

CADRE Webinar
Playing Nicely Together: Family-Centered Practices to Help Practitioners and Families Work Together
May 19, 2015
Transcript

>> Okay. Well, I think we're now ready to get started. So, hello. I'm Marshall Peter, the Director of CADRE, and I want to thank you for joining CADRE's Webinar, *Playing Nicely Together: Family-Centered Practices to Help Practitioners and Families Work Together*. Today's Webinar is one in a continuing series of CADRE Webinars. You should be seeing some poll questions on your screen; please take a minute to answer these.

A few technical notes: The PowerPoint is available for download on the CADRE Website. You can also download it from the file sharing pod on the right hand of your screen. All phone lines have been muted to minimize interruptions. When we open up the call for questions, please press Pound-6 to unmute your phone, and Star-6 to re-mute. We do recommend calling in using a telephone, rather than computer audio. You can enter any questions or comments into the Chat box in the bottom right hand corner of your screen. CADRE's staff will be attending to those throughout the Webinar, and then the presenters will address them in time that's available at the end of the session. Please note that we will be offering a captioned recording of this Webinar in the near future.

So, we've got a great lineup of presenters today; Megan Vinh, Judy Swett, Amy Whitehorne, Yvette Plummer and Kristin Reaves. I'm going to take just a few minutes to quickly introduce each presenter before we begin.

Megan Vinh is the Associate Director of Evaluation at the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. She also works as the lead of evaluation for the Center for IDEA, Early Childhood Data Systems, also known as DaSy. She provides technical assistance and supports Parts C and Section 619 systems in improving capacity to implement effective practices and systems.

Judy Swett is the Early Childhood Coordinator at PACER Center in Minnesota, and has worked there since 1996. Judy provides individual assistance to parents of young children, and designs and presents trainings regarding early intervention and early childhood special education services. She is also a Technical Assistance Specialist at the ECTA Center, the current chair of the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council on early childhood intervention, and serves on the board for the Minnesota CEC-DEC. She's the parent of a daughter with a disability.

Amy Whitehorne is CADRE's Policy Analyst, she provides technical assistance on the procedural safeguards and dispute resolution provisions of Parts B and C of the IDEA, and uses quantitative and qualitative data analyses to assist state educational agencies, policymakers and their stakeholders develop or improve related policies and procedures. Prior to joining CADRE in 2011, Amy worked for the State of Vermont on a range of education law and policy issues.

Yvette Plummer Burkhalter is the Executive Director of the Denver Metro Community Parent Resource Center, where she trains parents how to advocate for their children with disabilities so they can be successful in school and in post-secondary life. Yvette is a parent with a 14-year-old son who went through Part C services, and is currently receiving special education services under Part B.

Kristin Reaves is an Occupational Therapist with 15 years of experience. She has focused her practice in the area of pediatrics, specifically with early childhood and elementary-aged children in the Denver Metro area. Kristin is currently working as a Special Education Coordinator, Occupational Therapy for Cherry Creek School District in Colorado.

Wow, what a lineup! I kind of feel like I should say, "Well, that concludes today's Webinar." But with that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Amy to get us started.

>> And Megan, did you want to go ahead and run us through the content overview for our presentation today?

>> Sure. Yes. So thanks, Amy and Marshall. Like they said, I'm Megan Vinh, and I'm really excited to be here today to discuss how families and practitioners can work together. And just to kind of begin, with practitioners, when I'm using the term "practitioners," and I think when we're using that term, we really mean teachers, educators, providers, therapists; kind of folks that are working with families in an education or early intervention/early childhood special education type setting. So, I just wanted to make sure that that's clear, so that everybody was represented.

So, specifically, on today's Webinar, we are planning to discuss sort of relationship building blocks. So we're going to be discussing how to develop effective relationships that can really support parents and families and practitioners working together. We'll also be discussing family practices, which are practices that teachers and practitioners can use to facilitate parent engagement or involvement. And then we're also going to be talking about kind of a relationship timeline. So we'll end the discussion with a discussion about families and practitioners working together throughout the life of their relationship.

Throughout this Webinar, we're going to be presenting some content, and then it's great to have Yvette and Kristin here, who are going to share their experiences working together to support better outcomes for Yvette's son. We have opportunities built in for you to share your stories as well, and experiences in the Chat box. So like Marshall said in the beginning, we do have people monitoring that, and we do want to hear from you in the Chat. We'll also have some time for questions at the end of the Webinar. Again, like Marshall said, please feel free to put those questions in the Chat, because people will be monitoring that.

The purpose of this Webinar is really to showcase practices that have been used in early intervention and early childhood special education, and have been successful in building parent and family relationships that can then be adapted and used for relationships at any level; so for example, in elementary, middle school or high school. We have adapted the content from the DEC-recommended

practices, the key practices that are underlying the IEP process, and some agreed-upon practices for providing early intervention services. So that's all been adapted for this Webinar.

So, at this time, I think it's time to get started with the content, and I'm going to turn it over to Judy to begin sharing the information related to building relationships.

>> Thanks, Megan. Oh, I went one too fast. Good afternoon. As Megan said, we're going to be talking primarily about relationships today, and the importance that they have in building a team to support the child. If you think about any relationship that you've been involved in, obviously that relationship did not happen overnight. Likewise, we don't expect that families and professionals will form that relationship overnight, but that it's going to take time. We're going to be discussing some of the foundations of relationships. Part of the thing that we want to understand is that we need to have an awareness and a knowledge of our own cultural values, and those of the organizations we work for. For most of you, that would be a school district. And those create an important foundation for understanding the interactions we will have with others. It's going to be important in building that relationship with families that we have the ability to consider the family's perspective, and this would require an understanding of family systems, and an appreciation of the uniqueness for each family.

One of the things that we're going to talk about, then, is recognizing that each family is different, that our values and culture might be different than the families with which we are working. How do we build strong relationships with those who have different values and beliefs than we do? Part of the Webinar today, we're going to be looking at each of these components of relationships, and figuring out how they are worked to establish a quality relationship with the families. And one other thing I think it's important for you to understand is, as Marshall mentioned, I work for a parent information center in Minnesota, and one of the things that we also teach parents is that while we expect the professionals to be able to take our perspective and understand us as families and the needs that we have for our children, we also, as families, need to take on the perspective of professionals and try to understand and seek to understand where they're coming from.

