

>> Okay. I know that somebody is keeping an eye on the waiting room, so just in honor of your time we'll go ahead and get started. It is wonderful to see all of you and, again, happy Friday. Welcome to Negotiate Your Way to Success at IEP Meetings. We're so happy to be with you. But I will say we are bummed that we can't be there with you in person. And I guess this is the next best thing and we look forward to all being able to be together sooner than later and hope everybody is staying happy and staying healthy. A little bit about us, my name is Cassie Velasquez. And my best friend over there, and business partner, Robin O'Shea. We are both managing partners for Key2Ed. And we focus primarily on IEP facilitation as a means of preventing conflict. But we come to you today to talk about how IEPs should really be a series of negotiations. You will leave today with specific tools to fill your toolbox, so to speak, on how you can guide your IEP meetings so that they're collaborative. Which, in turn, means open and transparent where you're having actual discussions. And when we have discussions, that involves negotiation, especially when we're coming to the table with differing views of the child. And we'll talk more about that. Both Robin and I retired from Scottsdale School District in Arizona after around 25 plus, we stopped counting, years working in special education. And we wore many hats in the field throughout those years. But we both have facilitated hundreds of meetings that were very tricky where there was a lot of conflict and where there was negotiation that needed to happen. So we do come to you with practical experience, not just an philosophical approach. So we're happy to be here with you. So as we get started, I would like to share our outcomes with you today to make sure we're all in this the same way. You're here for the same reason we're here to present, and that is by the end of the this presentation, that you will have an understanding of the power of negotiations to achieve collaborative agreements. You're going to walk away is usable negotiation tools and techniques and you will have an insight into your own negotiation styles and strategies and also how to expand and improve on them. So here's a quote from Stephen Covey that we love so much and we continually remind ourselves of, and that is, "If we keep doing what we're doing, we're going to keep getting what we're getting." And what that means to us is really if it isn't broken, don't fix it, but always be working towards trying to improve. Be open to changing things that perhaps might be getting in your own way. Okay. All right. Let's look at different perspectives of the student for a minute. When we walk into IEP meetings, we don't all come with the same perspective of the student, do we? We don't. We may look at the student through a completely different lens and sometimes, as we know, that student doesn't show the same behaviors or characteristics or abilities at home as they do at school or as they do out in the community. Or perhaps we have differing views on where that child is functioning, right? We can all come to the table in an IEP meeting with very different views and even different data collected on where that child is functioning. Because of this, there may be some conflict and what we are tasked to do as IEP teams is to try to come to some sort of consensus for that child. Well, there's a team of people that comes together for the student, right? It's a whole team. And that IEP team needs to understand that we are there to negotiate a plan that is a win-win for the student. But we also need to really stay focused on that student's needs. And, as we just mentioned, that team may not agree on what those needs are and therein lies the need to negotiate. Why is negotiating so important in IEP

