

Sample comments from an observation: Beta

Areas of strength:

Beta has succeeded in reducing the time spent in introduction. She is good at helping people to understand their roles and the process with clarity.

Beta does give people her full attention and close listening.

Areas of concern

I suggested to Beta that she ask people to turn off their cell phones and pagers, rather than leave them on. Taking calls during the mediation could be an unwelcome diversion with an unfortunate message about the importance of the process.

Because the opening was framed as “What brings you here today?” the mediation moved quickly into bargaining over services. Any “bargaining” should be a late stage event, which is informed by a discussion of who the child is followed by a discussion of what they need, developed as a joint agenda by the parents and school staff.

The mother claimed regression and this assertion was carried forward: “You’re concerned that she’s regressed and that she’s gone backward and not forward. She’s lost ground and needs compensatory (education).” I’d like to see the mother encouraged to describe *what led her* to the conclusion that her daughter was regressing. Getting an open dialogue between the school staff and the mother on that point might lead to some illumination.

Beta can give an accurate literal summary. An opportunity in summarizing is to reframe the issues. Using new words to accurately describe the issues aids people in finding a way to freshly think about them.