

A CADRE Webinar
Conflict Coaching: Its Value in Special Education Dispute Resolution
Presented by Tricia Jones, January 9, 2013
Transcript

MARSHALL PETER: Actually we will start right now. Hello and thank you very much for joining CADRE's webinar on Conflict Coaching: Its Value in Special Education Dispute Resolution. I'm Marshall Peter the Director of CADRE. Today's webinar is one in a continuing series of CADRE webinars. You'll notice that...Today our presenter is Tricia Jones.

Tricia is a Professor of Adult and Organizational Development in the Department of Psychological Studies in Education at Temple University. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in conflict processes, conflict resolution education, negotiation and mediation, interpersonal communication, organizational communication with an emphasis on organizational dispute system design, and qualitative and quantitative research methodology. Tricia has authored 6 books and over 50 articles and book chapters on conflict management and has given more than 200 presentations at national and international conferences.

Dr. Jones is the Project Director of the Conflict Resolution Education in Teacher Education project that's funded by the U.S. Department of Education. CRETE's mission is to educate pre-service teachers and mentor teachers/supervisors about conflict resolution education to help them create more constructive learning environments, develop students' social and emotional competencies, and enable new teachers to succeed and sustain themselves in their profession.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Tricia. We're delighted to have you join us today Tricia.

TRICIA JONES: Thank you Marshall, it's a pleasure to be here and to have the opportunity to talk with folks about the use of conflict coaching in special education dispute resolution. I'd also like to say that, extend a big thank you to some of my colleagues in Pennsylvania who have been working with me and folks at Temple University to design some pilot programs on how to explore the benefits of conflict coaching. Specifically, Kerry Smith, Director of the PA Office of Dispute Resolution at the Pennsylvania Department of Education and to Suzanne McDougall her colleague. And we're also working with Tracy Mueller from University of Northern Colorado at Greeley, who does some of the best cutting edge research of the implications in due process hearings. So I just wanted to say thank you and throughout the talk today I'm going to be sharing some of the ideas that we have put together that really inform our pilot project and I'm really looking forward to hearing people's input and suggestions as we move forward and think about how we can do this work together.

So with that I'm going to go ahead and try to pull up that PowerPoint and go to that first slide and just let people know that the work that we're going to be talking about comes partially from my background as a professor in a college of education doing a lot of conflict education work and teacher education, as you had mentioned in the introduction, also from a background in the area of conflict coaching, mediation and dispute resolution. I've done mediation since the early 1980s and have done a lot of work in conflict coaching in different contexts. And so I'm interested to talk about kind of how those dispute resolution processes can work best to serve children and families, school districts and educators. So with that let me talk a little bit about what I thought we would do in our time together. And we will leave at least about 15 minutes or so at the end for questions and answers so that folks can really have a nice dialogue.

I noticed in the poll questions that about 30% or so of folks have experience with conflict coaching, either using it or having actually done conflict coaching. So about two-thirds of people that are participating today probably could benefit from a general introduction to what is conflict coaching and how does that differ as a process from other dispute resolution processes that they are familiar with. So we're going to start by defining it, talking a little bit about why was it developed and how is it being used in general in other contexts outside of education. We're going to talk briefly about the conflict coaching model that my colleagues and I have developed and have used in different contexts. And as we go through the discussion of that model, one of the things that I'm going to try to do is to talk about how certain kinds of tools that we use during parts of that process can be used by folks who are doing work with parents or mediators who are in the process of mediating a dispute even though they might not do what we think of as a full conflict coaching process. The real key is can you see value in parts of what happened in conflict coaching and bring that into the work or the dispute resolution process that you use.

We're obviously going to spend time talking about applications of conflict coaching in special education dispute resolution and how that might, you know, be promoted and put forward. And in that conversation I'm also going to want to draw attention to some of the wonderful resources that CADRE has on the Parent Resource Center that frankly as a conflict coach, when I look at some of those resources it's almost as though they were designed at least in part with a conflict coaching process in mind. There's a really nice connection and perhaps conflict coaching might be a way that people can take even further advantage of those great resources that have been put together. And last we're going to talk briefly about how people might think about building systems of conflict coaching and conflict education and what we might want to look at in terms of the effectiveness of those things.

So when we talk about conflict coaching, it is a one on one process and it has three basic goals. The first goal is to help the party to get a better understanding of the conflict that they are dealing with. Later on we'll talk about how we kind of help folks look at that conflict from different perspectives. But right now, the most important point is that a conflict coach can sit down with, it could be a parent who is the person in conflict, it could be a special educator, it might be a director, it might be an administrator. Anybody involved in dispute resolution in special education might end up being a party to a conflict coaching and the person who would be working with them as a coach would be focusing on working just with them or if it's a family, you know, the family as the party. The conflict understanding is that first, most important goal. The second goal is to help people think about what do want to actually make happen, what are some strategies and tactics that we want to think about using to resolve this or manage this conflict as effectively as possible. And last, but certainly not least, there is a third goal of skill development.