meetings? Because an IEP meeting should be a series of small agreements through the IEP process. And as it says on that slide, an IEP meeting is simply a compendium of several agreements. It is a collection of concise and detailed information about a particular subject, right? And in this case, the subject is the student. And so we need to make small agreements throughout the entire process rather than just waiting until the very end to see if the whole team agrees about everything. We want to make small agreements throughout. We're going to talk about this more in a little bit here. But by gaining those small agreements in a collaborative way throughout the IEP meeting, which would consist of making proposals, clarifying, checking for understanding, checking for agreement, and, in essence, that's what negotiating is. We are negotiating when we are doing that. Negotiation is simply a discussion aimed at reaching an agreement. Many special educators, or educators in general, lack training in negotiations and they misunderstand the impact that it might have on achieving success for families. So it's important to make sure that the entire IEP team has a clear understanding of what agreement actually means. So what is consensus? What does agreement really mean in an IEP Meeting? Well, first and foremost, consensus is not a vote. Okay. It's not a vote. That's illegal to vote in an IEP. But rather, consensus is a mutual agreement that members arrive at, and here's the key, through discussion. Parents often feel like IEP meetings are sort of sit-and-get-type meetings. We don't want that. We want them to be collaborative. We want it to be rather than the case manager or the facilitator or whomever is running that meeting, they're sharing all of their information, they're asking the rest of the school team members to share their information, and then asking the parents maybe what issues or concerns you have because it might be a box that we have to fill in within our paperwork. That's maybe the only time they really chime in rather than sitting there and just listening the whole time. We don't want that anymore. We want to have collaborative discussions where everyone has an opportunity to express their viewpoints. But when everybody has an opportunity, excuse me, to express their viewpoints and we know that the viewpoints might be different, then we have to start negotiating. Consensus is a group process. It's a group process where the input of IEP team participants, including parents, right, including parents, is carefully considered. And that then a plan is crafted that meets the needs of the student. Okay. In theory, one can consent to a decision even if he or she disagrees with it, recognizing that that decision best meets the needs of that student. Let's look at the art of negotiations for a minute here. Reaching lasting and meaningful agreement can only be achieved if everybody comes to that IEP team table to consider and hear each other's proposals. That's the only way we can reach a lasting and meaningful agreement. And everyone needs to come prepared to that meeting and they need to be knowledgeable about the meeting process. People are much more likely to come to consensus if those two bullets are achieved. And we want to set ourselves up for success by coming prepared with where that child is functioning. What are the child's strengths? What are the child's challenges? Obviously backed up by data. What are our proposed goals to address those challenges? And then what are proposing for services and placement? But we must be willing to consider proposals from all team members, not just what we, the school, is there to propose. Let's look at some tools now to fill your toolbox to help with this, okay? Establishing outcomes and an agenda for a meeting can assist in accomplishing this. Outcomes are what the team is there to accomplish and an agenda is simply a roadmap to get to those outcomes. Sending these tools home ahead of time will assure that the team members are coming to the meeting prepared, and that includes families as well. When we know what the outcomes are of the meeting, when we know what the agenda is, people can come

prepared to the meeting and the agenda helps to educate the group because it shows the flow of the process of the meeting so then everybody is knowledgeable about the process. So having these visual tools can help the team come together to work collaboratively, checking off the agenda pieces as we go. So let's look at an example of these visual tools and they're also provided for you in the chat as I know they're probably quite small on this slide. But here's an example of some proposed outcomes of an IEP meeting and a proposed agenda. So if I was running an IEP meeting, I might say, "I would like to propose by the end of this meeting that we will have a shared understanding and a shared agreement on Kimberly or Johnny's present levels of performance, goals and objectives, and special education services and placement. Now when these outcomes are either shared ahead of time or proposed at the beginning of the meeting, either way, and the team reaches an agreement that this is the work that they're there to do, you're building a culture of agreement and when you build a culture of agreement, you're building a culture of negotiation. You can see that there's visual aids on these documents. The visual piece is very important. The agenda here is simply a road map to get us to the outcomes. It is either sent to the team again before the meeting or it's proposed at the beginning of the meeting and then agreed upon. As you can see at the beginning of the agenda here, and again you have these documents that you can print out for yourself or pull up from the chat, but as you can see there are some process items in the start-up to go through. But this is to ensure that the team understands the process. You're educating the group. And again, like we said, remember if we come in knowledgeable and we come in prepared, we're more likely to reach an agreement. Everybody knows their role in the meeting. When you see the three areas that are addressed in the middle of the agenda, the present levels, the goals and the services, these are the areas that require negotiation. And we don't all see the child through the same lens, as we mentioned earlier, right? So we list the student's strengths and challenges, we propose the goals and we propose the services and placement, but all of these items may need to be negotiated. Please hear that proposal language. It isn't, "This is what we're going to do," it's "We would like to propose these items and then we would like to ask you what proposals you have to other team members," which includes the family. We're building small agreements throughout the entire process, not waiting until the end. A key factor in negotiation is that we need to be open to all of the proposals. We cannot say that enough. However, when you're open to that, you might get multiple proposals. So then what do you do? How do we negotiate and come up with a proposal that the whole team can support? We're going to share a tool with you on the next slide, but it's called advantages and disadvantages. We need to look at each proposal and then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each of those proposals and how it relates to the child. That's the key takeaway there. It's not the advantages and disadvantages for the school for for the parent or for a team member. It's the advantages and disadvantages of that proposal for the student. Okay. So using these visual tools can help people come prepared, it helps make them more knowledgeable in the process, and again, we're more likely then to come with agreements that last, or being able to negotiate to agreements that last. Okay. Consensus is far more likely to be achieved if we do it in small chunks thorough the process rather than waiting until the end. And now I want to go back to the question of, "What can we do in IEP meetings to negotiate multiple proposals?" I'm going to flip to the next slide. Let's say, for example, a school team makes a proposal of placement in a resource setting and a parent makes a proposal for keeping the child in the gen ed setting with an instructional assistant. Okay. Two different proposals . You can use this tool, which you also have in the chat, to educate the group on the advantages and