Some of the building blocks of relationships that we're going to be talking about, the first one is trust. And as I said earlier, just as relationships are built over time, trust is developed over time, and based on prior actions and relationships that we've had with people that go before us. Sometimes we recognize that it's important to give people the benefit of the doubt, and again, this is one of those two-way streets. It may be important for professionals to give families the benefit of the doubt when families are requesting something, or perhaps when a family doesn't respond to your suggestions as quickly as you might like. And then also vice versa, it's important for families to give professionals the benefit of the doubt. We have a term that we use here at PACER, talking about honorable intentions, and that's the belief that both professionals and families are coming at this wanting what's best for the child, and not assuming that something that happened that they were sinister, or they meant to hurt, or they meant to disagree; but sometimes just honoring and giving them the benefit of the doubt, and believing that they really are trying to do their best.

One of the things that we can look at is whether or not your policies and practices convey respect and personal regard for parents. I've been in many IEP meetings where the families were greeted as mom or dad, and so one of the things that you might think about as professionals is, how do you greet families, and how do you convey respect and personal regard for them? Perhaps greeting them as Mr. and Mrs., and then much like many other parents, myself included, if someone calls me "Mrs. Swett," I'm usually pretty happy to say, "Oh, please call me Judy," but appreciating that respect that's being shown to me, rather than just calling me "mom." So that you also might want to look at are your policies and practices congruent with goals of supporting family engagement? Some of the questions that come to mind; what types of activities do you offer to bring parents into the school environment and make them comfortable? How warm and inviting are the initial contacts that families have with you in your programs? We know that many of you operate on very tight timelines for getting things done, but if we really want to have an ongoing relationship with families, it really is that first contact that's going to set the stage for all of that.

Last, but not least, keeping promises – do what you say you will do when you say you will do it. That's going to go a long way toward building trust with that family, that they know that if you commit to doing something, that they can trust that you will follow through and make that happen.

Next characteristic that we want to talk about is mutual respect. And I think one thing that's really important to know is, when you respect yourself and your position, parents will respect you. And building a relationship through good communication will become a priority for both of you. And so, as a professional, it's important that when you walk in to a meeting with a family, particularly if it's your first encounter, acting in such a way that you really believe in the value of what you bring to that relationship, that you have confidence in what you're doing and that you respect yourself as a professional, it's important then, also, that as you're showing a respect for different points of view, look for a good idea behind a parent request that may initially seem strange or inappropriate to you, looking for good intentions helps to build a positive relationship. And again, just a reminder, that each of us brings our own culture, values, beliefs and experiences to each relationship. Our background and experiences affect everything that we do. So even as you're working with families, as I said earlier, it's going to be important that as you're making those first encounters, that you really recognize that you may be coming from a different place, that you may have different values and beliefs that that family has. But be aware that there is value to where that family's coming from, and making sure that we respect where that family is. Each of us needs to become consciously aware that our culture, with its values, beliefs and experiences, will influence our relationship with families. It's important that we treat others with the same level of consideration and respect that you deserve, and that you would want from them; the famous saying, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," I think is particularly critical when we are trying to establish those relationships with families.

Good communication – another critical building block of relationships. And sometimes it's not just the conversation, it's not only the words, but also the feelings underlying the spoken message. And some of that may come across in our body language, our facial expressions. And it's important to be aware of what our body language or what our faces may be saying, even if our words may be different. I have a good example of that; as an advocate, it's my job to remain neutral in meetings, and to help families and

schools work together. And in one of the very first conciliation meetings that I was involved in, I was having a real struggle with hearing what the school had to say, but wanting to be able to work together to help the family and the school avoid an impasse. Halfway through the conciliation meeting, we were taking a break, and the Special Ed Director called me aside and she said, "Why are you so angry with us? What did we do to you?" And I said, "I'm not angry, I'm just trying to listen very intently and figure out what's going on." And she called attention to my facial expressions. And that was probably the first time that I really realized that my facial expressions may be conveying something that I did not want to convey, and it taught me a good lesson; if I really want to help families and schools work together, I have to be very conscious of my body language and my facial expressions.

Communication skills may not come naturally. What we hear from others, how we share information and how we respond to one another will all influence our communication. One of the most critical pieces to this is active listening. It's one of the most valuable skills that you can bring to your relationship with families. It's going to be important that you work to seek clarification from what the family heard and understood what you were trying to say. Sometimes repeating back to the family or asking the family to repeat back to you what they think they heard you say, which can then often avoid any type of confusion. It's important to be attentive to a family's concerns or priorities, and to reflect accurately what the family has shared with you. The professional has the responsibility for setting the tone of the conversation, and creating a safe environment so that the family does, indeed, feel safe to share.

When we're working with families within that entire early intervention or special education system, we're often asking families to share very personal and private information with us, and in order for them to do that, we have to set a tone that they know that it will be safe, and that we will be keeping all information shared with us confidential. Sharing information with that family is enhanced when we share it in ways that are consistent, sensitive and honest. One of the things that you might want to think about are, are your written materials clear, appealing, informative and easy to read? Families will benefit from information shared through a variety of resources and formats, and in a variety of languages and reading levels. It might be important for you to talk with the family and ask them how they would like to receive information. I am not a good auditory listener, and so if someone's going to try to just share a lot of information with me verbally, I may not have a real clear understanding of that information. It's much easier for me if someone hands me something in writing. I have the ability to read through it, process it and maybe read through it a couple more times, and then I can also take that information back with me. So, getting a sense from families of what is their preferred learning style will go a long way towards enhancing that good communication. Strong working partnerships will happen when you have open and ongoing communication with the family.

It's an important part of the whole thing that brings both families and professionals together, is that there's that acknowledged agreement that we're here working in the best interests of the child. Many of the things that we've already talked about is that mutual understanding, and that grows when families and professionals share their insights, their concerns, their stories, observations and questions about a child with each other. So even as the family is sharing insights and information about their child, having the professional share some information and insights about what they know about that

child's disability, about how they might work with that child, some strategies that they might be suggesting will be important in creating that agreed-upon agreement. When you have a better understanding of the strengths and needs and interests of the child, working with the child becomes more rewarding, as you see better progress when you're using intra-space learning. And in order to get that information about that child and what the child's strengths and needs and interests are is going to be important, that you have that open and ongoing communication with families. And this can also, then, lay the basis for the child to have a better experience at home and in school, and sharing creates a greater understanding of that child, and what the goals are, both for you as a professional and for families as they're asking you to work with their child.

