

- [Jim] And then I will hand it over to our presenters, Beth and Gayl, thank you.

- Hi everyone.

We're so glad that you guys are here for, Finding Common Ground: Strategies for Resolving Conflict.

We know that teamwork is an essential part of almost every special education professional's life, we are all participating on IEP teams, classroom teams, eligibility and placement teams, specialized teams like AT teams, and with so many teamwork opportunities, disagreements, and occasionally, you know, conflict, it's all inevitable, and especially these days when there has been so much going on in the world of education with lots and lots of rapid change.

So this session's gonna offer an overview of ideas that can help teams find common ground when conflict arises.

We're gonna be talking about differentiating disagreement from conflict, identification of the elements of important conversations and self-assessments of our own reactions to conflict, and ideas to help a team find common ground.

I'd love it and Gayl would love it too if you would put in the chat like maybe where you're from and what kind of a team you serve on.

I'll introduce myself while you guys are doing that.

My name is Beth Poss.

I am a speech language pathologist and special educator.

I currently serve as the Director of Educational Programs for LessonPix, but I'm a former public school team member in many, many ways, including as an assistant principal of an elementary school.

I'm on the Editorial Board for the Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits, ATOB Journal, I'm a Board Member of Accessible.

org, I'm a consultant and inclusion advocate, and I'm one of the co-authors of the book, "Inclusive Learning 365: EdTech Strategies For Every Day of the Year.

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- Hi everybody, my name's Gayl Bowser, and I am really happy to be with you today to talk about this important topic.

We have, I think particularly this year, experienced a lot and need to know a little bit more about finding common ground and working together in teams.

My background is that I am a teacher by training and I have been both a school principal and a school administrator.

And then for the last part of my career I was a coordinator for the State of Oregon for Assistive Technology Services, for services with students with orthopedic impairments, and then also for one of the regional early intervention, early childhood special education programs in Oregon.

So the bulk of my most recent experience is as a school administrator, where it was my job I think a lot to help people find common ground and work together to find agreement rather than disagreement.

I need to say that I am also one of the co-authors of the book that you see here on this slide, which is called, "Leading the Way to Excellence in Assistive Technology Programs.

" And it's a manual that's published by CAST Publishing for school administrators as they lead assistive technology programs.

I wanna tell you that because we'll talk a little bit about some of the content in this book as we go through our morning.

One of the things to set the stage for what we're gonna do today is to really talk about the two aspects of finding common ground, and Beth and I have talked a lot about this.

We've had a lot of fun trying to figure out what's the important thing to say and what can you say in an hour and a half, but there really are two major aspects to helping people learn how to be more effective when there is conflict or disagreement on a team.

So we think that one of those aspects is having the skills and the self understanding to be able to speak your mind honestly and respectfully to know what your style under stress is and how you react when there's a conflict situation.

So we're gonna start with a bit of information about that, but then the other aspect of finding common ground, and especially since in our field, we work so much on teams and teams of people who may come together for short periods of time or long periods of time, but we wanna talk about the way that teams come together to collaborate, make better decisions, and foster workplace cultures of trust and respect.

So those two things are exemplified in this quote from the Crucial Learning Company, which does a lot of work on helping businesses particularly find common ground and have effective cultures of collaboration.

- So just to briefly review what we hope you're gonna walk away with is that you'll be able to describe the differences between disagreement and conflict, identify your own communication style and approach to conflict and disagreement, we are gonna discuss "Five Dysfunctions of a Team" but we're gonna focus really on two of them, we're going to use the Knoster Model to consider sources of conflict, describe typical dynamics of group decision making, and use inquiry and advocacy when trying to come to team decisions.

- One of the things that I believe all of us have experienced in the last couple years is that there was an enormous amount of change in our lives, and sometimes the changes happened in a day and we were doing things in entirely new and different ways, and sometimes that change took a little bit longer.

But we've really experienced all kinds of change and most of it unpredictable change in the last couple of years.

So we wanna acknowledge that that has really had an effect on how people are working together.

And particularly during the pandemic and the school shutdowns and things like that, it had a huge effect on what we thought we could do and how we addressed the confusion and conflict that showed up immediately as the schools were impacted by COVID.

One of the things that we know and that, I've used this slide and this quote for, I bet 15 years, is that "Whenever people are asked to change without their buy-in, we create resistance.

" And the thing that we've experienced in the last two years was total change without buy-in from anyone, at least at the beginning, and, you know, eventually we worked to find ways to get buy-in or to at least accept what was going on, but change without buy-in was a big part of all of our lives for quite some time.