the disadvantages of the proposals based on the child's needs, mind you, right? Based on the child's needs. And then negotiate it if needed. So here's an example that the school team might share is an advantage for a more restrictive environment, like the resource room, because earlier we agreed in strengths and challenges that a small group is better for the child with less distractions because one of the child's challenges is being very distracted. Okay. So again, that just shows how we're staying focused on the needs of the student. But the team may share a disadvantage of having an instructional assistant in the gen ed classroom because it could be detrimental to the child's independence, okay? It's all about the student. That's the key point here. This visual tool shows that we're having open collaborative conversations and that we're considering all proposals. We're going to at least consider and talk about them, but we all know that the LEA of the school has the final task of offering FAPE for what the school teams feels is best for that student. But all of this is still negotiation because we're accepting all of those proposals. We're listening to everybody. And this tool can help us move from power-based negotiations like, "We know best because we have all the data from the school," to true win-win negotiations. And we're going to talk about that very soon on a slide later on. I'm going to now throw this over to Robin and I'll keep an eye on the chat.

>> Wonderful. Thank you. And we had had some requests for us to be able to zoom into those documents, which we don't know how to zoom into it while we're sharing our screen, but those documents were certainly loaded. So we hope that that was acceptable. Okay. When Cassie was talking about consensus, you might have remembered her mentioning that lasting meaningful agreements can only be achieved if everybody is willing to consider other's proposals. But how do we do that to ... how do we ensure that everybody is set up to consider those proposals? First, we must establish practices and procedures. These procedures make life for all the parties much easier. Does your district or does your practice involve being open and creative or are there beliefs and practices going on that are rigid and minimize that creativity? The next thing we must do is increased perceived fairness. Fairness is interesting. It's largely a matter of perception. When you have a distinct process to your meeting that uses tools, like Cassie showed us, those process agreements and agendas, outcomes, disadvantages and advantages, this helps us to maintain that system of procedural fairness, which generally results in the perceptions of fairness. This is really important when we ... and it helps us to nurture relationships. We have to have relationships when we're working within the IEP team, don't we? We're going to be working with these families and the staff members, depending on what our role is in the meeting for many, many years potentially. And we're talking about a human being. So relationships are important. And finally, we need to maximize effectiveness by generating those creative solutions. This wraps up back to that first point, "Do the teams feel safe to throw out ... the team members feel safe to throw out innovative suggestions?" Or is there an underlying feeling of inflexibility or fear over the years? And like Cassie said, we've been in the district or had been before retiring in the district for 20 something years, and certainly throughout our experience, we had heard sometimes, "Well, we don't do that this way" even when we train nationally we hear, "That's not okay. That's not what we do," or "I've never done it that way." We need to make sure that we're setting up a scenario where we can be flexible and open. Certainly we don't want rogue statements where we have to do more interventions than helping to have a conversation. But we do want to be open to new ideas. And then finally, we need to maximize our effectiveness by generating those creative solutions. This makes sure that we're really being flexible. Two strategies to being open are visual charting and brainstorming. That really helps us when we're writing down all of the team members' ideas and it gives everybody that chance to be creative and to be heard. When we can be open to all our proposals and ideas and have a collaborative discussion, as Cassie was saying, that's when we negotiate that win-win, that what can we both come out of or all of us come out of this conversation having a win-win solution. So let's take a look at three more solutions and how we maybe want to approach negotiation. I promise we're not going to read the PowerPoint to you, but I am going to read this quote to you. I just want you to sit back and listen to it. There are three ways of dealing with compromise and difference ... sorry ... difference: domination, compromise, and integration. By domination, only one side gets what it wants. By compromise, neither side really gets what it wants. And by integration we find a way by which both sides may get what they wish. And that's from Mary Parker Follett. She was the original author and person who conceptualized the win-win. You should look her up. She's very ... was, very important in the win-win and how we can negotiate. But let's dig into this. What do we think when we think about domination? Domination involves low level of concern for others and a high level of concern for self. You can picture those people that are domineering in our negotiation discussions. People who continually use a domineering style in negotiations are often seen as tyrants or bullies,

