

**CADRE and JAMS Foundation Present:**  
***Voices from the Field***  
**Interview Clip #1 Transcript – Diana Autin**

**Marshall:** Diana, it's a pleasure to be talking with you. You've been, I think, one of the most powerful and effective parent advocates in the country and have really, I think, spent a lot of time advocating for and really leading in demonstrating the importance of stakeholder involvement in decision making. I'm wondering, as you think about stakeholder involvement are there particular benefits that you, that you believe come as a result and any advice about, you know, how you can most effectively engage diverse perspectives in decisions?

**Diana:** Well I think in my experience, and I'm a lawyer, and so I have a legal background that I bring to this work, which I think is very valuable and also has some drawbacks to it as well. But I think that in my experience, both in terms of my work directly with families in New Jersey and also in national work like the work that I participated in with CADRE and the IDEA Partnership on Creating Agreement, the most important value of genuine stakeholder involvement is that you end up with a result that is...more effective for more people, that has a greater likelihood of having the impact that you want. And so I feel that anyone who's trying to do anything around dispute resolution or even preventing disputes from happening in the first place, which is the purpose of the Creating Agreement collection, has to begin the process with genuine diverse stakeholder participation. One of the tips that I would suggest is that having that stakeholder participation from the very beginning helps get you off on the right foot. People, especially parents, don't like to be invited to the table after work has already started and bringing any stakeholder into the process after you've already got a foot hold or a toe hold in the work that you're going to do will make the people that you're now inviting in feel less welcome and then you have some period of time where people are trying to resolve that relationship problem of feeling like they really weren't wanted in the first place. I think another important tip is that just one stakeholder from each stakeholder group is really not sufficient because there are a lot of different cultures and experiences and expertises that different stakeholders bring to the process. So having parents from a wide array of cultural, and linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds and having teachers who teach in different settings and administrators who are principals in different kinds of schools and people who represent state departments from different types of

states is going to result in a more effective outcome than simply having one person who's trying to represent, you know, all parents or all principals or all occupational therapists or teachers.