

## Getting Past “No”

Have you ever felt like you were just spinning your wheels in an ARD meeting? Everybody throwing out ideas, but not making any progress toward a consensus? “I want my child kept in general education” or “He just needs more support at home” or “She needs to have an aide” or “What he needs is an attitude adjustment”

Sometimes it seems like we’re in a tennis match of ideas. The parent volleys over a request, the school volleys an alternate request and round and round we go. This tug-of-war mentality usually ends just like most games of tug-of-war: one side is going to fall down and we are left with a winner and a loser.

Is that the way an IEP meeting should work?

So how do we get out of the tug of war? In the books *Getting to Yes* and *Getting Past No*, Roger Fisher and William Ury of Harvard University explain the idea of “principled negotiation.” The basic idea is getting past the demands to understand the interests. We might all be surprised to find out why a person does or says something when we take the time to ask and not assume.

We all know what happens when you assume!!

Interests are the objectives, often hidden, that underlie whatever it is that people say they want. As parents, we often believe that the school is suggesting a plan of action because it will be easier and cheaper for them. However, with some questioning, we may find out that the teacher who is recommending a change of placement doesn’t just ‘want that kid out of her class’ but she’s afraid because she knows she doesn’t have the training. We may find that the administrator who says no to a one on one aid is not just trying to save money, but has concerns that the this student would become too dependent on prompting. That he is genuinely interested in the long-term success for the child.

The first step to opening up communication on interests is to be sure you are providing the reason behind your requests. Why do you want that

goal or placement or device or testing? “Because it’s what I think is best” is not going to cut it with a data driven system like special education. For example:

**I want my child in a general education classroom despite his disruptive behavior** *because I fear that making him “different” by pulling him out will be very damaging and create more behaviors.*

Do you see that adding the interest to the sentence makes a big difference from a school perspective? Instead of just an “I want” you’ve also provided a “you need” by explaining that more behaviors down the line are something that need to be considered for the best interest of the school, not just the student.

So how do you find out the interests of other committee members? There are several questions you can ask. Some examples are:

1. What are the benefits we could expect if we did it that way?
2. What would be the harm of doing the other way? (other suggestions or your suggestion)
3. How do you think that will address the issue?
4. What will that look like down the road?

These are just a few ways to open up communication and help stop the spinning wheels of an ARD meeting.

For more information on **collaborative IEP meetings** and a full list of questions to determine interests, check out “*A Guide To Collaboration for IEP Teams*” by Nicholas R.M. Martin in the Lending Library at FISD’s Early Childhood School (10330 Red Cedar Dr, Frisco).

*The Lending Library is open to all families from 9a.m.-2p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the school year (if school is in session).*