they don't appear to care about each other. Now, they might, but they don't appear. And they're perceived as being only interested in getting what they want. Compromise and negotiation often results in haggling. So sometimes we think a compromise is the best way to go, but in negotiation it's a tactic that if the party comes in very strong and domineering or aggressively, then they tend to get more of the negotiation. So if they start in and they're most ambitious or most aggressive, then that compromise becomes more of a win. And finally, that integration. Integration involves a high level of concern for yourself, but also those around the table. And that's what we're after. Aren't we? We are really hoping for the concerns of all those around the table as long as they're focused on the student. This style, of course, is the most appropriate when you have time to spend working towards a positive solution. And I think in negotiations that relate to an IEP that individualized unique programming, we need to take that time. Integration seeks to bring all the best ideas together. Now we're going to look at a little 2-minute video and it's an example of how two neighbors compromised to solve a problem. I wonder if compromise was really their best solution. Well, what do you think? Was compromise good enough? Did any tools and techniques that Cassie just talked about jump into mind that could've helped Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones open the conversation and achieve integration? I'm sure it did. Let's take a little bit further dig into that and look at integration through value claiming and value creating. Value claiming and value creating in negotiations is where each party can try to claim more of what they want or they can work to create value. That is to figure out how everybody involved can get more of what they want and what they need. That's that integration we're talking about. Your goals should be to find creative ways to satisfy as many shared differing as well as similar interests that you can. So really looking at the whole picture. It really actually involves looking beyond what the most obvious issue is to new sources of value that can be brought to the table. Team members can do this only if they go into IEP meetings without the idea of, "I'm only going to accept what I want." This is really getting to that underlying interest. So I'm going to give you a non-IEP example because I think this is something that we've all probably believed with. But I hear a little feedback, so I didn't know if somebody has an actual question. Nope. Keep going. Okay. Non-IEP example. Anybody ever thought about, considered accepting a job that they were hoping for, but maybe the salary wasn't exactly what they had anticipated? I think in education, oftentimes we get excited about a career choice and then we see what the salary is offering us and then we're like, "Oh, okay." Well in order to potentially accept that because it's something we're excited about, we might have needed to go move beyond the salary to include things that are valuable to us, such as vacation time, responsibilities, flex time ... that was always a good one for me ... and so on. This created value for me, so I was able to look at the proposal with a better negotiation. In an IEP, if one person is requesting intensive services, let's say, getting behind the why to that request is being made helps to offer opportunities that can create value for other proposals. Let's take a look at this, the next slide. Finding creative sources of value or creative ways to satisfy the team member's shared and differing interests relates to creating value based on their dimensions of need. And you see those three dimensions down there: process, relationships, and results. And for those of you who have been through our training, you know that concept. One time I attended a meeting where an IEP team member was most concerned about a student completing their nightly homework. There were lots of zeros in the grade book and this was a big concern for them. They were adamant that that work completion be added as a goal, so that was an interesting proposal. And it was something that the rest of the team didn't really know or understand. The