When we started working with conflict coaching, and I've actually been doing coaching work since the early 1990s where we developed it for use, originally, in higher education settings. One of the things that we found was that the analysis - helping someone to really understand their conflict - was very helpful and important but it wasn't enough. That people need to have someone in some capacity who can actually help them learn how to act, to do the behaviors, to perform the skills that make that hoped for outcome a reality. And so when conflict coaching is used in other contexts, for example, workplace conflicts, or family conflicts, elder conflicts, that emphasis on understanding strategic direction and skills development is a very balanced focus. I also would say that I'm really excited about conflict coaching with special education dispute resolution because I think that the skills development work is one of the areas where we can always do more, always do better even if we're doing it pretty well already. And I think there are a lot of opportunities for folks to benefit from that. As I mentioned the development of

conflict coaching really started in the early 1990s and it was driven by a number of different kinds of things. Right now it is the fastest growing process area in the field of dispute resolution. So that a number of dispute resolution professionals, as again, the polls that you've taken have some familiarity with that and already do conflict coaching. And it's growing and it's being used more and more for a couple of reasons.

First of all, it is a process that lets you work with somebody even if another party to the conflict doesn't want to sit down or doesn't want to engage in some other dispute resolution process. So if I am wanting to work with and help a parent who is getting ready to go into initial IEP meetings process, I can work with that parent, you know, one on one without having to think that this person can't take advantage of that wisdom because we can't get everybody to the table or we can't get everybody to attend a particular meeting. And you know that flexibility really helps you use conflict coaching to meet the needs of a party at the time they have the need, and in the way that they will probably get the most from that process. You also use conflict coaching to help prepare people to engage in other processes like a resolution session or a mediation session. And we can talk more about that in a little bit. So it's not an either/or, it's actually very much a both/and situation. You might coach someone and then that really is they take it forward and they do that conflict management work and don't end up using or becoming involved in other kinds of third party processes. Or someone is coached and then they go through mediation depending upon the nature of their dispute. You can even coach people in preparation for a due process hearing and how and when that might happen again kind of increases the utility of the process.

It's training for one and again I go back to that point of skills development. It really gives you a chance as a coach to say you know lets work through how you're going to present your idea or exactly how you're going to say that. Or what negotiation strategy do you really think you want to use, let's try this out. Because in the conflict coaching, you know, it's just you and me and I am here for you to help you do the best that you can with the strategy that you want to use. It's also a technique that is being used in large systems where there is high conflict and of course where emotions and identity issues are really important. And obviously special education conflict, you know, falls within that area. And you can, as I mentioned earlier, merge it not and combine it very strategically in very smart ways with other dispute resolution processes. In, you know, the process of conflict coaching, one of the things that I often get asked is, you know, well, you know, who can be a coach? You know? And to what extent does someone have to have a certain background or a certain kind of specialization to participate as a conflict coach? There is obviously training and preparation that's important just as it is in helping someone to become a mediator or to you know engage in any dispute resolution intervention process.

But for me I think one of the most valuable parts of conflict coaching is that you can think about a number of different people acting as coaches to help us do a better job of handling conflicts that relate to special ed. Teachers and educators in general can be prepared and trained to be conflict coaches. I'm going to talk a little bit later about how important I think it is that we, we think about conflict coaching as a really powerful peer based process, doesn't have to be only peer based, but that we bring up the idea of creating and developing, you know, peer based support structures in terms of conflict coaches and that we think of all of the different groups of folks who are involved in handling special education conflict. And we think about how can we have at least a group of those people, special educators, general educators, administrators, parents, parent support folks, parent center staff, etcetera. We should be able to think about having an array of prepared conflict coaches who can work with folks from other groups but who can be very valuable working as peer based coaches when people, quite frankly,

learn more, trust more, and will rely more on folks who they think come from the same background or understanding.

We've mentioned, you know, briefly already, that a lot of people can benefit from being a party in conflict coaching. And so again, the parents and family members who are trying to come to a situation where their child's needs, educational needs are being met to the extent that they think is important and necessary and parents who are dealing with conflicts that they are having within the family because of having special needs issues happening. They can benefit from coaching. General educators – very important audience and population to be involved as parties in conflict coaching. A little bit later we'll say a little bit more about that and in terms of attrition issues. But one of the things I wanted to toss out early on is as a professor of education as a teacher, educator, I am really particularly concerned about the kinds of stressors on special educators and the things that they are kind of asked to do and what that means in terms of the attrition, the loss of special educators that we see in the system. I think it's something that our dispute resolution processes should be put together so they help everybody within the system and so the system works better as a whole and that's one of the areas where conflict coaching might be most helpful. And administrators and directors of special education programs can also benefit from conflict coaching in terms of how they might be able to do better and interact better as leaders within the process of setting up the system and making sure that the system is working to everyone's best benefit.

So in a nutshell - What are some of the strengths of conflict coaching? Why is it something we should look at seriously? You can use it as the lowest level of intervention. In all of the work that all of us do in dispute resolution, you know, we're always trying to say, you know, can we be doing something that's going to make it better at the earliest possible point. When conflict happens so that people can have the best skill sets, the best relational connections, and conflict coaching gives you a whole lot of flexibility. Frankly, I think it's the most flexible process and gives you the most opportunity for that low level of immediate intervention. As a result it can really prevent things from going in the wrong direction, from escalating unnecessarily and it is really helpful in deescalating conflicts that have started to kind of ramp up, it brings that temperature down. The focus on conflict analysis helps people understand, you know, what is, what is really going on for them? What's driving them? What's happening for them in the conflict that needs to be thought about and addressed for the conflict management to be workable and effective for them? Rather than people feeling sometimes that they're just reactive, you know I'm just kind of ping-pong to the pong in terms of what's happening with this conflict.