What we know is that change, particularly change like that, is often a source of disagreement or a source of conflict.

And when I first started investigating this topic, one of the things that I did was I read a lot of the works of Michael Fullan.

This quote comes from a book that he wrote called, "Change Forces with a Vengeance.

" But he is the head of the Toronto Institute for Educational Change, and that institute has a total focus on studying what it takes to make effective educational change.

When Fullan starts to talk about conflict and disagreement, he says, "Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable, but fundamental to successful change.

" So we're gonna use that idea as we move through this day and figure out ways that we can address that inevitable but fundamental thing that has happened to all of us and continues to happen.

- And so, moving along with the idea that when there isn't buy-in, there's going to be resistance, so we're gonna talk about a particular model called the Knoster Model that provides a means of looking at the condition of the climate of an organization and figuring out what might be missing when you're trying to affect change.

And so what this particular model looks at, and I'm gonna go ahead and click to the next slide 'cause it's gonna have all of this right there, is that the conditions that we see when we are trying to affect change that are gonna impact it are gonna include an organization's vision, mission, and values, the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the individuals who are a part of this change, right? Who are being asked to participate, who are being asked to implement the change, the idea of incentives and rewards.

And I don't mean, like, that you're gonna get a gummy bear like we might do with a kid as part of a token economy, but the idea of understanding that, you know, what am I gonna get out of this? What are my students gonna get out of this that makes me want to engage in this change, and what positive reinforcement am I going to get? Is this gonna make my life easier in the long run? Am I gonna see more progress in my students? What resources are available in order to implement this change? And that's human capital, financial resources, all of those things.

Is there an action plan that is in place in order to make change happen or are we just sort of blindly trying to accomplish something? And is there gonna be data that supports that this change has an impact? And when we have all of those things together, all of those different elements, that's when we are going to see change, that's when we're gonna get buy-in, right? That's when change is going to be successful.

However, what the Knoster Model, it's a model for managing complex change, supposes is that, if you are missing a common understanding of vision, mission and values, what's gonna happen is that you're gonna have confusion because the individuals involved don't understand why we're doing this, right? If we don't have that shared vision, mission and values.

If we are missing skills and knowledge and attitudes, so mindset is a part of what's in there, when we try to implement change, we're gonna have anxiety because, "Can I do this? "I don't feel confident," all of those things are gonna come into play.

When there's no understanding of the benefits and the reason for this change, it's gonna cause resistance, right? That's part of one of those big things about getting buy-in is I need to know that all of this work and effort is going to pay off for a reason.

When we don't have resources, and I think this is one of the biggest things that most people have encountered before, is not having the people, the time, the money, the materials, you just get frustration, right? "I can't do this, you know, it's just not possible.

" I think that was one of the things that most people encountered with the change that was thrust upon us with COVID and virtual teaching and coming back from COVID, was a lack of resources and the frustration that came with that.

If there's not an action plan, if we don't understand a timetable, what's supposed to happen when, it's going to lead to false starts because there isn't a plan in place to keep us going.

So you start and you stop and you have to restart again.

And in the end, if there's not any data that supports the change being effective, then we don't have any proof, and that is gonna create its own set of resistance to really implementing change with fidelity.

So this is a really great way to look at what might be missing in your organization when you are trying to implement change, or if change is being put upon you as the individual, you know, where are your concerns coming from, right? And what are the emotions that are tied into that, because of that? So it's a great way to examine and see what might be missing and what you might need to put in place in order to have successful change.

- And, Beth, go back just a minute because as I was listening to you, I really got it in a way that I hadn't understood before that this model is useful from both perspectives of what we wanna talk about today.

It's useful from an individual personal perspective.

If you're feeling, you know, anxious about a particular situation, it's helpful to go back and look at, "Well, maybe I don't have all the knowledge and skills and attitudes that I need do that.

" But it's also a wonderful tool to take a look at when groups are not working well together, what might be causing conflict or disagreement? So we give it to you first, it's kind of a sophisticated way of thinking about conflict resolution and managing complex change, but I'm hoping you'll go back and look at it again several times during the work that we're doing together this morning.

- Yeah, I find it really helpful personally, when I'm encountering resistance to take a look and see, Am I barreling ahead? Because, you know, it's all very clear to me, but something might not be clear to someone else in whatever these are.

So I know that's how I often use it, yeah.