conversation became stuck. In value creating, the goal for the team is to creatively satisfy both shared and differing interests. Remember that. This goes back to conducting a fair process, how to help each side feel that the process is being conducted so that their feelings are being heard and their proposals are being heard. When we use the visual charting, I had talked about that in the brainstorming we use, we can put the ideas up in front of everybody, whether you're in the same room or you're on Zoom or Skype and we're writing down everybody's proposals that helps to discuss, like Cassie said, the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal so that we're feeling valued. But be sure to use careful language that guides the team to provide input as it relates to the needs of the student because sometimes when you're creating value, it's value for the person. You can also manage the tension between claiming and creating value by building an agreement that satisfies everybody, going to that win-win. Again, that goes back to the integration versus domination or compromise. In the certain scenario I talked about, in the IEP meeting where the staff member was very concerned about the zeros in the grade book, we had everybody put their proposals on the board. The teacher shared that the student was going to fail not just because he wasn't turning in his assignments, but because the additional practice that was helpful in the homework was what he really needed to imprint that concept. Once that was explained, then the parent, we charted or put on their graphic, their concern was that it was impossible for the child for 4 days a week to do that homework because he went right to work and he was coming home exhausted, so they were putting it off to the side. The new proposals created value for everybody, was the practice, the parent didn't realize was so important and the child was in the meeting as well and agreed, practice was helping. So we came to a negotiation where we integrated all of those issues. One day a week when the child wasn't working, they were going to be doing their homework and that practice session and the homework would then be reduce to just that day and it was a win-win. The grade book looked better, the child was getting practice, and the child was able to rest as well. Once the team began talking and everybody we also sharing suggestions and we were using that visual charting so it wasn't a us-versus-you kind of situation, we were able to really negotiate what could happen to benefit the student because we had a process and a place for sharing new ideas, we were able to create a safe environment and that was that relationship process, which allowed us to achieve the best results for the student. This helps to build a productive lasting relationship. Remember, if we leave those negotiation meetings where everybody feels polarized and upset, that's not going to help us in the implementation.