The perspective taking point. I just want to take a little bit of a pause and let that one sink in. As a mediator for over 30 years. As a person who's done dispute resolution and I think I probably speak for pretty much everybody I know who works in this field, the more that we can encourage perspective taking the better our chances of being able to move into a humane, if not collaborative process of conflict management. The conflict coaching process has built into it a real emphasis on perspective taking, which is not trying to convince someone that they should do what somebody else wants, but it is, let's sit back and let's be as careful as we can be about really looking at the fact that the people who are involved in this process, you know, they have points of view, and they work with particular perspectives and pressures and issues and the more we appreciate that the more that we can move forward in a way that's probably going to work best, and bottom line, best for the child who needs that support.

The conflict coaching model that I'm going to talk about briefly, I just want to say right up front this is the coaching model that we've developed and that we've used for almost a decade in different contexts. But I think it's really important to say that in special education, one of our challenges together is to

figure out, is this the right model in particular conflicts. Whenever we do conflict coaching or we help an organization or a system to develop conflict coaching and think about how they're going to use it we always start out with the idea that look you know, this is a good starting idea, it makes a lot of sense for a lot of reasons, but our job together is to really figure out how does it best fit the work that you're doing. And so I'm going to go through this coaching model and simply say, I would love it if folks who are listening to this are thinking as I'm talking, hmmm you know I really like that piece but I'm not sure I really need the other piece, and quite frankly I'd probably maybe do this a little differently. I think that's exactly the kind of start to conversation that is very healthy. And as we move forward doing more coaching work in special education we have to I think keep bringing ourselves back to that conversation.

So in a nutshell, this coaching model, you know, assumes that there's some sort of an initial conversation that lets people know what coaching is, what is going to be involved in it and then asks them quite frankly, is this useful for you, is this something you want to do? We call that, the prefatory conversation and it's basically the same kind of initial introduction or intake conversation that you would have to any kind of conflict management process. Most important, do you understand what this is and do you want to do it? Do you want to give it a try? Conflict coaching is always party centered. So it's, you know, something that they, you know if they're getting value from it then that's you know where you keep going. If they are not getting value from it, they don't think it's doing something for them anymore, well then the conflict coaching has run its course or something else needs to be tried.

Assume they want to go forward and do coaching; the first stage then is really kind of discovering the story. We like a lot of the work that's done in narrative mediation and narrative conflict work and so when we put our model together, you know, you can see that narrative idea that is kind of throughout our entire model. But I want to say something about from a special education point of view and why I think it's particularly important to think about that, you know, discovering the story or telling the story. You know, one of the things that I did not mention in my introduction and opening comments is that I appreciate the need to be able to tell the story and have the story heard, you know from the point of view of a parent with a special needs child. As well as, from somebody who does this work and works within educational systems. Our son who is 16, is special needs, and you know, it's been very, always informative and always helpful to remember kind of how that feels, you know, from the parent point of view and how sometimes you feel like you know what, my story is not the same as your story, and even though there might be similarities and even though you might see these common threads happening, it's important that people have a chance to say this is what's happening here and this is unique for us and this is unique for our family, for my child. And the conflict coaching process does a really good job of allowing that to be honored. And as a conflict coach when I do that work I particularly appreciate having that kind of an exchange. Built a lot of investment, built a lot of trust.

Same way when you work with teachers or educators. You know, no educator's experience is exactly the same as another educator's experience. And again, coaching lets you have that time to honor that experience. Once you have a sense what is going on there, what's that particular situation, what's that person's story, the second stage and we will spend more time in the second stage and talk about some tools that you could use in mediation or in parent support outside of coaching, that's the stage of exploring three perspectives of identity, emotion, and power. And again, I'll talk a little bit more about those in just a bit. That stage helps you to really give people the richest kind of analysis, understanding of what might be happening for them in conflict and for the other people as well. And from there, the goal is to talk about, you know what is, what we call crafting the best story, what's, what is a really good, if not "ideal outcome" that people might want to try to go for. When we talk more about that stage in a minute, I'll also mark that you know, and come back to that in the sense of this is one of those stages

that I think we, as we apply to special education situations, we need to be careful about how we frame that and how we use that in our work.

And then the last stage, which actually isn't a stage, it's actually a progression of things, depending upon the needs, that's really the skill development stage. You know we talk about it as enacting the best story, but the bottom line is this is where you say, okay if you want to go from A to Z and what you need to do in order to get there is to be able to do really fantastic relationship repair conversations. Or really wonderful negotiation. Or fantastic use of a mediation process, or great use of a resolution session process. That stage four is where that skills development happens. And the coach helps somebody come up with those skills, hone those skills, practice those skills, try those skills out before they have to actually use them in the real situation so that the person feels like, you know what, I not only know what I'm doing, I can do it, and you know what, I can do it pretty well and I can get feedback on this. So it reduces their anxiety as they go forward in the process.

We've already talked a little bit about the stage one so we won't spend more time there. I will say that one of the things that we do when we talk about what's going on here in your conflict, coaches can be a little bit more challenging I think than sometimes other third parties like mediators. Because part of what you can do as a coach is to raise these questions of, you know, are you biased here? Are you making some assumptions that might not be accurate? You know let's sit back, let's test some of these assumptions and a coach has more freedom and flexibility I think to do that within that relationship than someone who has to really keep the impartiality and neutrality issues more in the center.

