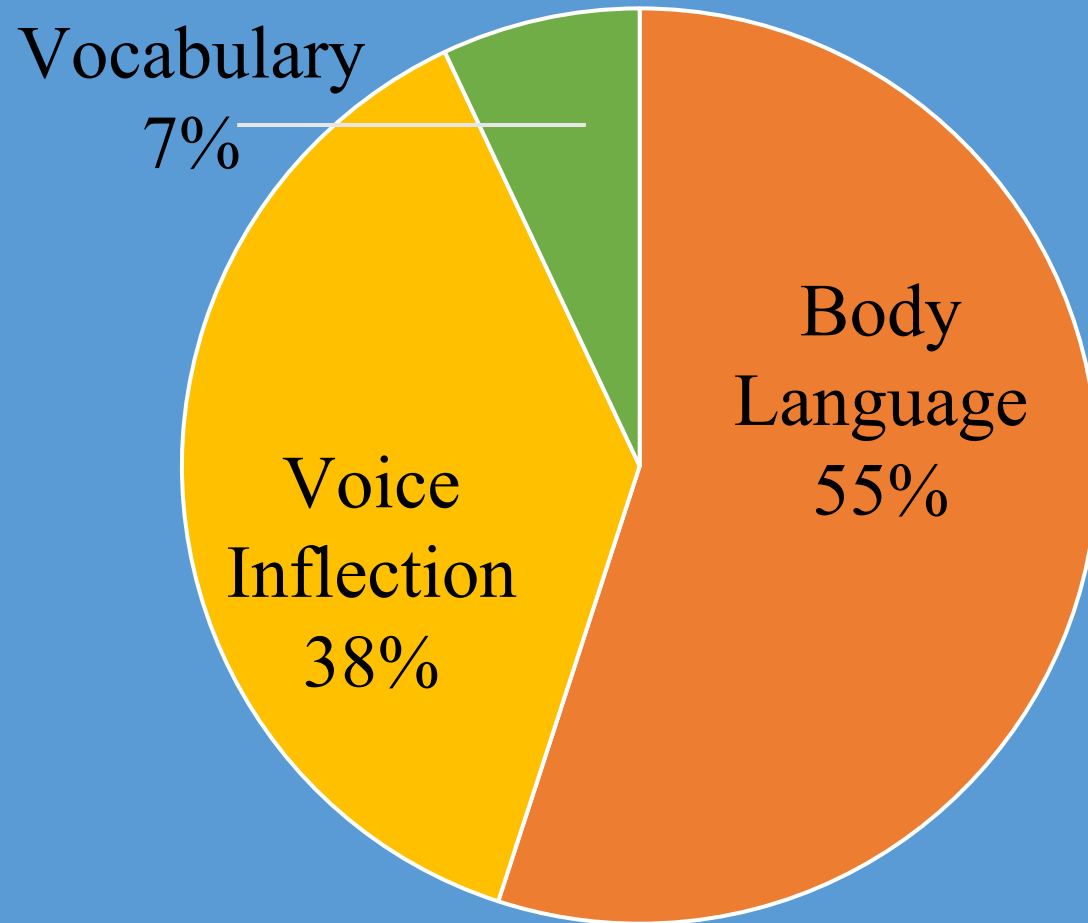
# Advanced Communication Concepts

- What does effective communication look like?
- How do we communicate?
- What factors impact communication?
- What communication style do you use most?
- Communication Shutdowns
- Education-Related Communication Shutdowns