- Yeah and I know I'm the barrel ahead person in my groups, "Let's just do something about it," is my response and I've really come to understand that.

- Yeah and Lauren put in the chat, "Knowing the reason behind the request for change is important to me.

I feel like there are oftentimes when there are more than one gray box in a row.

" And you're absolutely right, it's not just that one thing is missing, it could be that there's multiple things missing, but it's a way to sort of chart out and examine, you know, what might be missing.

And whether it's for you to advocate for yourself in order to have something that you might need, or whether it's when you're the leader trying to institute the change, examining why are you getting pushback on things, is there something that you might have missed out on?

- So we've used these two words, conflict and disagreement fairly loosely up until now, and that is how they're used in the literature.

But for today, what we wanna do is we wanna define for our purposes the differences between conflict and disagreement.

So if we go to the next slide, we see that conflict, in our definitions and in the definitions of lots of people who take a look at the ideas about conflict and disagreement is that conflict is a strong disagreement or collision of values, needs, interests or intentions.

So conflict has that element of a collision being dysfunctional, sometimes unhealthy competition, people vying to get their way in a situation where there may be a variety of different values and interests.

But conflict is seen as the more negative of the two words if we're talking about conflict and disagreement, conflict occurs most often when basic needs are not met, or when an individual or group seems to be obstructing one person's ability to obtain certain goals.

So conflict involves struggle, and often struggle over uses of resources and uses of power.

Disagreement is different.

Disagreement is a difference of opinion based on one's personal orientation system including values, needs, interests or intentions.

Disagreement is actually built into our system of special education services and specialty design instruction.

Now, I did not mentioned in IDEA or anything like that, but IDEA really emphasizes the fact that no one person has the expertise and the skills to make all the decisions that need to be made about a child with a disability in their educational program.

So disagreement in our work today is seen as a functional or a positive kind of event.

To disagree is natural, no matter how strongly you feel about something, you're gonna have other points of view that cause us to have disagreement, and as long as we don't get to that overstressed need for power, need to control things, disagreement is actually seen as a benefit.

So if we look at it another way, products of conflict, if you think about conflict on a team that you've been sitting on where there really was not a collaborative work situation going, you probably experienced barriers or even an end to communication.

I used to get called into situations where, as a specialist for the Oregon Department of Education, I used to get called in when people had essentially stopped talking to each other and they were both writing letters to the State of Oregon and saying, "These people are wrong."

"So that's the ultimate barrier or end of communication."

But there's also a lot of anger, there's a lot of escalation, and there's a lot of polarization that happens when you have conflict like that, disagreement is different.

Disagreement helps us come up with new ideas, it's the brainstorming part of any good meeting.

So we get new ideas and better ways of doing things if we disagree and then resolve that disagreement.

Disagreement allows us to have change and innovation, better use of resources, and develop new skills for everybody on the team.

Whoops, there.

I have to put in this slide because it's kind of a theme throughout what we're gonna do today and what we're gonna talk about.

The absence of disagreement is not harmony, it's apathy.

And I love the photo of whoever the road painter was who was too lazy to get out, pick up that tree branch and throw it off to the side so they just went around it.

And I think it's a good analogy for some of the things we do sometimes in order to avoid disagreement, we think we may be avoiding conflict, but in fact, if we don't have some disagreement, we get really unusual solutions to some of the problems that we run across.

- And I keep thinking about this slide, because I think it's often when we just avoid it completely, it actually builds up.

So now every time, if it was me, like, every time I would drive by that, I'd be thinking, "Why in the world, like, couldn't they have just, right?" So what could have been just a little thing can sometimes morph into a much bigger thing because we haven't talked about disagreement.

- Right.

- So tell us a little bit about your thoughts.

I don't think you can unmute yourself, but you're welcome to type into the chat.

In your experience when conflicts have arisen around assistive technology or whatever it is that you are dealing with in your workplace, what has been a central issue, right? What are some of the things that have caused conflict for you?

- And if you're having any difficulty at all thinking of a situation like that, which I suspect you are not, but this is a really good time to go back and look at that Knoster Model and see what you think might have been missing.

I see Lorna says, "Personal opinions and no data."

"So it looks like you actually did go back and look at the Knoster model, that's great."

- Yeah, I see, "It's the fear of the unknown," "Control of resources, implementation, teachers are so overwhelmed, asking them to do one more thing feels like an unreasonable task.

" And I think a lot of times that comes down to resources as well, like time.