That second stage of exploring perspectives. The three perspectives that we have folks talk about in coaching are in my mind, the three perspectives that are underneath any conflict. Doesn't, frankly, it doesn't matter whether it's an international conflict or a national conflict or you know a special education dispute. You know every time somebody's in a conflict, you know, it really comes down to, hey how is this affecting my identity? How is it affecting my emotions? How is it affecting my sense of influence and power? And not just me, what about the other parties in the conflict? What about their identity and their emotion and their power? And how are those things affecting the overall trajectory of the conflict. One of the metaphors that I like and that I use a lot is this idea that these are kind of three lenses and if you put, look through any one of those lenses separately you get a different understanding of what it is that's really happening here. But when you put them together, that combination of seeing things, you know literally it does transform. You know, that's where people kind of can sit back and go, wow you know what I actually do think I have a much better understanding, you know, of why the school district is saying what they're saying about what can and can't happen here. Or, you know, I might as a parent have a much better appreciation now for what it is that the teachers, the general education teachers and the special education teachers are really dealing with. You know, because I didn't actually perhaps appreciate before the kinds of things that they are wrestling with and how important it is for them, how they feel about what's happening in that situation.

So, you know, these conversations about identity, emotion, and power, I think are things that you not only want to do in a coaching conversation they're definitely things you can bring into certain mediation processes as well. You know, as you know, we suggest on this slide, they're connected in a lot of different ways. If someone, you know, suggests I'm a bad mother because I am not arguing that my son get a certain intervention for his special need. Wow. You can't say anything that's going to trigger me to have a worse feeling than someone suggesting I'm not a good parent. And those kinds of, you know, once that negative emotion is in play, you know, that affects what I do, what I might say in response that I might not normally say if my skills are in, in you know, better shape. And so you see these things, again

reverberating off one another. And one of the things that as a coach I think is really important is to help people step back and say, what is it that you might be doing that is literally threatening to, attacking of someone else. Not that you mean it, not that you would ever intentionally want to do that, but if we can look at it from how they are seeing it or feeling it or living it, you know, maybe that's going to help you figure out why you're getting a particular reaction in the situation and certainly is that the kind of reaction and relationship you want to build?

I wanted to talk a little bit more about the issue of identity. We usually start when we do coaching, we usually start with that issue of identity, because most folks can think about that and talk about that and work through that fairly easily. And, you know, one of the activities that we use is the, what we call the defining identities worksheet. And this by the way, this is just one example of what could be a hundred different things that you would use to get people thinking about and talking about how the conflict is effecting how they see themselves and how they're being seen by other people.

There is, you know, some really great materials on the Parent Resource Center under parent engagement and early assistance section. They, materials on collaborative communication from the Family Network on Disabilities, there is a listening video and you know a good communication skills training skill set from FACETS, Wisconsin FACETS. And you know one of the things, I kind of wanted to draw attention to that because in looking through some of the materials on the Parent Resource Center, each one of those, and others have it as well those were just ones that I saw and I said, wow, as a coach I'd definitely be looking at how to use these. Each one of those handouts and PowerPoints, they actually have some really excellent content in there about helping people understand you know, how their identity is affecting what they're doing and what they think they need to do, you know, how they need to come across.

So in this little defining identities worksheet, you know, we'll talk to people about, hey you know we've all got a lot of different identities in any situation. I mean, just for example, you know when I sit down and when I first started the IEP meeting process you know related to my son's situation, it was, it was one of those things where I was mother, I was wife, I was educator, I was mediator, I was dispute resolution person, you know and all of those kind of identifies they made a difference. Not always a good difference, frankly. They made a difference in terms of how I was seeing what was going on and how I was reacting to it and quite frankly how I wanted to be respected, how I needed to be seen to be effective for my son, for my family. And also to live up to values I have as a conflict manager. When we work with parents and educators I have a lot of special education students in pre-service teacher education classes and one of the things that I hear from them when they first go out and they're initially working in the field is how very very hard it is for them to not want to give absolutely everything that can be thought of or given to the children they work with and the families that they work for and how they really wrestle at times with how those identity issues are happening for them.

Administrators who are dealing with, hey you know what, I've got identities as an administrator, a leader, an educator, you know a financial manager, I've got a lot of things going on here and those things are not always in line for me. So this worksheet and others like it, you could use this as a coach but you could also use this as a mediator, you know. Let's say that you are having a situation, a conflict where somebody has really dug their heels in, they are literally not moving at all. You are, things you need to and want to ask them in terms of what's happening in the conflict, but you don't want to do it obviously in front of other folks and so you might want to caucus, you might want to pull them aside, you might want to say, you know what, I'm going to ask you some questions about what's happening for you. Now you wouldn't necessarily pull out this sheet and say, hey I'm going to ask you questions off of

this identity defining identities worksheet. Nonetheless, you can use the coaching tools and bring that into what you're doing in that work as a mediator. Or, you know, let's say that you are an educator getting ready to sit down in a resolution session with a family or a parent who's going to be there for the very first time and you know that this person may honestly not know what's coming and what's going to happen here and might be quite defensive about this. You might have an opportunity, not as a coach but as somebody who's invested in the process and cares about it to have conversations that relate to identity that might help to increase that kind of understanding and reduce that defensiveness.