**What does  
effective  
communication  
look like?**



# How do we communicate?



# **What factors impact communication? (CVAP)**

- Communication Styles
- Values
- Assumptions
- Perspective

# COMMUNICATION STYLES

**How do you communicate verbally and non-verbally?**

**PASSIVE**



**AGGRESSIVE**



**PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE**



**ASSERTIVE**



**What communication style do you use most?**





**What is important to you?**



# **ASSUMPTIONS**

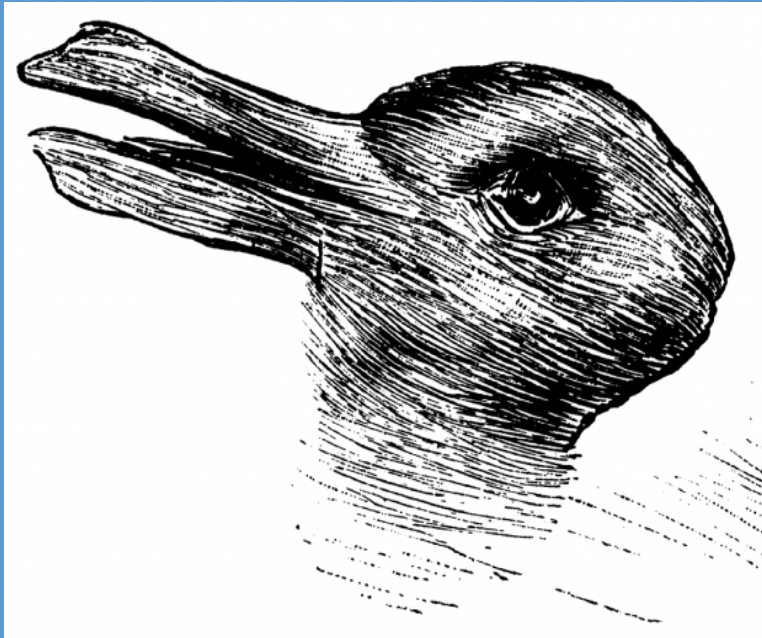
**What do you believe or suspect based on the  
information you have at any given time?**



**What do you and others see, hear, think or feel?**

# Perceptual Perspective

**Do you see what I see?**



**Do you hear what I hear?**



# Conceptual Perspective

What do they see?



# Social Perspective

**What biases, social norms, rules are making me and them think or feel that way?**



# Communication Shutdowns

1. Don't be ridiculous.
2. It'll cost too much.
3. That's not my responsibility.
4. We don't have time.
5. We've never done that before.
6. That's not the way we do things around here.
7. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.
8. We're not ready for that.
9. You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
10. It will never sell.
11. We will become the laughing stock of the entire company.
12. We tried that before and it didn't work.
13. It simply can't be done.
14. It's too radical of a change.
15. That will make our current equipment obsolete.
16. It's not really our problem.
17. Let's get back to reality.
18. Let's form a committee to decide.
19. I need to go over the numbers again.
20. It's not in our budget.
21. We have done alright without it all this time.
22. It won't work here.
23. Okay, but if it doesn't work, you're the one who's going to get the blame.
24. I don't personally agree, but if you insist.
25. Are you crazy?

# IEP-Related Communication Shutdowns

“It just  
can’t be  
done.”

“I don’t  
have time  
for this.”

“All you  
care about  
is your  
budget.”

“If you don’t  
sign the IEP, we  
can’t do  
anything for  
your child.”

“You don’t  
care about  
my child.”

“Our  
resources are  
limited.”

“You  
never even  
follow  
the IEP.”

“We don’t see  
that behavior  
at school.”

“You’re just  
trying to cover  
your butt.”

“We don’t  
have the  
budget for  
that.”