As I said before, that acknowledged agreement to work together in the best interest of the child is going to result in that open, ongoing communication, and hopefully increase family awareness and involvement. While the communication focused on the child is the most critical, families also appreciate getting information about your program, about your goals, what you're hoping to accomplish, so that they can know what to expect, and there are no surprises. Good quality programming does not exist without good communication. Good ongoing communication will also allow them to work on goals and objectives at home, to be able to support their child's learning at home, as well as their understanding what your particular school's grade level expectations may be for a child. Families really want to know what is going on, and be involved in all decision-making. It's important, therefore, then, that you provide families with information so that they can make those good decisions, as well as giving families information on how they can be involved in the child's school, such as your visiting policies, volunteer opportunities that might be available or other opportunities for family leadership within your program.

So, all of the things that we have talked about so far really have been to talk about those building blocks, those important steps along the way to building those family-professional relationships. So, one of the things that you might want to think about is, what are you doing, both personally and in your programs, to build and support those family-professional relationships? And this is an opportunity here for you to share your stories in the Chat box. If there is a particular policy or practice that you are doing as a person or as a program, please free to share them in the Chat box, and then we're going to move forward now with a much more personal story about how these family-professional relationships really can work together for the good of the child. At this point, we're going to hear from Yvette Burkhalter, who is a parent and Kristen Reaves, who is a professional, and see what they have to say about the parent-professional relationship.

>> Well, thank you. Listening to this, it does give me a memory that I, with Kristin, dealing with my son. My son at the time had humungous sensory issues, and he would have a huge meltdown. And I was at the end of my rope of what to do when he would do that. So Kristin gave me some suggestions of what to do, but there was one suggestion that I couldn't do, and that was one of just when he misbehaves, or he has a meltdown, to just not give attention to it, and just kind of ignore it. And I had to look at Kristin straight in the eye and say, "I can't do that, I just cannot have a little two-year-old running around just doing what he wants to do, and I'm just sitting there not doing anything." And Kristin, maybe you can suggest, remind everybody what you suggested to me, other stuff that you suggested to me to do. Kristin? Oh, is she muted? I don't know. Kristin –

>> Hello? Hello there. Can you hear me?

>> Got you. Now we can.

>> Okay. Absolutely, I remember when I was working with Yvette's son and he had some complicated issues going on that were further complicated by the difficulties he was having processing sensory information effectively, and so one of the things that I had told her was, in this instance, he's kind of on overload with some of this information, so just try – don't, I know you want to correct the behavior and intervene at this point, but right now that's just going to be one additional piece of information that's kind of coming in on him, and maybe kind of let this go and try to change the environment as much as possible so that it's not overwhelming him, and that was just definitely really difficult, because I think in some ways, and Yvette, you can speak to this, it felt like maybe that you felt you were losing control as the parent, and other people would look at that negatively?

>> Yes.

>> Mm-hmm. So –

>> And culturally, I mean, you just don't do that, you just don't let a little kid run amuck, even if it was just with me and him; it just seemed so wrong for me, like this is not how I have – I can't – I remember telling you I can't do that.

>> Yes.

>> And I respected that you didn't try to talk me into it. I just looked at you like, "I can't do that."

>> Right. So, I think, then, is the professional really meeting parents with where they're at, and going about it in a different way, and really front-loading and heavy-loading all the pieces that you could put to hopefully avoid those huge meltdowns happening. And then just work with the parent at what they could do that would be the least intrusive to their child, and would be the most helpful and still be allowing them to address the issue.

>> Well, thanks, Yvette and Kristin, for sharing with us that story; I mean how your relationship started and that example that you just talked about, the information overload. I think, actually, we all experience that from time to time, that's some good advice for all of us. But it really gives us a great example of how the two of you working together, a service provider and family person, parent, working together. It really becomes easier for you to build trust, and it made it possible for Yvette to share with you, Kristin, that it wasn't going to work, because it would have been way more awkward for her to say that if she didn't have the trust in you, to be able to have you hear it for what it was.

>> Yes.

>> So, next we're going to hear from Megan Vinh, who's going to talk to us about family practices. So, take it away, Megan!

>>Thanks, Amy. So, when we're talking about family practices, we really mean kind of ongoing activities that you're doing to promote family members' active participation in decision-making related to their child; so thinking about what happens during assessment and planning and intervention. We're also talking about ongoing activities that really lead to the development of a high-quality service plan or education program, and then also activities that support families in achieving the goals that they have for their children. Something to think about with family practices is that they're really critical to ensuring that families are full members of the IEP or IFSP team.

When we talk about family practices, there are really kind of three types, or some themes within this idea of family practices that we're going to talk about in a little bit more depth. And so, these include family-centered practices, family capacity-building practices and then family and professional collaboration. So, I'm going to go into a little bit more detail about each of these next, and then we'll hear again from Yvette and Kristin, to sort of bring this home and give us a realistic example of what this looks like.

So to start, family-centered practices are really practices that treat families with dignity and respect; so they're individualized and flexible, and they're really responsive to each family's unique circumstances. So family practices really provide family members with complete and really unbiased information to help them to make informed decisions, so they can support participation of their child and in making education decisions for their child. Family-centered practices also honor each family's own strength while responding to each family's own circumstances, so things like culture and language. It's also important for practitioners and teachers to respect that each family has a story, so each family may have a story, and it might be one that's very different from our own. And so, for example – and this was something that came up when we were sort of planning for this Webinar – we talked a little bit about family engagement. And as we were having our conversation, we as a group realized that family engagement may look very different to different families, and that that's really okay. So what my expectations as a practitioner and teacher may be very different than the family's expectations. And so, we talked about how it might be helpful to sort of outline some of these expectations so that we recognize that everybody's on the same page, so that families and professionals can really collaborate together as partners.

So, some things to think about, and some family practices that really might support the development of high-quality relationships includes things like practitioners and teachers building trust and respectful partnerships with the family, through interactions that are really sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic and socio-economic diversity, and also thinking about the fact that practitioners really can provide the family with some up-to-date, comprehensive and unbiased information, and that should be provided in a way that the family can understand and really use to make some informed decisions and choices. And then another piece of that, practitioners are really responsive to the family circumstances.