>> So this brings us back to this integration piece. What Robin was just talking about was what they were able to achieve. And when we look back at that orange story that you saw, when Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith just compromised and cut the orange in half, that worked for them but had they talked a little bit deeper and a little bit further and just asked some open-ended questions about why that orange was so important, they both would've had the whole orange because Mr. Jones wanted to just eat the whole orange and Mr. Smith just wanted the rind. So integration is what we're after in our IEP meetings. And we want to shift from those power-based negotiations to the win-win negotiations. A win-win negotiation is a careful exploration of both your own position and that of the person that holds the opposite position. In order to find a mutually acceptable outcome that gives you both as much what you want as possible. And if you can both walk away happy with what you gained from the deal, then that's a win-win. But with that said, we're not willing to give in, are we, about the child's education, especially if I'm a parent. I'm not willing to give in. And as an educator I'm not willing to give in if I think that I know what is best for that student. But we do, however, need to be open to exploring all options. Again, looking at advantages and disadvantages of the different proposals with the needs of the child being at the forefront of those negotiations, not our own needs or our own wants. Making the conversation visual is so, so important. And be open to negotiating perhaps what we call a "both and" meaning think about is there any way where we could combine both proposals or take pieces of each proposal and combine it so that it could be a win-win. Or perhaps we could negotiate using another strategy that we call build up or eliminate, which is thinking about is there anything that we could add onto a certain proposal to make it a win-win for all or there anything we need to take away from the proposal to make it a win-win for all. This is all about negotiation so that we can come to consensus. And remember consensus isn't being thrilled and delighted about everything and getting everything you want, but rather it's about can we live with it? Can we support it? And can we implement it? So in order to achieve integration, we need to have relationships. Strong, healthy, and positive relationships are a fundamental precondition for lasting agreements. We need to listen to one another so that everybody leaves feeling valued and feeling heard and that's also very important to building these relationships. And how can we accomplish this, you might be thinking. Well, we accomplish it by asking open-ended questions. We do it by setting aside our judgments and really trying to listen to where people are coming from. The most prevalent area of conflict in special education is communication, right? Or lack thereof. The source of communication comes from team members not feeling as though we're listening to them. But when we are open and we consider all proposals and we ask questions, they leave feeling valued and heard. Even if that proposal seems out in left field, right? Seems just kind of crazy in a way. We're still going to accept it and listen to it and have a discussion about it so that everybody feels heard. An IEP meeting is not a single event, okay? But it's part of a lengthy and continuing process. Another reason we need those relationships. And finally, seeking to understand the behind the scenes factors that influence the team collaboration is really important. What do we need to know that is going on in the school, that's going on in the family? Are these things going on within the school context that might interfere with open transparent collaborative discussions? We want to know that ahead of time. Are there things going on in the family? Divorce, loss of job? Man, in these COVID times there's so much more for us to be considering. But all of those things can inhibit transparency and these are all factors that will really influence team collaboration. And for those of you who are familiar with Bruce Patton's work, he said that you can create a problem-solving



atmosphere where all parties feel it's safe to brainstorm ideas. How do you do that? You resist making demands, offers, and threats during discussions and really explore each other's interests, your underlying needs, hopes, fears that motivate each other. These all contribute to the interference with the goal of achieving integration. Effective negotiations happen by listening and asking questions. We need to be curious. We need to ask open-ended questions. We need to bracket our beliefs. And what that means is clear your mind and set aside your personal judgments and really try to listen to the underlying message of what somebody is trying to convey. Paraphrase what they're saying. Do perception checks. Check the emotion behind where it's coming from. This is all going to help in how we communicate, which in turn will help us to better negotiate. Understanding the other side's situation. We need to tap into the empathy piece. In an IEP meeting, we are talking about someone's most precious commodity, right? We're talking about their child. Yet often we get in our own way because we have a job to do, we have paperwork to fill out, but we have not walked in the family's shoes and they haven't walked in ours for that matter. And therefore we have no idea what they're dealing with. And for that matter, no one else knows what we're dealing with, so we come in with our own, what we call, ladder of inference, our belief system. And everyone comes in with their own ladder so to speak. And we need to be curious about that. We need to be questioning. We need to be listening. And finally, effective negotiations meant that all participants need to come prepared. They need to come well informed. And this goes back to setting up our teams, which include the parents, setting them up for success by providing them the proposed outcomes, agenda, and norms prior to the meeting. This will allow people to know what is the plan, what is the process, what's the purpose of us coming together. And it allows parents to come prepared with their strengths and challenges as they see their child at home or in the community. Sending all of this along with a draft of the IEP well in advance for the family to have a chance to really digest the information and ask questions before the meeting can really help to build trust and that helps to build agreements that will really last. And when we are all operating at our best and we feel informed, we feel prepared, we're going to be able to negotiate to consensus where we all feel valued and heard. Negotiations data from the Harvard Program on Negotiations show that when both sides are well prepared and informed and understand the process, they're more likely to come to an agreement and for that agreement to last. Robin.