"Scared to ask for help," that's that knowledge and understanding of something, absolutely.

- Well and the fear of looking not good enough.

- Right, yep.

"Competing with outside providers and school systems.

" So a lot of that can come down to not having shared mission, vision and values.

I love what Lorraine just said, "More often it is based on disagreement about what is actually required, and then the disagreement increases to conflict.

" So when you don't have good skills and strategies in place for discussing what you're disagreeing about and resolving it, then it's that downturn, right, to it.

Yeah, those are all really.

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And so as we were saying, this is a perfect segue way.

You know, this does tie back beautifully to the Knoster Model, right? So Cheryl puts in, "When parents see AT issued by school in conflict with what they have at home through clinic, HH, they do not see the need for discussion or comparison," And again, it could come down to, is it that lack of shared vision, missions and values? Is it the lack of an action plan happening there because the school and the clinic setting going down different paths? Is it a lack of resources, opportunities to collaborate? All of those things, right, can really impact it.

And I think it's, you know, those sparse resources causing a fear of failure, lack of accountability is often a piece of that where there's no action plan.

Inattention to results is gonna come from a lack of of data.

I think oftentimes, I know one of the biggest ones that I have run into and that I see frequently now is when skills, knowledge and attitudes are at odds.

And so there's different philosophies working in silos.

So the SLP thinks one thing, and the classroom teacher thinks another thing and maybe the BCBA has a different opinion.

And then you've got maybe the parent who is listening to a private provider, right? And so people have different skills, knowledge and attitudes, because we're not coming together to discuss those and to learn from each other.

Onboarding of staff getting buy-in.

"It's not about them, it is," I'm reading from the chat, "It's about the student and what the student can do with tools or supports.

" So these are all places that conflict can arise in, and I had some examples, but I don't think I need to list them because I think you guys have come up with lots of different examples on your own, right, of different things that are occurring.

- So we said we were gonna take two different approaches to this idea of finding common ground, and the first one is about knowing your own approach to a conflict situation.

So what we'd like you to do is read these five descriptions of how you might behave or how you might react in a situation where there is conflict.

And we're really talking about conflict now because that's the one that's gonna really, you know, bring up those emotions and you will know immediately, I think, if you look at these five options which one is closest to your style.

So when you've found the one that you feel matches you the most, if you don't mind, type it in the chat, or if not, just write it on a piece of paper or something that you have handy because we're gonna look at these in terms of a different kind of scale about your style under stress.

So the first one is, I usually find it productive to smooth over the other people's feelings when I'm involved in a disagreement, I don't get upset or make waves.

" "For me, disagreement is a real challenge since there's usually one who's right and one who's wrong, and I don't wanna be wrong, so I'll make my point.

" So that's somebody who's pushing for a response.

"In a disagreement situation, I usually sit down and try to work out the disagreement.

" Or, number four, "When disagreements occur, both sides have to be prepared to give a little.

" And then number five, "I don't like hostility intention that result from disagreements so I try to avoid them and not deal with confrontation and disputes.

" And I see people were doing the task really well in the chat that love fours and fives, which is something we find commonly when we do this workshop together.

But now people are starting to say, "Well, three or four or maybe five, it depends on the relationship with other people.

" And I really want to emphasize that your style in conflict situations will differ significantly probably based on the environment that you're in.

And if you're talking about conflict in a IEP team meeting, or conflict in a classroom situation, that'll be really different than maybe conflict in a group of friends when you go out to eat after work someday.

So these are the four different options.

Remember what you picked, because we're gonna go on and talk about how those things relate to a particular scale.

So let's go to the next slide, and the link on this slide takes us to the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid.

It's a leadership self-assessment questionnaire.

You can see the whole thing here, it's just one page, but it actually lets you do a self rating of how you react, oh, maybe I'm, is the second page is a score sheet? Is that what that is?

- I think, yeah, it's .

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- The second page is a score sheet, but this gives you a good summary of how you react in conflict situations, and this particular scale was designed for leaders.

But what I wanna say about that is you are all leaders, if you are here today talking about how to define common ground with other people, you are taking a leadership role in doing that.

So let's go back and look at the scale itself.

And in this slide what I want you to do is get a picture of what they're analyzing when they do this, the checklist that you saw in the previous slide.

So on the left side of the grid that you see here, the scale is from low to high.

How much do you value this relationship in the situation you're thinking of? So hopefully by now you're all thinking of some kind of situation where there is a possibility of maybe damage to the relationship, or change in the relationship because of the disagreement you're experiencing.