It never hurts to figure out who somebody is so that you can treat them the way that they want to be treated. It doesn't cost you anything and as I think all of us know it can certainly help situations that are tense enough on other levels. The second perspective in this, what we call stage two, is the emotion perspective. And this is stuff where, you know, it hits where people live on lots of different levels emotionally. Sometimes I think we end up being in processes where we feel like gosh, you know, we're just going to try to box that feeling off and put it over to the side and see what we can do without dealing with that level. But that's just not realistic. Those feelings are there and they define how someone literally is orienting to the conflict and wishing them away doesn't handle them, doesn't manage them. Pretending they're not important doesn't either. And defining somebody into a process that doesn't allow for any kind of an emotional dimension ends up, you know, at best delaying what might be a conversation that needs to happen, and often actually makes it worse. A pressure cooker kind of thing happens.

There is a lot of great work on how important that discussion about honoring somebody's emotional experience is and we don't have time to get into that in a lot of detail, but I want to mention a couple of tools, again, that we use a lot in coaching, and particularly in situations like special education where emotions are quite high and usually on lots of different levels. And one of those has to do with emotional flooding, that idea that, you know, when we get emotionally flooded you know we're just absolutely in system overload. And you're so swamped that you can't think cognitively complex solutions to serious problems. I had a, when I was first working, and I hope people don't mind my using the personal example, but I mean it's one of those things that in some ways I think of this and I go all the way back to that kind of initial experience of wow, you know, I mean even for people who think yeah I can problem solve really well and I do it for a living and that kind of thing. You know, going through that process of being fearful about your child or about your family, about how your spouse is dealing with what's happening here. The best of us shut down. And I was, remember talking to a vice principal at the time in my son's school and the vice principal said look, you know, I want you to give yourself space to be able to be who you need to be and to deal with how you're feeling about this. You know don't think that we're expecting you to be able to play mediator or put the dispute resolution hat on or put the professor hat on. You know, not that we don't honor or appreciate those things, but you know, this is not an easy thing to always go through. And I always think back, that was many years ago by now, but I always think back about that comment and about that exchange and that you know, it meant more than you can say. And I think that it really showed that sensitivity that I think we all need to have. From a very practical standpoint I know he needed me to be an effective problem solver and conflict manager so he could partner with me to come up with the best solution for my son. I know that on a very pragmatic level. I also know on a very human level that that was an important, really important thing to hear and an important thing for him to say. And so again, that kind of notion is really helpful.

The, you know, issue of flooding which I think is a good thing to remember, everybody floods differently, at different rates, in different ways. And so one of the tools that we use, there's a little document that's attached to this slide which actually is, this is not our questionnaire and I'm going to I think do a little

revision on this before we post it permanently on the website. This is actually a flooding test that John Gottman uses and used when he was initially working in marital conflict and family conflict work. And so for those of you who are listening, this is John Gottman's stuff and we'll change that when we post it on the website.

But this is a little simple questionnaire that you could give to somebody as a coach or again, you could give this in a session as a mediator. You, if you're working in a parent support center or a parent center, you know, you could be working and you know saying, you know what I've noticed, I've noticed that you know, you flood a little bit more easily and a little bit more frequently than other folks might. Let's, let's see whether or not there are some indications of that and then let's talk about how might you be able to de-flood, you know, come back down the ladder or avoid situations where you can't, you know, or won't get flooded as easily. The other take away from this work on flooding is once somebody's flooded you can't talk to them and expect them to hear you. We would love that to be the case, especially when we only have 30 minutes to have a conversation with somebody and we need to get that 30 minutes done with them but if they are really flooded emotionally, well you're going to waste 20-30 of that minutes because they're not going to follow seriously what you're saying. So trying to prevent that rather than, you know, remedy it and one of the ways to do that is figuring out who's more prone to flooding.

Another way is to look at how people, we call it emotional contagion, how people catch the emotions of other people who are in the room or in their presence. Again, some folks are really susceptible, you know. I think of those folks as kind of like the Hallmark card folks. I am a Hallmark card person, so I'll say that upfront. Where we see anger or sadness or happiness or joy or whatever and oh wow, you know all the sudden we're having that same kind of emotional reaction even if we don't know why they feel the way they feel. It's not empathy, it's just, you know, we're literally catching the emotion. Some folks are really contagious in that sense. And again, on this slide, another simple little self-test. And this comes from Hatfield and her colleague's work on emotional contagion. But again, it's a really simple, very short, very psychometrically sound instrument by the way, that allows you to say to what extent are you really going to catch somebody else's emotion versus not, you know. I think a lot of times, and again I want to talk briefly about resolution sessions as kind of a basic context or a basic idea. I think resolution sessions are one of those areas where coaching prior to a resolution session could end up, I think it could be helpful in a lot of different ways, but prior to resolution sessions if they happen could be really particularly powerful because that's already at a more escalated level of interaction, most parents really don't understand what's going to be happening there although there's a great guide that CADRE has on the Parent Resource Center called Resolution Meetings: A Guide for Parents, absolutely wonderful, they should definitely read that and work with a coach to go through that and to figure that out. But they've got a lot of things there where it's really easy for somebody who is susceptible to catching somebody else's mood to walk into one of those kinds of sessions and literally all the sudden have somebody on the other side or other sides, you know, angry, upset, tense, etcetera and boom, they're there, you know. They don't even know why they're there, they're there. But their plan is derailed. They can't do the work that they want to do as well as they would like to. And in a lot of cases they don't even really know what's happening until it's happened for them. Okay?