So when we talk about family capacity-building practices, what we really mean is, practices that include participatory opportunities and experiences that build parents' and families' capacity relating to their child's development and education. So, these practices really help families to recognize the important role that they play in their child's development or education through everyday activities. And so, these

family capacity-building practices create possibilities for families to participate in their own children's education and development, and again, this is where we continue to recognize the important role that families play as part of the IEP and IFSP team. These practices also support families to develop those advocacy skills, and their ability to educate others about their child's strengths and needs. And so, some family practices that support families in building their capacity include practitioners or teachers promoting family confidence and competence by acting in ways that really recognize and build on families' strengths and capacities. Another piece is maybe practitioners and teachers engage the family in opportunities that support and strengthen parents' knowledge, skills, competence and confidence in ways that are really flexible, individualized and tailored. Another piece is that practitioners and teachers help their families to know and understand their rights, and then also that practitioners and teachers can inform families about some leadership and advocacy skill-building opportunities that might be available.

And then when we move on to family and professional collaboration, these are practices that build relationships between families and professionals who need to work together to achieve mutually agreed-upon outcomes and goals to promote the education and development of a child. These are practices that build trusting relationships between families, practitioners and educators, and Judy, a little bit earlier, touched upon – earlier in this presentation touched upon how you think about building trusting relationships between families, practitioners and educators. Family and professional collaboration practices also provide some genuine opportunities for families and professionals to work together to create those mutually agreed-upon goals and outcomes that support the child's development and education. They also are practices that support the families in using opportunities to be involved in their child's development and education, and they support and encourage cooperative problem-solving. So you can see this in practice when practitioners and families are working together to create outcomes or goals, develop individualized plans and implement practices that address the team, and recognizing again that the family is a critical team member those priorities and concerns, or a child's strengths and needs, to make some mutual decisions and some problem-solving activities.

So at this time, again, we want to give you a chance as well to share some of your stories, so thinking about what are some of your experiences with practices that support family engagement, and I saw from the last one that many people had put in some of their experiences around building relationships. This is also, I think, a chance for you again to talk about what are some of those places that you've used practices that support family engagement. And we're also – we would love to hear those stories. And at this time, I also want to give Yvette and Kristin a chance to share their stories related to how they've utilized, or how they were kind of creating some practices that supported family engagement.

>> Yes, the one story that I remember with Kristin and me was, like I said, my son had sensory issues, and as a matter of fact, the slide before is a picture of my son wearing headphones in the supermarket, because the PA system was just too much for him. And so, when we had to go to the barbershop to get my son's hair clipped for the very first time, he screamed bloody murder, I mean, it was as if someone was cutting his stomach open, the scream was so shrilling and so loud, that it caught the attention of everybody in the shop. And the shop that I go to, it's a barbershop and a beauty shop. And for those who are familiar with African American culture, just like the church is the center of activities and

contemporary issues of the day, the barbershop and the beauty shop is that, as well. And so, this is a very cultural kind of thing; everyone has their opinions, everyone's talking on the top of their lungs with their opinions and everything, and it's a very social kind of atmosphere. So, I had my son there to get his haircut, and he's screaming, and they're thinking that my son's out of control, and I'm not a good parent, I guess, because I can't control him. I mean, we have people coming to him, tending to him, like, what are we going to do, you know, he's screaming like this. And I knew that as a mother, there was something else; it wasn't just that he was afraid of the clippers, we were trying everything. It was just I knew it had to be something else. So I shared it with Kristin. And so Kristin decided that I should use the social story. And we used social stories with my son before, and it worked. And so, if you wanted to talk more about the suggestion you gave to me, Kristin, in that situation?

>> Sure. Absolutely. Yvette was really a collaborative partner in helping me get pictures of the barbershop, I know she did a drive-by and took some pictures of the outside and of the inside of the barbershop, and did some pre-teaching for her son about what that experience would look like, and reiterating throughout the social story that it would be okay; he was going to walk in there, and he was going to see these faces that were in the book and he was going to be okay, and his mom was there. And then he was going to climb up in the chair, and he was going to sit down and the barbershop was going to show him different materials, and he was going to be okay. So, kind of doing that pre-teaching about that experience. And Yvette worked really hard on building up to it, so not – before the day that he actually went in the barbershop, he did some drive-bys, and she talked about, "Look, this is the barbershop. This is where people get their hair cut, and this is where we're going to go sometime," and did a really nice job of working him through that process, just with some suggestions.

>> So, I did that, and we did that for several weeks before his next appointment to get his hair cut. But when I was doing what Kristin was telling me, I had to go to the shop, like she said, and take pictures. So when I went in the shop to take the picture of the actual chair and the barber and the clippers, and the outside of the place, everybody was looking at me like I lost my mind. And they were looking at me – now, they didn't say this to me, but their faces said to me, "Here you go, Yvette, you're listening to what white people are telling you about your child. They don't know about our children. You're being foolish." That's what I read in their face. I'm not saying they said that, but that's what I read, because they looked at me like I lost my mind. But I knew that social stories worked before, so I was going to do it anyway, even though I looked like a fool to them.

So I did that. He came, it was time for him to get his hair cut, and we put him in the chair, and everyone was there looking, because they knew what happened last time. And so the barber came, had the clippers, and then he used it on his hair. And all my son did was, he kind of maybe moved a little bit to the left, a little bit to the right, but he didn't scream. And when it got close to his ear, he kind of moved a little bit, but he still was composed. And I was just so proud of him. And Kristin came with me to the barbershop, which I thought was very sweet of her, because I didn't expect that. But she said, "Do you want me to come?" And I said, "Yeah!" And so, she came. So I always wondered – I wonder to this day, Kristin, how did you feel coming to a barbershop where you were the only white person in the shop, and they were looking at me like I was crazy at first, I'd like to know how you felt about that. But before you tell me, I just want to let everybody know that it did work. I mean, he was fine. And it was a teachable

moment for everybody in that shop, because when they saw that he wasn't screaming, the owner of the shop said, "Can I see that social book? Can I see that book?" And they wanted to know what happened. So, I mean, that was so great, and I was so appreciative that Kristin was there. But I am curious, Kristin, how you felt by coming to the barbershop with me.

