IEP Environment: Module I

The purpose of this training is to understand the purpose of the IEP team (ARD committee), sources of conflict, and dispute resolution options. In this training, focuses on what makes a good IEP team or ARD committee. One of the first considerations was the Weasel Words such as FAPE, Least Restrictive, Equal partners, etc. These words are opened to interpretation and often times lead to conflict. Many parents may want to record the IEP meeting and an indicator of dissatisfaction. Some early warning systems are as follows:

1. Frequency and trend of formal indicators for due process hearing requests, formal complaints, and mediations.
2. Low participation in surveys, or school functions
3. Interviews with leaders of parent organization reveal a number of frequently voiced concerns.

Another key point in this training was the awareness of qualities that makes great IEP members. Many descriptors relate to listening well, having a positive attitude, good eye contact, understand their role, willing to devote time, come prepared, well organized, enthusiastic, stay on topic, tactful, knowledgeable, self-aware, on time, etc.

The author spend time explaining that effective IEP Team Meetings. Some characteristics of the ideal ARD committee meeting include pre-conferencing, reviewed evaluation results in advance, informal meeting with parents prior to the ARD, a written agenda visible to all participants, refreshments are provided, breaks are taken as needed, the meeting ends on an positive note, etc.

On important point shared in the presentation was what to do in the case of a conflict arises. The first thing to do will be to clarify why consensus was not reached, then collaboratively and consensually decide how to proceed, defer pending further information, delay further thought and discussion, defer to an expert, and finally request for mediation. It is important to make agreements about the disagreements.