I would mention again briefly, mediators can also use these kind of short, quick, easy, I mean this is like a little 7 minute little check sheet instrument that you can use and that you can help folks think about what's happening to you here and how can we potentially avoid that. The last activity for emotion that we use a lot as coaches is what we call the emotional triggers activity and you know this little worksheet it's really only just four questions, you almost don't need a piece of paper for it. But it's a checklist that helps people talk about what kinds of behaviors are triggering them. What is it that's getting them hot

under the collar and why? And if you can think of it in terms of behavior, language, non-verbals, you know, going into meetings where someone thinks that what they're doing is just explaining the law, for example. Not pointing fingers at anybody, just using that as an example. But somebody goes into a meeting and they think, you know, all I'm doing is explaining the law clearly, but the way they do that, the language they use and that tone of voice for that parent or for someone else in the meeting, just literally shooooo, you know, sends them and they are triggered, flooded, and then you're back in that place where good problem solving, good listening and probably bad retaliatory behavior is going to happen, right? And so you don't want to go there.

I like using the emotional triggers conversation with parents too because if you help people know what is going to trigger them, what's likely to trigger them they can be their own best protector. They can figure out how am I going to cope with that, maybe I can see that from a different point of view, maybe I can understand that as they're trying to be helpful, not trying to bully me with language I don't understand or acronyms I don't know what they stand for. And so those worksheets, you know, can be useful.

The last perspective in this stage, the power perspectives, is just what it sounds like, you know, helping people talk about what are their power and influence resources. You know how do they have or not have power in the system and what is that, you know, they need to know to be able to be influential. And again I want to draw attention to the Parent Resource Center, because, you know, they've got a lot of really great things in the Parent Resource Center about, you know, preparing for the process of mediation. They've got, you know, a wonderful document from PACER. They've got the Advocacy Institute's work on resolution meetings and preparing for special ed mediation and resolution sessions documents and due process hearing documents. The Parent Resource Center gives you lots and lots and lots of wonderful information you could use as a coach to be able to sit down and to help, not just parents, but you know anybody who's involved in the process have a better understanding of what is the system, how does it work, what kind of power and influence might you have, how can you have power with somebody, not necessarily for or against them. Although, you know, sometimes what a coach does is to help say, hey you know what this is a situation where, you know, it's a rights based issue and you know exercising your influence to get what it is you need, what it is you want, that's important that's just as valuable for a coach to do.

And then the suggested activity for power that we have here, and I actually don't think we need to pull this one up in terms of time. You can look at it if you like. It's just a power resource activity sheet. Where do you get your power? Where, you know, is it because you have certain expertise. You know, because of certain connections you have? Because of organizational positions? You know if you are director of a special education program, you know, if you're a district supervisor, etcetera, in an LEA. You know, you've got a certain amount of influence and decision making authority based upon that and it just gets folks to have a chance to think about where are those sources of influence, but also where could they increase influence, if they need it.

So, you know, all of those tools that we think of as stage two tools can be used in a variety of ways, whether you're doing a full coaching or not. The, you know, crafting the best story, that really, you know this is one of those things I said let's mark it and when we come to that talk about it a little bit more. This is one of those situations where I think coaching conversations, you know, it's really important to craft the best relational story. I feel this personally, so I'm just going to own that up front, that if you're an educator, if you're an administrator, if you're a parent, if you're working in a parent center, etcetera, you know, bottom line is we can all help somebody articulate what is the best relational story that we

want to be able to create with the people we are going to be working with on behalf of the child. And really have that kind of conversation.

That's really helpful as a coach. What's it look like to be respectful, to be respected? What's it look like to be partnered with as opposed to dictated to? What's it look like, what's it feel like to have that happen? But I don't think that you can assume, and I know that there's a lot of conversation we can have about this. You can't assume that that crafting the best or ideal story is something that necessarily can be put over to the substantive area, right? Because there are, you know, the legal and resource limitations of what could or can be done and what the law does and does not require. It does require, as we all know, best educational opportunity being provided, etcetera. So this is one of the stages that of conflict coaching where I think we need to have some very interesting and careful conversations as a group about how does this work best and depending upon who's the party, who's the coach, and what at stage of the process?

And then you've got that transition to stage four, which is, what are the skills that I can help you develop to do what you need to do best. And, you know, those skill areas, this is just a smattering of some the skills areas that we work in as coaches. Literally, there are twenty-five or thirty skill sets that we regularly work with people on. No one, you know, needs all thirty, but somebody might want to focus on two or three critical skills to be able to prepare for what they need to do in the dispute resolution. And again, I want to call attention to the Parent Resource Center. Under the parent engagement and early assistance section of the Parent Resource Center really wonderful things that are already there that literally they are worksheets ready to be coached. You know, there are great materials, great insights, great examples, ready to be coached. And so somebody might be thinking well okay they're there, do you really need a coach? And I don't think you always need a coach, no question about that. But I do think that it really does make a difference to have somebody who helps you take it from the page and put it in the room. And that, you know, no matter how great the PowerPoint or the document there is a learning transfer. There's an issue there in being able to say I read it, I understand it, but can I really do it? And do I know that how I'm doing that, how I'm doing that negotiation is exactly what is important?

