
Effective IEP/IFSP Facilitation: Reconnecting with the Purpose and Intent of the IEP/IFSP Process

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One key characteristic of any effective meeting is clarity of purpose. The IEP/IFSP process is intended to provide the structure that supports shared decision-making for families and school districts focused on children with special needs. The objective of this collaborative teaming process is the identification of innovative, specially designed, instructional strategies. It is a process, which at the core, is about shared-learning to support problem solving around complex issues. The most successful IEP/IFSP meetings occur when we stop seeing them as isolated meetings, and begin seeing them as part of a system of interrelated learning events. Unfortunately, as the culture of Special Education becomes increasingly adversarial, the focus on innovation and creativity is to often replaced by a focus on procedural compliance and the creation of a legally defensible document.

For IEP/IFSP Facilitation to truly add value to this process we must revisit the core purpose and intent of the IEP/IFSP and identify best practice, essential characteristics and qualities supporting an excellent IEP/IFSP.

Setting the Context

Objectives

- Identify what we believe to be the characteristics and elements of an excellent IEP/IFSP process
- Explore, more deeply, key themes that surface from this conversation
- Discuss the ramifications of this learning for the design and implementation of IEP/IFSP Facilitation resources
- Create the opportunity for shared learning and reflection

Activity: Assumption Paper

“When I visualize the implementation of an excellent and successful IEP/IFSP process, I assume”

- Respond Individually (3-5 minutes)
- In small groups share your responses with each other and develop a composite list.
- Large Group Debrief

Small Group Discussion ?'s

- Determine the three most significant themes identified as being at the heart of an excellent and successful IEP process.
- To what extent are these elements present in the IEP process as you observe it?
 - What contributes to their presence?
 - What are barriers to their presence?
- Large Group Debrief

Summary of My Themes

Innovation:

The Primary Goal of the IEP/IFSP Process

Innovation

“To begin or introduce something new; be creative.”

- Innovation in education is not a complicated issue. It is a complex issue.
- Differentiating between:
 - Simple Problems
 - Complicated Problems
 - Complex Problems

Adaptive Work:

An Essential Component of Innovation

Technical & Adaptive Work

- Technical Work

“Technical problems are those that, in some sense, we already know how to respond to them.”

- Adaptive Work

“The problem definition is not clear-cut, and technical fixes are not available. Learning is required to both define problems and implement solutions.”

Leadership Without Easy Answers
Ronald A. Heifetz

Adaptive Work

- “Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face.”
- “The exposure of and orchestration of conflict – internal contradictions – within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways.”
- “Different values shed light on the different opportunities and facets of a situation. The implication is important: the inclusion of competing value perspectives may be essential to adaptive success.”