# Advanced Conflict Concepts

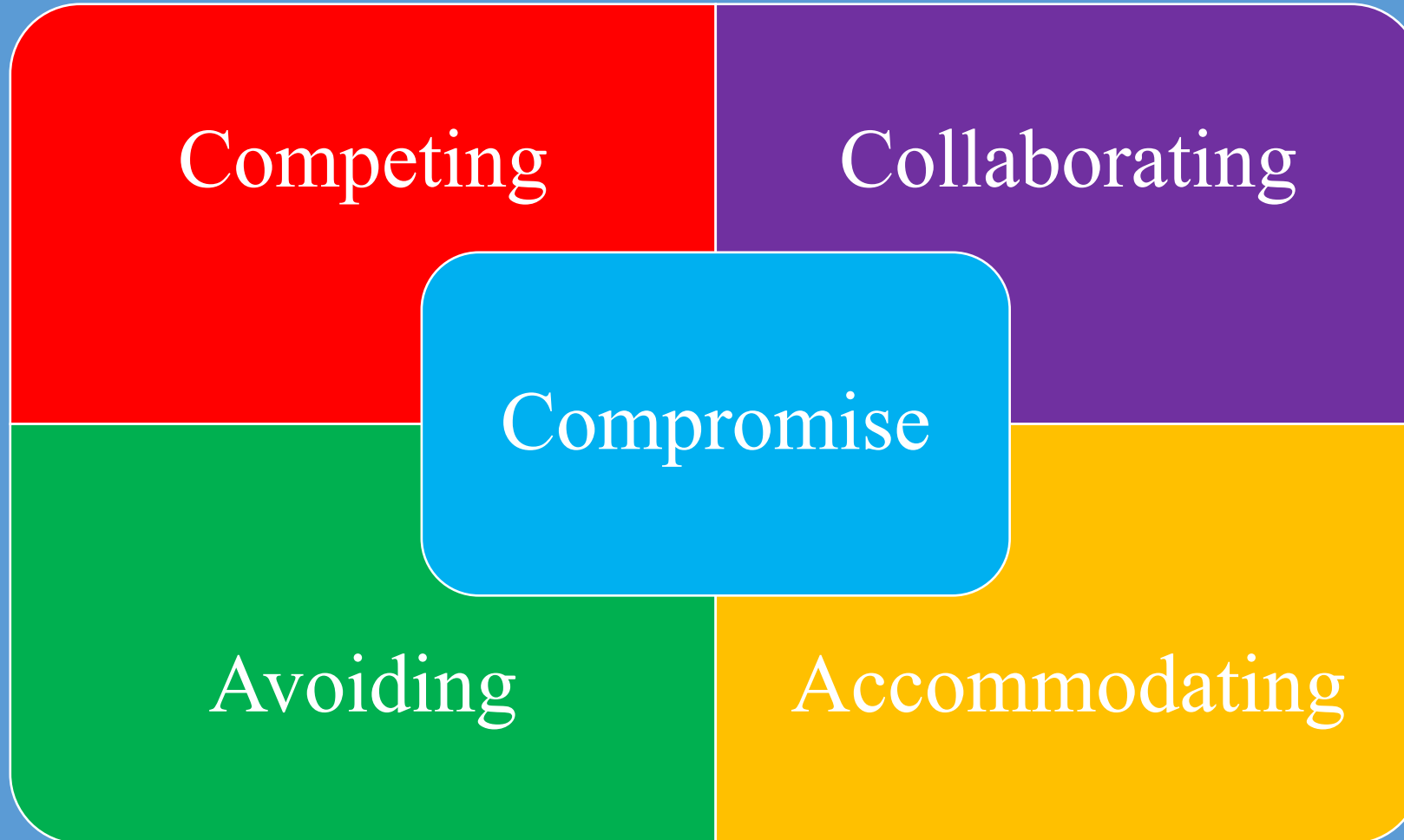
- What is conflict?
- How do we deal with conflict?
- How does conflict develop?
- How do you deal with conflict?