>> Right, this was definitely my first time in a barbershop that was exactly like this, but I think it was a great experience for me, and a great learning experience, too, and something that's really valuable and important when you're working with families that do have different cultural expectations and experiences for you to understand that. So I think it was valuable, and I appreciated Yvette trusting me enough to bring me into that situation that I know was really anxiety-provoking for her, absolutely.

>> Thank you. I appreciate that Kristin, I really do. I just wanted to tell you that.

>> And thanks to both of you for sharing such a fun story with us, what a great example of how sharing cross-cultural experiences – it increases our understanding and awareness all around; I mean, for both of you. And then even the folks at the barbershop. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall, that would have been fun! [laughter] It's also, you know, there's probably no chance that that would have happened the first day that you met each other either, so hearing about that experience and understanding how your relationship had started to evolve in working together, it's a great model of how that, the relationship timeline and what it takes to build a relationship to get to the point of trusting that that was the right way to work with that goal, to work with that situation. It's a great segue, too, to talk to you about the relationship timeline.

As Judy was saying earlier, we all have many relationships in our lives, and although they differ, each is built much in the same way; you know, block by block, experience by experience. Every relationship also has a timeline. There's a beginning that we go through, you know, the period of adjustment, when we're getting used to working together, developing mutual respect and good communication, until time is past, and we're smack into what I like to call the "long haul" – that's the time period where the relationship really grows and strengthens for months, years, until the relationship naturally comes to an end. And with special education, this is often in the period of transition, at least it ends in the formal sense. Certainly the connections that we make, family and then practitioners, whether you be service providers or educators, those relationships really never die; they're really with us. They're part of us for as long as we're here.

We're going to take a look at these three mileposts in the timeline of family/school/provider relationships; initial contact and establishing rapport, working together, that meeting and evaluation period, and then taking a look at the long haul. And thinking about different points, at these different points in our relationships, things that we can do to reinforce the blocks upon which these relationships are built, taking these steps can really go a long way towards strengthening and supporting our relationships over time.

So, at the beginning, "*In the Beginning*" – it's always fun to say that – we're talking about relationships with special education. So we're talking about relationships really formed around the needs of a child or a student with disabilities. And that child or student has a family, right, parents, maybe some siblings,

maybe some grandparents and extended family members, people who love that child and who have hopes and dreams for that student, who really need to be heard and feel supported, as this family bring their child into the world of special education. Megan reminded us earlier that when receiving early intervention services, a child's family is part of the service plan that's developed; talking about the IFSP. But when a child transitions into preschool at age three, the service plan is replaced by an individualized education program, an IEP. That focuses on the student's needs. Some of the relationships that are formed in early intervention continue, but many of new ones are formed at the point of transition and in the years to come as that child grows into a student in special education, in Part B. Regardless of when the relationship starts, though, whether it's an early intervention, preschool, elementary, middle or high school, whether it's an eligibility determination or following a change of service, or a new move to a school, or a move to a new school, it's really essential for practitioners and educators all around to begin every relationship with the parent, the family, with a trusting, respectful inquiry about the child's educational and developmental needs. Being sensitive and patient, paying attention to cues from the parent, the family, their body language, questions they might ask, or the fact that they're not asking questions – those can be huge guideposts for practitioners to guide the conversation about what that child or student needs.

Also, introducing the concept of working together with that parent and family as a team at the very beginning – I like to think of it as the “A-Team,” asking the parent and family members how they'd like to be addressed; Judy referred to this earlier, you know, “Would you like to be called Judy? Mrs. Swett?” Maybe even “The Big Kahuna?” You know, whatever it is that is comfortable for that parent or family member, however it is they want to be addressed, that's an important thing to do right at the very beginning there. Don't just call them “mom” or “dad.” That person has a name and identity that they carry into this relationship, as well as being the mom or dad, or grandparent, or whatever. Balance the time that's spent with the parent and family listening and sharing; listen with open ears, and share with an open heart and mind. Pay attention to what others share about themselves. There are lots, lots, lots of fertile cues that you can pick up on to really help grow your relationship by doing this. Ask open-ended questions, and don't wait for particular answers. Don't sit there and wait for what it is you expect to hear, really listen with, again, open ears and an open heart and mind. When you share, also be mindful of using language that isn't judgmental or jargon-y, you know? Relating knowledge and expertise through stories and examples that are easily understandable – that really helps the family, who is coming into this world – again, regardless of where in the spectrum of Part C, Early Intervention to Part B, Transition – wherever they are entering this spectrum. It's important to really do this in a way that they understand, and can relate to whatever the knowledge is that's trying to be shared.

Also, it's really, really important to acknowledge the strengths of everyone involved; family and practitioners, and Judy talked a bit about this earlier, keeping in mind that everybody has some expertise to offer. It's important for family members to sort of think about the shoes that the practitioner is walking in, and the practitioner thinking about the family's shoes as well. And when it comes to the child or the student, besides that child or student, him or herself, it's really important to respect that the parent and the family is the first expert of that child or student, first and foremost.

So we also want to really encourage sensitivity to all aspects of diversity; socio-economic diversity, religious diversity, cultural considerations. Recall the barbershop story that Yvette and Kristin shared with us earlier, you know, how a family's cultural identity and practices can be – how those play into the relationship really offers an opportunity for educators and practitioners to respect those as part of the process of both developing and building the relationship, and determining how the goals for that child or student really could be met. And thinking about it from an advocate perspective, again thinking about what Judy said earlier, it also gives us some insight into how families can share understanding with practitioners, the educators and service providers that they're working with their child or student. We need to really develop an understanding of the family support system beyond special education; what supports are there to help them meet their child's education and development needs? Are there extended family members in the picture? Are there community supports? Do they have spiritual supports? You know, sometimes apples don't fall far from the tree. What sorts of supports might that parent have had when they were a child or a student that maybe would be helpful to them continuing into adulthood, as they are now parents of the child with special needs or disability? You know, it's being sensitive to those things, and thinking about how that parent can be supported in really making sure their child meets their goals, the needs are addressed. That's really important stuff.