>> So how do you come prepared? What can we do? Clarify your interests and estimate those of your counterparts. But how? Creatively brainstorm possible agreements to satisfy both parties' interests. Now, I already talked about creatively brainstorming during the meeting, but beforehand think through, I wonder what's going on here or what other people are going to come to the table with. That's that creative brainstorming ahead of time. Parents need to have the opportunity to brainstorm before as well. So, as Cassie mentioned, send home proposals. Help them to understand the process. And identify opportunities to capture and create value for both sides. If you come prepared to do that, it will go much quickly. Assessing inner team relationships. Determine how to creatively create positive emotions, but also avoid negotiate reactions. This could be about how you frame things. This could be about knowing the person that you're sitting across the table with. Do I know how my language affects that person? Do I know how I propose things? Will that change how somebody receives the information? And then finally, deal with disagreements or stalemates right away. Don't avoid it. I know some of us like to avoid those disagreements and skirt around the issue. But if we just deal with them head-on and in that going back to number two, understanding the relationship between each other, it will help us in the end. There are also necessary attributes that we need to have in order to have effective negotiations and to be effective negotiators. Ethical behavior. We may be dealing with some team members, some advocates, attorneys, who knows, other staff members, parents that aren't always ethical. But what we do know is how we can operate, how we conduct business. You yourself, doesn't matter what role you have on the team, know and commit to operating and responding ethically. Which also helps with being aware of your own emotions and the emotions of others as well. Know how you react to conflict and what, for example, what are your physical reactions, what happens when you get into conflict? Do you get prickly or sweaty? Cassie and I like to call it the sweaty pit moment. What happens to you? Do your ears get hot? If you know that, if you know what happens when you're getting or identifying what happens when you get agitated, you can then take a deep breath and acknowledge it and move through that with a better position in how you're going to conduct your negotiation. And then finally, avoid being provoked by emotional responses. Author and expert ... negotiation expert William Ury often recommends controlling your emotions by going to that balcony. I just love that. The balcony, which is a place of calm, perspective, and self control. Think about it. Just sitting up there at the balcony and watching yourselves from above. I love that vision. That helps me when I'm emotionally charged to just see what's going on in the negotiation and calm down a little bit and really think through how I want to respond. Other necessary attributes are ... Sorry ... balancing time. Allowing everybody to have a say and be listened to. We often prepare for our meetings far, far in advance, hopefully, if we can. If we have a moment to do that. The parents don't always have time to prepare in advance. So be careful, if they don't have time to prepare or digest what your going to propose, then sometimes, and this has been reported nationally in national data, that they feel like they don't have a voice in the system. Other team members sitting around the room may also feel that same way. So know your audience. But also have empathy for all the parties' situations and what they're coming to the table with. Empathy is a big part of being able to negotiate, especially if you want to negotiate in a win-win manner. But in order to do that, you must balance empathy with assertiveness. There's a difference between assertive and aggressive. Finally, I'm going to read this quote to you again by our friend Stephen ... not really, although someday perhaps we'll meet him ... Stephen Covey, "Empathy is so important. When you show deep empathy towards others, their defensive energy goes down and

positive energy replaces it. That's when you can get more creative in solving problems." Think about that. When you're showing empathy, their defensive energy goes down. We can apply that not just to IEP meetings, but all interactions and including interactions with our families and our friends. Being able to bracket, as Cassie said, setting aside our judgement and guiding the group to proceed with that creative problem solving and creative negotiations occurs when we have empathy. Finally. And I want to end my section on something that's very important that we all need to really identify and think through and that is cultural diversity in negotiations. We are a beautiful melting pot in this country and we need to know that and know who is around the table. Culture profoundly influences how people think, how they communicate and behave, and it also affects how they negotiate. We must consider all of the different variety of factors that make up culture. So culture isn't necessarily what we would think of it. It relates to gender, organizational culture, past experiences, background. Literature gathered from researchers as well as our government accountability office, the GAO, tells us, as well as, excuse me, as well as our own experiences. Think about that and maybe the most important, our own experience sitting around that table, that the most common barrier to family and staff who are culturally and linguistically diverse as well as diversity in the other perspectives that I mentioned ahead come from and include perceived power imbalances, language and communication barriers, nonverbal behaviors, differing values, and unfamiliar decision-making processes. It's critical to become familiar with your stakeholders, those stakeholders, anyone who has a stake in that child's program, so that you're creating a safe and open negotiation.

