CADRE and JAMS Foundation Present:
Voices from the Field
Interview Clip #4 Transcript – Greg Abell

Greg: An article that has really influenced me in the last couple of years, there was an article in Ed Leadership 2006, it's called Relationships in the School House, and the author is Roland Barth. You know, Barth, educator, principal, leader, taught at Harvard a number of years and he starts the article basically this way, it's the first paragraph, he says, 'One incontrovertible finding of all my work in education is this: that it's the quality of the relationships between the adults and the system that correlates most highly to student achievement.' And he goes on to say is, 'where I go into buildings,' you know, and Melody had said that this morning, I think, in the presentation, 'where I go into buildings, where I see evidence of trust and respect between the adults and the system, teacher-teacher, teacher-administrator, you see student learning, and where I see absence of that you don't see student learning.' So the other piece for me is this importance that our work is not just about dispute resolution. You know, our work is about: how do we help adults have the conversations they need to have to do the work that we're doing and how do we shift the conversation away from the adult issues to the kid issues, because fundamentally, once some person told me once, he's all, 'fundamentally we're not achieving learning improvement because we as adults are not having the right conversation.' You know that has fundamentally anchored for me the work that we're doing. Because it's no longer about resolving conflict so adults get along better it's resolving conflict so that we can fundamentally do the work that we're tasked with doing. You know, this is not a soft skill, this is not an add-on. I mean, he would say this is critical. Someone introduced a book to me this last summer, I was back in Oklahoma, it just came out, I haven't read it yet, but it's called, *The Trust Imperative: Schools Cannot Improve Without It*. And I think that's fundamentally an issue, is that if we don't trust each other enough to have those really hard conversations, then we're not going to achieve the objectives we're looking at. I mean, you can bring all the technical input, all the technical solutions to the problem but if the adults in the system cannot talk to each other on how to implement that, it doesn't make any difference.