Also, it's important to ask the parent and family members how they view their role in their child's special education and development – pardon me, I'm tripping over my tongue there a little bit. You know, culturally speaking, there are lots of differences in how people address their child's education, their cultural differences from regional perspectives. You know, people in the South may look at things differently from people in the Northeast. People from different cultures – again, we heard the story earlier from Yvette relating perspectives in the African American community on church and the barbershop; those are core pieces of daily life in that community. That may not be the case for the practitioner who grew up in a very different sort of family, and developed different personal views and beliefs. So understanding how personal views come in, and asking the parents how they view their role in their child's education and development is really important, working together, too, to help them find ways to fulfill their role. Don't just presume that because they're the parent they're going to want to do this, or that. They may have an expectation that in their community, the expert is the one who does this or that. So, understanding that goes a long way.

Developing an understanding of family concerns and priorities and their available resources – you don't necessarily need to hand them a survey to get this information. We come with these great senses that we've been given that bring to our life, and we really need to observe and clarify. Don't observe and judge, but observe and clarify to really develop an understanding of family concerns, what their priorities are, what their resources are, you know? We're not just talking about money, we're talking about time. Transportation, day care, family supports. Again, mental health practitioners potentially in the picture, you know, what sorts of other resources are available? And does the child or student that's at the center of this particular relationship have siblings who may have disabilities or special needs? And what can we do to really wrap around the family and their needs, to understand what those are?

So used along with the building blocks of relationship and family practices that we talked about earlier, these practices can go a long way toward building a solid relationship foundation. There's an analogy

that Marshall uses often here, that I think is a really good one to borrow – starting a relationship can be a lot like opening a bank account. In the beginning, when things are new, you've got an opportunity to make some significant deposits to that relationship account. And those deposits create equity in the relationship that you can build upon over time, and draw upon if difficulties come up. And they do, especially as we begin working together in that growing pains sort of stage.

After you've gotten a chance to know each other a bit and develop some rapport, the next milestone is really the working together. This is the part of the relationship where we see growing pains as we learn to work together. It isn't unusual for our differences to seem like challenges; whether they be differences of personality, points of view, personal experience. And sometimes they get in the way, let's just be honest. But as Yvette and Kristin shared earlier, challenges present us with opportunities, gifts of information to really help us develop understanding, and to strengthen the family education or practitioner relationship, and add deposits to that account, instead of just making withdrawals.

Making sure that the parent and family know that they're really the core part of this team; in IEP meetings, the number of educators, administrators and experts in the room can make a parent feel powerless, potentially, or at the very least, outnumbered. So, demonstrating how vital their membership is to this team by affirming their importance and working as a team – you know, everybody gets to share. Everybody gets to share their observations, provide suggestions, raise questions and really have an opportunity to be heard. Again, from a practitioner or educator perspective, paying attention to how family members relate to each other and to other people can tell us a lot about how best to engage parents at that level. We need to work as a team, act as a team, and not forget who the child's first team is.

Honorable intentions – oh, sorry, I jumped ahead on the slides for a second there, I want to get back to the honorable intentions. Judy made reference to this earlier, as well. It's important to presume that everyone has the child's best interest at heart, and work through frustrations together. If you don't start off from a really positive foot, you're setting yourself up for trouble, bottom line. And again, walk your talk – really work collaboratively. Let your actions be your words. Don't say things in an aside that you wouldn't share at the meeting, really. You know, be transparent, be honest. And this goes for everybody; the family and the educators, the practitioners – you know, everybody has an opportunity to dig deeper, to get at the hearts of the needs, here, and respond in a way that's respectful of the relationship. Don't do things that are going to upset the apple cart.

Using warm and welcoming communication and thinking about accepted social behaviors, there's an opportunity for some modeling here, both on the family's and the practitioner's side of things. If things are feeling like they're going a little bit wonky in the meeting, you know, use your own communication to sort of demonstrate how it is that you would prefer people to communicate with you, keeping in mind that relationships go both ways. As Judy said earlier, it's a two-way street. When you demonstrate trust in others not to run over you, or run into you, they then can mirror that back to you, they then can do that themselves. I like to say, "communicate, don't dictate," you know, pay attention to your body language. Again, Judy, that was a great example earlier with your facial expressions. You know, sometimes we don't realize that we're making a face, or that our body language can be sending

signals that we don't intend them to send. So paying attention to your body language – sometimes your actions can speak louder than your words. On the other side, if you're the recipient, giving a clue to the person who is making the body language, that sort of threw you off, telling them – hey, I didn't get that, what was going on there? It's helpful. At that point, Judy then knew, oh wow, I was making a face. We need to help each other. Again, part of the working together, going through the growing pains here.

Meeting expectations – I think this is one of those things that across the board, we all need to do this every day in every relationship in our lives. If you say you're going to do something, do it. You know, don't break promises to kids; I've seen that bumper sticker on cars time and time again, and I love it. You know? Don't break promises to anybody. Pay attention and be credible, and follow through with whatever you've said that you're going to do. Recalling what was mentioned earlier, it's also really important to share the balance – balancing the time spent talking, sharing and listening. It feels a little off today, as I'm the one just talking, talking, talking, and there's a whole lot of listening, listening, listening going on on the other side. But it's intended to in this presentation, I guess. We're going to share a little bit in just a few minutes. But encouraging participation, being mindful of cultural considerations while you're doing that – that's really important. Use words that everyone can understand, try to avoid jargon. If you do use it, explain what it means. But don't just say, "That means blah blah blah," explain it in a way that's actually relatable to whoever it is who may not understand it, you know? Use stories. Paint a picture with words. Provide an example that really can increase awareness and understanding of what that jargon means; don't just say, you know, "blah, blah, blah."

Over the long haul, this is, again, the point in our relationship when we – oh, we're going to advance our slide here, thanks – this is the point in the relationship when we work together through the growing pains. We've developed some trust and respect, and we might, at times find ourselves forgetting that we need to tend the relationship and cultivate it all the time. So we need to revisit the relationship regularly; make sure everything's working well together, everyone is working well together. Don't make presumptions that everything is all set. You know, make sure that trust has no reason to be questioned. Make sure that we are having good understanding of each other all the time. Be respectful of different priorities, don't let outside factors interfere with the relationship; things like money or available practitioners, when we're talking about IEPs or IFSPs. And really thinking all the time, being appreciative of the relationship, and taking care of it all the time. We need to jointly consider new strategies, activities or routines, and any kind of revisions or outcomes – that needs to happen together. Again, Team A, the parents, the A-Team, need to be there at the table.