>> And we'd like to end with one of our favorite quotes by Maya Angelou that we know we have all heard, but we can never be reminded enough that, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." So being curious and being open to all proposals, communicating so that everybody feels valued and heard and really listening with empathy will give our IEP teams the opportunity to negotiate and ultimately arrive at the best plan for that student. All right. That wraps up our presentation for today. I'm seeing ... yup. Somebody wanted to know if this will be posted. Thank you, Alicia. It will be and if there's any questions, we could unmute and ask questions now as we do have a few minutes or you can put them in the chat. Or we can say adios, it's Friday. We're open. Yes, I see Jerome, your hand raised. Go for it.

>> Hey. How's it going?

>> Good.

>> You guys did a ... in Florida and I've been doing it for 10 years and you hit on so many strong points and action item just want to share that. But I want to get to the question right away because I know everybody else would like to ask questions. What is your definition of integrating? You mentioned it a lot about integration and all that. How do you compare that with collaborate and compromise?

>> So, Robin, I'll take that if you want.

>> Sure.

>> Okay. So when people come into meetings with a domination sort of attitude where they want what they want, this is what I get, I'm not going to be open to anything else. I know this is the right way. That's the domination piece. But what ends up happening is people end up talking and then compromising. And although compromise is something that I think, as kids, we were taught to do and we teach our kids compromise with other kids. But when we're talking about a child's education, it's hard to tell a parent to compromise their child's education, right?

>> Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

>> So what we're always after is the integration piece, which is really trying to uncover the underlying interest behind why people are positional about what that they want and when you can uncover that, oftentimes you can find integration. You can find a win-win scenario for that child. But I think it's very important to state, I don't think we stated enough, that ultimately we, as the educators, do have the obligation to offer FAPE based on our data, based on things that we have collected, right? So it's not about giving in because a parent wants something that's way over here and the school wants something that's way over here, so we're going to give into that, no. But it is about being open, being curious, and really trying to find out why people are so positional on what it is that they want. Because typically that comes out of fear. It comes out of lack of knowledge. It comes from maybe some misinformation from somewhere.

>> Yeah.

>> But you want to uncover those things so that then we can really have open, transparent conversations where people feel valued and heard. And what that does is it helps build trust. And when we have trust and show empathy with families, we build relationships, and then we can really talk and we can really come up with the best plan for the child.

>> Yes. Thank you so much. And that gives the underlying message what each party is looking for, correct me if I'm wrong.

>> That's right. That's right.

>> Yeah. Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

>> Thank you, Jerome. You bet.

>> You're welcome.

>> All right. Thank you, Andy, for your chat. Is there any other questions that we could address?

>> And certainly Cassie and I would like to just mention that you can always get a hold of us and it looks like, Cassie, that's our reference slide. But here's another way to get a hold of us. You can also e-mail us if you every have any questions related to this presentation or anything else that we can do to help support you and your endeavors. And we just really appreciate what you do every single day. Whether you're staff of parents or advocates or attorneys, just we know that you're focused on the children.

>> All right. With that, I'm not seeing any more questions. Thank you, Sharee, about communication, it's a great reminder, absolutely. Communication is one of the biggest barriers that we face. So very good. So I'm going to stop share here and wish everybody a wonderful, safe, fun weekend and Friday night and have a great time. And I'm sure and I hope our paths will cross again. So thank you, everyone.

>> Thank you, Cassie. Thank you, Robin. Much appreciated.

>> Bye, bye. Thank you.