# What is conflict?

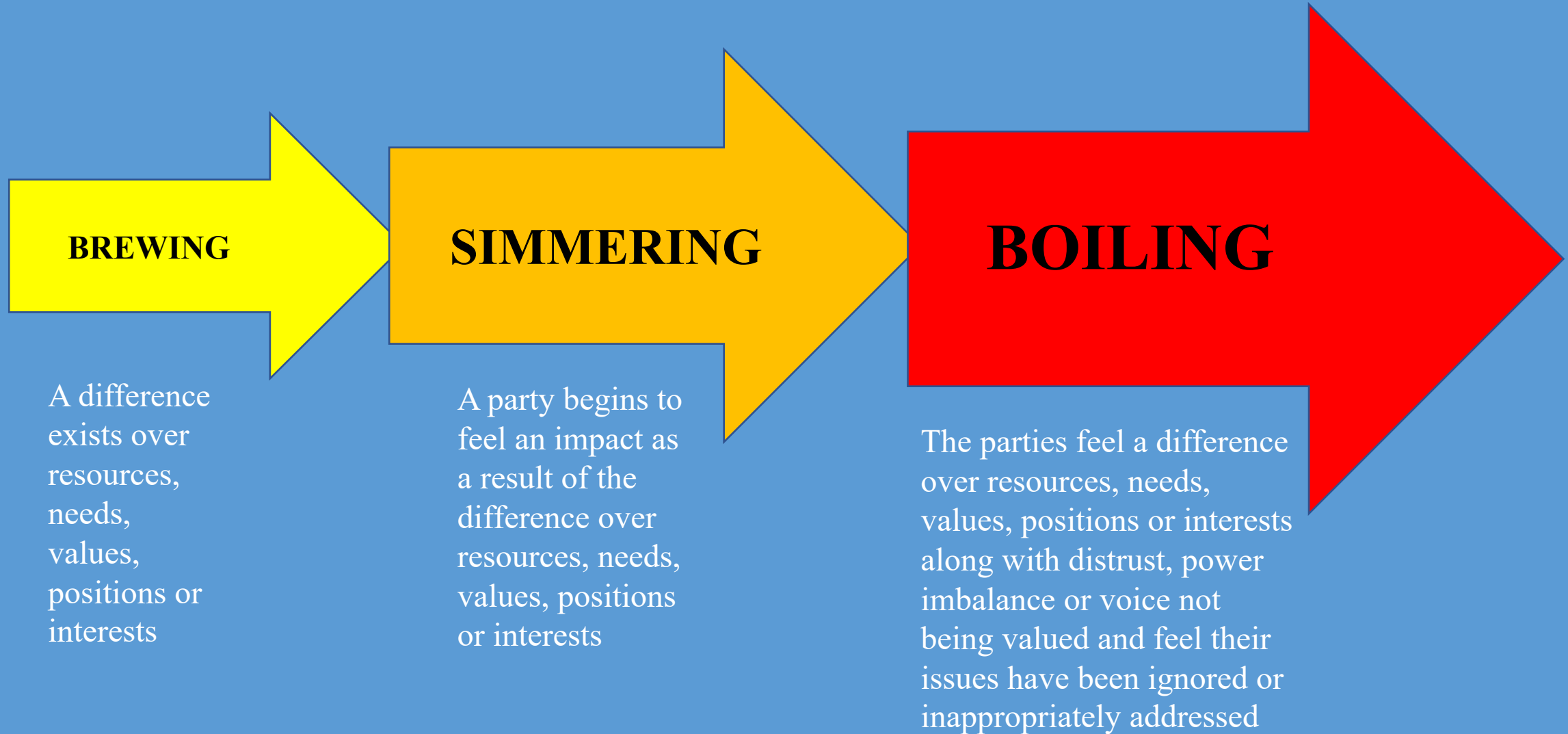
“Difference over  
resources, needs,  
values, positions  
or interests”