I think coaches, and especially peer based coaches, they are going to end up helping people enormously from all party areas in special education dispute resolution, in terms of that skills development work. So we've talked a lot already about how these kinds of things might apply. Let me say again, just a little bit more about certain areas. I mentioned earlier the need for coaching for educators by educators you know and that we're losing about 13% of special education teachers every year. It is the highest professional attrition rate in the field of education and frankly one of the highest attrition rates in any profession in the United States and if you look at the research, a lot of that's obviously is because there being asked to deal with so many kinds of conflicts and so many kinds of group processes and its hard work no matter how skilled you are. But they're also reporting that they're just not getting enough of this work in conflict skills and conflict education in their pre-service course work, in their professional development. We just really are not giving them enough. We're asking them to pilot a jet and we're sometimes not teaching them how to get off the ground. And so it is not a surprise that a lot of special educators last in their jobs two to three years before they end up leaving the field, especially if they are working in urban education environments. And that is a brain drain and a heart drain that I think we obviously need to stop and I think coaching is a tool that can help us. Training cadres of educators to be coaches for other educators. It's a personal goal and dream of myself and as I mentioned earlier some of my colleagues.

Coaching for parents – I don't think we sometimes give enough attention to the fact that special education conflict can create a lot of tension within families, between parents, etcetera. Within those family systems coaching could be a great help there, especially again if it's a parent trained as a conflict coach to coach a parent. Certainly can be somebody from a parent center who has those other kinds of knowledge and expertise. Very valuable to help parents prepare on how to partner effectively in the IEP processes or resolution sessions or mediation. And again, helps the parents build skill sets that are going to help build positive relationships, because as we all know you're not just working for your child this year, you're working for your child for the next several, several, several years, and your misstep today can end up being the challenge you can't overcome tomorrow. So you really want to, I think coaching again can help here. And helping that parent prepare for dispute resolution processes in a number of different ways, some of them are listed on the slide that I have for you. But again, the Parent Resource Center has real wonderful materials on understanding, explaining these dispute resolution processes. You know, they're coach ready, coach friendly. And I do think that that coaching dimension would add a great deal.

For administrators, I mentioned earlier, you know, everybody who's a party to the conflict can look back at their own skill set and own behavior and see whether or not they could be doing something better. Administrators are right there with everybody else. How can they reduce conflict between the school system and the administration and the educators? You know, where are those points of tension and could it be possible that the school system, the LEA could have a group of coaches who are you know administrators trained as coaches and educators trained as coaches? And I know administrators are educators too so bear with that use of the language. But really you know having that as a resource to be able to help in situations where that's a point of tension that really is making a negative difference.

And last but not least, the more that we think about building systems of dispute resolution, exactly obviously what CADRE is all about, you know, that prevent escalation than I think the better off we are in every way. The Conflict Education Professional Development Project that I mentioned that the PA ODR folks and Tracy Mueller and I working on, you know, really has a number of different components. Conflict coaching is one of them. You know, also has some basic conflict competence training from the Creating Agreement work and has some conflict education, teacher education training, from the CRETE project. If those folks out there are interested, one of the things that I do is direct the National CRETE Project, which we're now in about twelve states and the District of Columbia, to focus on how to help teachers to understand conflict education materials and social and emotional learning materials and infuse them into regular and special ed teaching situations. So we kind of see this as a combination of activities and resources to build a really effective system. This is just a different slide to kind of help people understand that that combination of skill sets that we're thinking about you know really touches on, it prevents, it intervenes, and it helps infuse some of these positive collaborative conflict skills in the entire learning environment. And then last and probably least, I'll bore you at the very end with this slide. It's kind of some suggested benefits in our proposed research that we're getting ready to start up and so we won't spend more time on that other than to say that we really want to be able to track how this kind of conflict education, professional development with coaching as a part effects the conflict competence and attitudes of educators and parents and system members, their orientations to the dispute, can we reduce due process hearings where, if that's a good thing. Can we increase collaborative service? But the bottom line is can we see all of that translating into benefits and outcomes for the child. You know, can we see over time that adding conflict coaching to this process is actually going to build that student's academic achievement, their social and emotional competence, their pro-social academic behavior and get them better able to handle all of the challenges and all of the opportunities that they have coming to them.

So that's really all I had to share with you today about the idea of conflict coaching and I very much appreciate your patience and I'm open for any kind of conversation that folks would like to have, you know? And let me say, I actually just glanced down at the chat thing and I have been mislabeling the Parent Dispute Resolution Showcase, sorry, as the Parent Resource Center. My apologies. But I hope that everybody tunes in for the next webinar which is going to be someone, Philip, talking about what that is, and so. I just want to thank you guys for letting me mention some of those resources that you have on the CADRE website because they really are, I'm, if I'm coaching in these areas in the very near future, I know definitely I want to use some of those resources. So thank you.

MARSHALL PETER: Tricia that was absolutely terrific! Fascinating! You did a wonderful job. What we're going to do is we are going to move some survey questions up so that people have an opportunity to give us quick feedback on the presentation. I see that they're pouring in and the comments. But it would be very helpful for us to get this feedback from you before you leave. If you want to ask Tricia a question, there, and in fact I see that one has just come in from Rosemary Mullaley, Tricia. It's, how does this process increase a student's emotional and academic levels, where does the student fit in? So I'll let you field that one and then if we don't get them in the chat box, I'll give folks instructions about how that can unmute themselves and ask a question live.