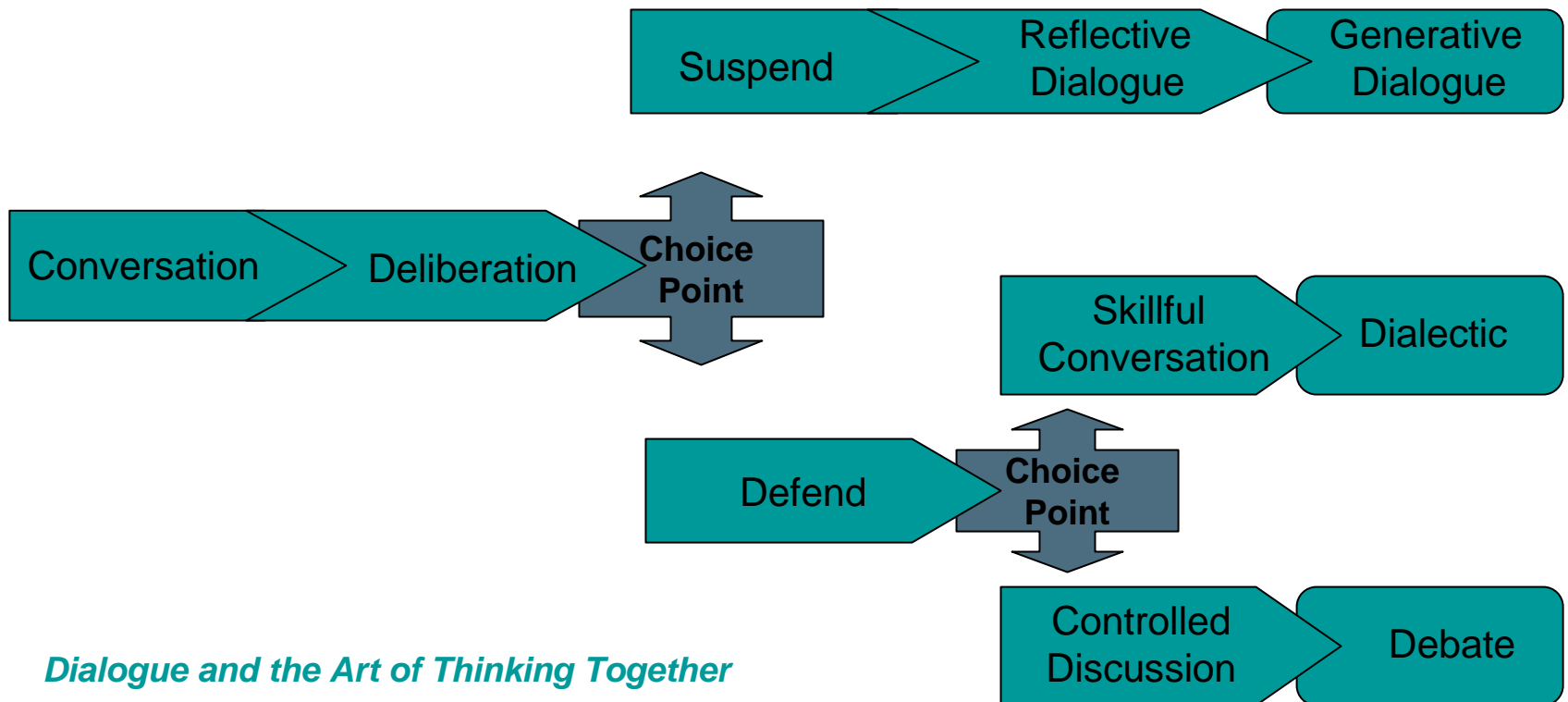
Situational Styles

Situation	Problem Definition	Solution/ Implementation	Responsibility For Work	Kind Of Work
Type I	Clear	Clear	Authority	Technical
Type II	Clear	Requires Learning	Authority & Team	Technical & Adaptive
Type III	Requires Learning	Requires Learning	Team & "Leader"	Adaptive

Engaging in Learning Conversations:

Conversational Structures that Support
Adaptive Work

Conversational Structure & Choices



Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together
William Isaacs

What defines a conversation as “Difficult” or “Crucial”?

- Opinions Vary
- Stakes are High
- Emotions Run Strong

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High
Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler

Difficult Conversations

- There is almost always more than meets the ear.
- What people say rarely reveals what they really think and feel.
- What is said is usually not what is most important.

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most

Stone, Patton & Heen

Conversational Structures

- Every conversation has a structure that invites certain kinds of responses and inhibits other kinds of responses.
- We approach most difficult situations prepared to tell the other person something that is important to us.
- Our preparation involves how we can tell the other person in a way that will be effective.

Two Types of Stances

TELLING

- Judgment
- Hubris
- Pretense
- Dismiss

LEARNING

- Curiosity
- Humble
- Presence
- Acknowledge

In a “Learning” Stance

Shift your internal orientation from:

- Certainty to Curiosity
- Debate to Exploration
- Simplicity to Complexity
- “Either/Or” to “And”

Engage in Shared Learning

- Individually intelligent people can collectively make stupid decisions from shallow pools of understanding
- One measure of a group's intelligence is the depth of its shared pool of understanding.

The IEP Life Cycle:

A series of connected learning conversations and learning events.

Events within the Life Cycle

- Pre-referral work
- Referral
- Eligibility Determination and IEP Development
- IEP Meeting
- Finished! Right?
- Implementation
- . . . Ongoing learning events
- Sustaining the cycle of Adaptive Work necessary in complex situations.

Conclusions: So What

Ramifications for design and
implementation of IEP/IFSP
Facilitation resources