# How do we deal with conflict?



# How does conflict develop?



# How do you deal with conflict?

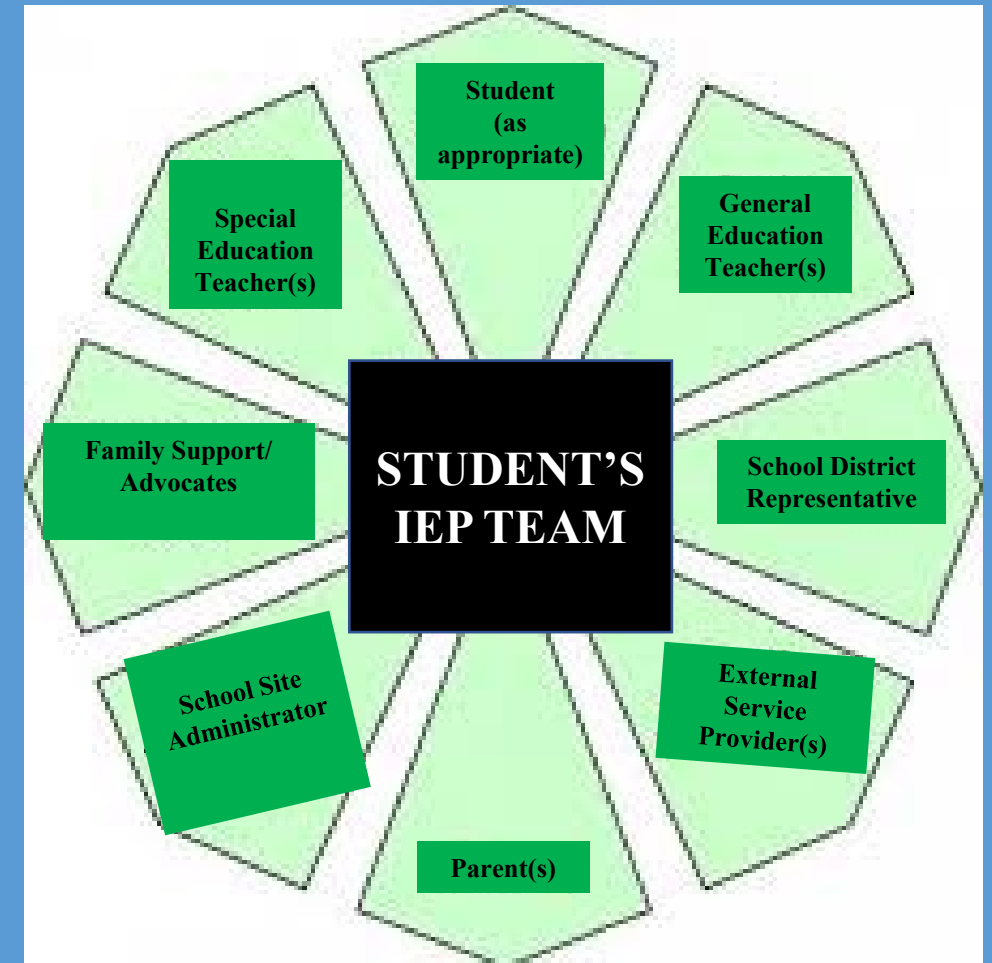


# IEP-Related Conflict Management Tools

- What to consider when assessing IEP-related conflict?
- What stage is the conflict in?
- Can the case benefit from conflict management?
- Components of an effective school-based conflict management program

# What to consider when assessing IEP-related conflict?

- Parties to the Conflict
- Stage of Conflict
- Conflict Management Requirements
- Conflict Management Resources



# Is conflict management appropriate?



# Can this case benefit from conflict management?

Is a conflict  
**BREWING?**

Are you aware of parent and school having a difference over resources, needs, values, positions or interests?

Are you aware of mistrust, power imbalance or voice inequities being felt by parent or school professional?

Initiate Case Management Protocol (i.e. designated case manager, parent-school meetings, communication plan, etc.)

Is the conflict now  
**SIMMERING?**

Are parent or school professional aware of a brewing conflict and feel some impact as a result of the brewing conflict?

Has parent or school professional expressed feeling excluded, dismissed, ignored; or, that the resources the student needs are being withheld?

Initiate Internal Conflict Management Protocol (i.e. facilitated IEP meetings, facilitated conversations, conflict management plan, etc.)

Is the conflict  
**BOILING**  
over now?

Has a complaint been filed?

Are attorneys, advocates or legal team involved?




Has parent or school professional started attacking each other verbally or in writing?

Is there an issue that keeps coming up or has begun to impact interactions between parent and school professionals?

Has parent or school professional requested third-party conflict management?

Initiate Conflict Management w/ External Conflict Management Expert (i.e. facilitated IEP meetings/ conversations, mediation, communication coaching, etc.)

# Components of an Effective School-Based Conflict Management Program

- ☐ Conflict Management Program Policy
- ☐ Conflict Management Program Coordinator
- ☐ Conflict Management Program Accessibility Tools (i.e., website, forms, etc.)
- ☐ Skills Development for Parents and School Professionals
- ☐ Appropriate Conflict Management Tools
  - **Brewing Conflict**  Case Monitoring Protocol  
(i.e., parent-school meetings, communication plan, designated case manager)
  - **Simmering Conflict**  Internal Conflict Management  
(i.e., facilitated IEP meetings, facilitated conversations, conflict management plan)
  - **Boiling Conflict**  External Conflict Management Expert  
(i.e., TPCME-led facilitated IEP meetings/conversations, mediation, communication coaching)
- ☐ Conflict Management Program Marketing
- ☐ Conflict Management Program Tracking & Evaluation

"If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

**-Maya Angelou**

# Resources

- Conflict Resolution: *Step-by-Step*, The Community Board Program, Inc., 149 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, 1987
- Kreidler, William J. *Creative Conflict Resolution, More Than 200 Activities for Keeping Peace in the Classroom*. Good Year Books, Scott, Foresman & Co., 1900 E. Lake Avenue, Glenview, IL 60025, 1984.
- Reproduced from *50 Communications Activities, Icebreakers, and Exercises*, by Peter R. Garber. Amherst, MA, HRD Press, 2008.
- Reginald (Reg) Adkins, Ph.D., Elemental Truths. <http://elementaltruths.blogspot.com/2006/11/conflict-management-quiz.html>
- The World Wide Web <http://www....>