

# OFFICE FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION

## Creating Agreement in Special Education ...

### CORE CONCEPTS

#### ■ Conflict as Opportunity

Conflict is normal, natural and, in some situations, ongoing. Conflict creates change and new possibilities.

#### ■ Perceptions

People see problems differently based on their perceptions. Learn about the other person's perception and use this information in thoughtful ways.

#### ■ Anger as a Secondary Emotion

Anger is often seen or felt before we understand what caused it. Think of anger as a secondary emotion and seek to understand the underlying cause. Among common reasons are fear, frustration, embarrassment, disrespect, helplessness, a need to be heard, a desire for justice, lack of validation, loss, confusion, grief.

#### ■ Positions and Interests

Positions are what people want or SAY they want. Interests are the needs, desires, concerns or fears that motivate them to take a position. Learn about the other person's underlying interests.



## ■ Conflict Management Styles

There are different conflict management styles: avoidance, accommodation, control, compromise and collaboration. Ask yourself, “Is this approach the best one to use right now considering the issues and the relationships involved?”

## ■ Effective Communication

Active listening is crucial to having a learning conversation. When speaking, use language that everyone understands. Ask clarifying questions, such as “Tell me what a good day is like for Joey.” Reframe the conflict in an open-minded and hopeful way. Instead of the issue being about the student’s failures in school, reframe the issue to be about what is needed to support successful outcomes for the student.



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Through the Office for Dispute Resolution, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) fulfills its statutory mandate to maintain a special education due process system. PDE contracts with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit to provide fiscal and certain management support for that office, without becoming involved in substantive operations.