I'll jump to the next slide – I'm looking at the time, here. Stepping up to assist when others could use help is a really important thing, but you also need to be respectful of how you step up. You know, I'll leave it at that. We can kind of think about how we might interpret that. But be respectful when you do step up to offer help. Connecting with families regularly between meetings – this is harder as a child grows into middle and high school, but it's really, really important, and something that needs to happen. Needs change over time, too, so making sure that the families still have the supports that they need – they're not part of the IEP, but they are absolutely part of the kid who is the IEP, it's that child's, that student's, IEP. So we need to make sure, inquiring regularly with the family about what's important to them. Successes that they're seeing, challenges that they're having – this is all important information. It

gets a lot of attention in Part C, but when we're in Part B, we can't just look at this with the annual review. We really need to share and communicate throughout the year.

Also, this isn't just something for special ed teachers to do, this is – you know, we're talking about everybody. The cafeteria lady, the principal, the bus driver, you know, the general education students who are seeing successes or challenges with that student through the course of the year. And finally, again, being aware of the resources that are available in the communities to support these things, especially as the student grows up and toward transitioning out of special education, it's going to be really important that the bridges to those resources are in place and are solid, when that student is ready to transition.

This brings us to our last question slide for everybody participating with us today: What is it that you're doing to nurture and maintain your family-professional relationships? Keeping in mind that it's helpful for people to be polite about communicating needs, nurturing can go in a lot of different directions, so providers need to share complete and unbiased information, and families want to know the truth. But doing it is easier to do when you have trust. And there is – anyway, when there is trust in the relationship.

So, I'm going to be quiet now, and I want to pass the mike, if you will, back to Yvette and Kristin, who are going to share one more story with us here today.

>> Well, and I think more than a story, the piece that Yvette and I are an example of, and what to emphasize to everyone, is just how important it is for both sides of the relationship to really be open to hearing the other person out, and for – and I'll speak for the professional piece – for the professionals, when you are working with a family to really take the time to develop a relationship with them as you would with students, because what you get out of students or clients is going to be so much more when you have a relationship with them. And that's the same thing when you have a relationship with families, and to really take into consideration what's important to them. And I think sometimes we come in with a wealth of information and ideas of what we want to do and how we want to work with our clients and students, and sometimes that that piece of really talking to the family about what things they value and what pieces of this are really important to their family and would really make an impact on their day to day lives is not taken into consideration as much as it should be.

>> I agree with Kristin about – I think a parent, but just people know when someone's respecting them and they're really listening to them. And so when that happens, I think the child or the student does benefit, because they know, even instinctively, if not consciously, they know instinctively that they're not alone, that there's someone helping them become better when we're all working together. I know that when I transitioned to Part B, well, my kid transitioned to Part B, it was a totally different feel; it wasn't that lovey kind of feeling, warm, fuzzy feeling. When my navigator said, "You know, it's going to be an IEP, Individualized Educational Program." There's a reason the "S" is out of there; because you're not going to be involved like you used to be. And I really didn't get what she meant, I didn't understand what she meant by that. But you don't have that kind of support, where you have different entities helping your child and yourself; it's the school, and then there's you. And the school has all these

people at a table on their turf, not in my home, and it's so different. And it's not very welcoming at times.

And so, if I can identify with at least one or two of those people at the table, that would make me feel a little bit more comfortable. But I think maybe professionals have so many IEPs, and I think it becomes industrialized, it could be cauterized sometimes, I think. And they forget that, I think, that sometimes it's forgotten, that you are dealing with a family, you are dealing with a person. And maybe it's hard when you have one after the other, and you only give yourself an hour – maybe that's lost. But if isn't lost, if there is someone who could be reminded that, you know, just like you have a family, we have a family, and we're more than that little piece of paper, documentation. And I think some teachers – I know a lot do get it. I think it's the time. There's only so much you can do at one time, and I think sometimes it just gets lost.

>> I think I would agree with you, and I look back to when my daughter entered into elementary school, and I think that the best years that we had were when teachers and members of the IEP team were talking with me about what were my – what did I want my daughter to learn that year? What were my priorities, what were my concerns about her education, about her skill level, and things like that? And those kinds of things really made me feel like we were in it together, by asking my opinion and demonstrating that they wanted what was best for my daughter. It really helped to establish that family-professional relationship, once she got into elementary school.

>> Yeah, that goes a long way; that one simple question goes a long way.

>> Yeah.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> Well, thanks, Judy, for jumping in there, too, with that. And Yvette and Kristin, it's really, really important for us to really do this; nurture and keep in mind that things don't grow without being tended and taken care of. And even as the student is growing, we need to take care of the relationship as well.

So, we've included at the end of our PowerPoint here, if you decide to download it from the Website or from the pod, we've got our contact information for all of us who have presented here today. And also, we've included, on the next slide, links to the resources that we used to develop the content that we shared with you. But we're going to back up to that really cute picture and ask you to share with us any questions or comments that you might have. I believe people may have been sharing in the Chat box all along, but Marshall, will you guide us along in a Q and A here in the last 10 minutes or so that we have together?

>> Sure. That was absolutely terrific. There have been a lot of comments, no particular questions. I really appreciated a comment that Beth made about when parents feel that the people who are working with them are really invested in the child, it's not difficult to form a really solid working relationship. And I just think that there's a lot of wisdom there. So if you have questions, please enter them into the Chat box. I also – if you want to go ahead and ask a question over the telephone line, if you press

Pound-6, that will unmute your phone, although I would ask you to press Star-6 after you do that to re-mute so that we don't have the extra noise on the line. So if you'd like to ask the panelists a question, press Pound-6 and proceed.

>> Hello?

>> Hi.

>> Hi, I'd like to ask a question. My name's Bob Mullen. I think it was an excellent presentation. One of the things that I'd be particularly interested in knowing from the presenters is, when you are triggered personally, feel an emotional response, what do you do that you've found helpful to bring yourself back to center so that you can be the listener that you'd like to be, and interact with parents and staff in a way that is most conducive to the outcome you seek?