TRICIA JONES: Rosemary, that is a great question. First of all, the conflict coaching work that we do and that others do is built upon the kind of theoretical models of emotional competence. And you probably clearly saw that in some of the conversations that we were making. There are peer coaching possibilities where you can take you know groups of students you know who are involved in the process and train them as peer coaches. I did not talk a lot about that and frankly, you know, I think that's one of the areas where it's not being done much now but has great potential. And I would put that on the list of that would be absolutely fantastic to add the students and the possibility of student's being peer coaches. And even if they are not being peer coaches a student going through – and again I'm sorry to use my personal example but I'll use it – my son is 16 and I can tell you that as we were going through the last two or three years we had a you know, a good friend who was working with him as a conflict coach because he wanted not only to be present, but to equal to be participative to be active in that process. And you see, I see, but, for him, but I see for other kids as well – and the research shows as well - that going through these kinds of processes when they're done well has a direct learning impact on social and emotional competence skill sets of kids. So I would say, a big applause for you raising that point.

MARSHALL PETER: Great. So another question. How can we find out which states are using this forum?

TRICIA JONES: Well I can tell you right now that I would love to know if CADRE could actually help to put up some very simple kind of, you know, survey to tap into that and to see that. I don't know that there is any kind of research that says it's definitely being used here, here, and here. But I do know that informally we have a number of folks of, you know, who are conversive with coaching and who in their own practices are doing coaching. So I'm assuming we're talking about a low percentage, maybe fifteen, twenty percent of folks out in the field who are actually doing some version of conflict coaching in special ed. I don't know exactly which states, other than the ones that I'm, that I am knowledgeable about like in Pennsylvania and the tri-state area surrounding us. So that might be something that would be a great, simple survey technique that CADRE or somebody else could do. Where are the nubs of this work happening? And where are the best practice pilot projects, as well?

MARSHALL PETER: Great. So I have another question for you, Tricia. And let me say, we are very interested in figuring out how to continue this relationship. It is a very, very informative and exciting work. So a question – are there any recommended conferences targeting conflict resolution?

TRICIA JONES: There are a couple of them. One of them would be, Association for Conflict Resolution has its education section, it also has a workplace section where they have a lot of folks who are experts in conflict coaching and their conference is usually held in the fall. The next one is going to be in Minneapolis in October. There also is an International Conflict Resolution in Education conference that's held in Cleveland, Ohio at, it's sponsored by Cuyahoga Community College, they're Global Issues Resource Center. That's going to be in June of this year and later on I can send in some of the contact information for both of those so that people could tap into that. The ABA ADR conference has a fairly active conflict coaching presence in dispute resolution section. And so they're conference is in April and so those are the three that come immediately to mind. ASCD is another conference where, quite frankly, I think we need to be doing more work in talking about the coaching professional development possibilities and how it relates to special ed. And if anybody else has other suggestions I would love to hear them. I reinforce that this is a relatively new process in the sense that it's only really been around since the late 1990s in general and it's just mushroomed. But as it's being used in education we're really in the first you know two, three, four years of people doing conflict coaching in the education context and in special ed. So we're right at the cusp. And anybody has any suggestions about where people are sharing work and ideas on this I would love to have them posted somewhere - obviously CADRE's website would be a great place.

MARSHALL PETER: Yeah. CADRE does have a calendar feature on the website where we try to post upcoming conferences trainings and opportunities that might be of interest to folks who are tracking special ed dispute resolution. So we'll also be trying to post things there that will keep you informed about what's going on. Lots of very, very positive comments, Tricia. I think what I'm going to do is I'm going to, if someone has a live question, we're almost done and I need to tell you about the next webinar, but if you have a live question, if you press #6 that will unmute your phone and then after you've asked the question please press *6. But just time for one. [Silence]

Okay. Well, hearing none I'm going to again thank you Tricia, that was absolutely superb and tell you about the upcoming webinar. And I have to say you couldn't have done a better job of creating a segue for us. The next CADRE webinar will be on January 30th as you can see on this slide, from 11:30-12:30 Pacific Time. CADRE will be hosting a free webinar with Phil Moses, many of you know, who's the Assistant Director of CADRE and the webinar will be on Preparing for Dispute Resolution, CADRE's Parent Dispute Resolution Resource Showcase which Tricia referred to a couple of times as our Parent Resource Center, and we love the fact that people are talking about it period. The Dispute Resolution Resource Showcase is the result of feedback that we received from parent leaders on resources that would be most helpful to parent center staff, family members, parents and professionals as they prepare to participate in the full range of dispute resolution processes and practices. It offers an easily searchable collection of resources ranging from policy and guidance documents to preparation materials, brochures, factsheets, webinars and videos. It is the sibling of a Resource Showcase that we did that was particularly focused on documents and resources for state education agencies and Part C lead agencies.

A word about Philip, who for many of you requires no introduction, Philip's been with us since 1991, and has helped to manage the full range of CADRE's activities including use of advanced technology as well as traditional means to provide technical assistance to PTIs and state departments of education. In

addition to Phil's work as a trainer, Phil has been the chair of all CADRE's national symposia. So I know that he'll be doing a delightful job for us on the 30th and hope that you'll all be able to join us for that webinar. So with that, I, we're going to go ahead and wrap up. Please don't hesitate to contact us at CADRE if you have any additional questions or ways that we can be helpful. Thank you so much! Take care and happy New Year. Bye.