>> Judy, do you and Kristin want to each give a response to that? Would that be –

>> Sure. I can try. This is Judy. I'll give an example of that. I felt I was at a meeting where, for the first time, this was in junior high, where I really felt totally disrespected by a couple of members of the team, and yet I knew it was critical for us to continue working together as a team. And at that point in time, I just said, you know, I think, in the best interest of my daughter, at this point I would like to ask that we adjourn this meeting and reschedule another meeting, because I knew going forward that I was really – I was hurt, I was angry. I felt I had been very disrespected. And to try to continue at that meeting at that point in time, it wouldn't have been a positive experience. Now, that might be kind of drastic to ask to end the meeting, but I think that's a better thing to do than to have sat there and been petulant, or disagreeable or angry, or just shut down totally, because then I would have been wasting the time of the other team members.

>> Yeah, and this is Kristin, I would absolutely agree with that. And you know, maybe sometimes it wouldn't get to that point. I think something that's helpful for me in a variety of situations; whether it be a meeting or just individual discussion with a parent, is really trying to incorporate some of your own self-regulation strategies, and take a deep breath, and try to put yourself in that person's shoes. So, if a parent is coming at you, or another team member, or someone with an attitude that you don't understand, you know, taking a step back and looking at where they're coming from, what experiences maybe they've even had prior to their experience with you, maybe what experiences, in my case, other families have had just working with Occupational Therapists in general, and is some of that being transferred over, and really just trying to find some place of common ground that you guys can start with, and focusing on that, and staying with that maybe for a little bit longer than normally you would, but to just build that rapport.

>> Thanks. I think those are both great responses. And – this is Amy – I would say also, given the time restraints and the number of meetings that we all have in our schedules, even maybe taking a brief break. So just letting the group know that maybe, you know, we need to take time for a bathroom break, or just a pause so that everybody can step away, catch their breath as Kristin was saying; really have a moment to compose themselves in a way that would allow the meeting to go on. And if it

doesn't seem successful, it really seems like the meeting does need to be halted, then at that point, as Judy was saying, then maybe it's time to reschedule. But hopefully those are some good suggestions, in answer to your question. Any other questions?

You can just hit Star-6 – I'm sorry – Pound-6 if you want to unmute and ask a question, and then Star-6 to re-mute. Are there any others? It sounds like we're –

>> Hi.

>> Hi!

>> I have a question. Have you had experiences where you attempt to get the parents involved in the treatment process so that they can be an active participant in the child's development and challenge, like, this new distance in terms of never being available to participate in a session, or just seeming like they're almost maybe overwhelmed with everything in their life, and they just can't devote the time trying to build that relationship with you and participate? And if so, like, what would be a way to try and maybe help that parent get involved?

>> Can you hear me? This is Kristin.

>> Hi. I can hear you.

>> Okay. I think my two thoughts, I have kind of a strong feeling on this. One, I think if you're using, incorporating a variety of approaches and maybe talking to the family, like, hey, what's the best way for me to communicate with you? Is it better for me to email you? Is it better for me to make a phone call to you? And then also, I think, and this took me a while to kind of learn in my professional practice, but I think it's really important for the providers to understand that we chose this career. And I went to OT school because this is what I wanted to do, and I'm working with pediatrics because this is what I want to do, and this is what I love, and this is my passion, and just my interest. And not that the families that you're working with, it's not their interest or their passion because it's their children, but maybe that's not their skillset. And I think sometimes in my early practice, I would get frustrated when, I'm, like, oh, I want this parent to work on this, and I want this parent to work on that. And then I kind of just had this epiphany one day where I was, like, you know what, I need to respect kind of the involvement that they are able to give right now, or wanting to give. And if that is a piece that's not working well, where can I focus my consultation efforts on differently, that will help this student, if that's not the avenue that's available right then?

>> Mm-hmm.

>> If that makes sense, I don't know. That's my two thoughts on it.

>> Yeah, and that's a really valid point. And I think that actually that's something I never thought about before, the fact that, like, this is something I want to do, or is this something that kind of fell into their lap. I was thinking specifically of a parent where it was a home-based early intervention therapy, and the mom kept saying that she wanted to participate in the sessions, but then every time was busy with

something else, and I couldn't seem to find a way to get her to –she said she wanted to sit in and participate, but couldn't find a way to make that actually work with her schedule and have her come and sit down for the session. So I felt like she was telling me one thing and doing something else. And it could be that she just wasn't ready to be that active in the child's therapy at that point, but I didn't know what another strategy to try and help her with that.

>> Right. And that may be a different case, just because it is the early – and I know when I've done early intervention, that's kind of a requirement that is set up in the contract when you're doing that, so maybe talking to the company that you work for and maybe having a conversation with the mom and just saying, you know, I really value the input you have, and I really think it's so important for you to be involved in this, because your child will see the value of it more if mom's involved. So is there a better way that I can work my schedule so that it'll work better for you, or just trying to gently remind them, or make that piece of them being involved really clear.

>> Yeah, I think that's a great point –

>> Okay.

>> This is Marshall. And just a couple of responses to the question, I'm going to also wrap us up. I think that first of all, the point about scheduling that oftentimes for families, times that are convenient for the people who support them may not be convenient for families, and that gets further complicated if you have a single parent or a parent who's absolutely overwhelmed, and the time when somebody comes to their house, it's, like, 30 minutes of time where they're not actively engaged in taking care of their child. So, I think trying to be sort of sensitive, and oftentimes that sensitivity, that a simple way to get there is just to point-blank say, how can I be most helpful to you? And to really, then, within the confines of what it is that your job is, do your best to meet the needs that the family says that they have.

So, I have to say, we are right on time. It's, I think been, again, a fabulous Webinar. I really want to thank our presenters, Megan Vinh, Judy Swett, Amy Whitehorne, Yvette Plummer Burkhalter and Kristin Reaves. We would very much appreciate it at CADRE if you would take a minute and complete the brief Survey Monkey, it will only take you just a second. It gives us data that is very, very helpful for us as we present information to our funders about these Webinars, and how the participants value them. We also want to just ask you to stay tuned. I suspect that many of you are subscribing to the CADRE Caucus. If you aren't please do. We'll be announcing our next Webinar, we are trying to pin down what we believe would be a really good topic, a great presenter. We're expecting that will happen sometime in early to mid-September, so stay tuned for more information. Thank you very much for joining us, and thanks again to the presenters, fabulous presentation. And it will be available recorded and captioned, and the PowerPoint, if you didn't get it out of the pod, will also be available on the CADRE Website.

So, thank you very much! Have a great summer, and make CADRE your home page. Take care, bye!