The bottom scale, the scale from left to right is the value of your own goal.

So how important is it to you to reach this goal that you have set? And I think we're assuming here that we may not have shared goals and that that may be one of the reasons for the conflict situation.

So that's the scale itself, that's how it's built, but let's look at the next slide because that really gives us a better picture of how the slide, I mean how the scale works.

So if you scored yourself number one, then you are a person who has a high value to the goal, and also a low value to the relationship.

So you're gonna be over here in the competing corner, the lower right hand corner of this scale.

And in some situations that's particularly appropriate, you really feel like you know the right answer and it's most important to you to get the right answer accomplished, then you may be competing.

In number two, you're accommodating.

So you are willing to lose in order to give the other person the win, and that's the upper left-hand corner of this grid.

If you're avoiding, then you are doing, "I lose and you lose.

" So that's the lower left-hand corner here.

If you're compromising, you're in the middle.

I just realized I'm running my mouse all over this screen and nobody can see my mouse, so thank you, Beth.

- Yeah, I'm trying to use my big pink, I think hopefully people can see my big pink mouse on there.

- I can see your big pink mouse.

And then finally in the upper right hand corner, we want, "I win and you win.

" And that is the collaborating part of the scale.

So when I originally saw this scale, I thought, "Oh, compromising, compromise is what everybody wants to do," but in fact, if you rated yourself a five, then you're indicating that you wanna win and you want the other person to win also.

And that is where the most benefit happens in terms of addressing conflict and in teams and groups.

We have a short video, do you think.

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- I went too fast.

There we go.

- There it is.

This is a short video that shows this even in the very youngest children.

So I'm gonna let you watch this video, but what I'm hoping you'll do is identify what was the approach that the children in this video that you see used in this particular situation.

I'm not hearing sound.

- I know, I haven't played it yet.

- Oh.

Well, that's why.

- Okay, there we go.

I was hoping that the close captioning was on.

There we go.

- We all know adults stink at talking about tough things, but how about little kids? Here's my experiment, feed kids wretched brownies, then see if they'll tell you the truth, especially when they think it might hurt your feelings.

First I made the brownies, lots of chocolate, eggs, flour, but instead of just sugar, I added in salt, lots of salt.

There's no way they can like these better.

Then, I invited kids of various ages for a taste test.

I told them I want to compare ordinary brownies to my special brownies, my dear grandmother's special recipe, my dear dead grandmother's special recipe.

I gave them some cash for being such a big help.

Okay, here it goes.

First they ate the yummy sugar brownies, next, they ate the salt bricks.

Watch this girl, she can barely choke it down.

And how about this girl, even this kid, look at that face.

And now, for the crucial moment, will they tell me the truth and possibly offend me? I ask them to point to the brownies they like best.

No surprise that some try to spare my feelings.

But watch, even the one who gagged.

And how about really little kids? Yep.

Wow.

But do you wanna know what they really thought? Here, guys, I've leftovers, does anybody want seconds?

- So I don't know about you, but I see myself in this video pointing to the salt bricks in certain situations.

I'm pretty good at addressing disagreement when it happens, but if it's gonna hurt somebody's feeling, I tend to wanna be more accommodating.

So if we look at the next slide, what we did was is we summarized the statements that we asked you to look at first.

"Accommodating, I usually find it productive to smooth over the other person's feelings.

Competing, disagreement is a real challenge.

" So you looked at these before and now we've labeled them with the Mouton Scale categories, but what was the common and almost universal reaction to those children in the video? Which style did they use in their reaction to which brownies do you like the best? Oh, Beth said, it was you, I didn't realize it was, Beth said, "I'd be like, 'No thanks.

I'm on a low carb diet.

" So, I think that in most cases, in all cases in the video that we saw here, these kids were accommodating, they didn't wanna have anybody, have their feelings hurt, this girl made a big deal out of her grandma's special brownies, but the other thing that you can see happened is they got offered more.

So it's one of the things that makes it really important to know your own style and the possible results of using that style in a situation where there is disagreement.

So if you're hesitant to talk about disagreement, if you're hesitant to really tell, you know, say what's going on for you, you may end up creating a situation where conflict is actually more likely.

There's no right or wrong answers to what your style is, but there is I think, an important element to knowing what your style is when you get into those kind of conflict situations.

And as we're thinking about it today, we're really talking about conflict on teams where we're working with children with disabilities.

- So what are your thoughts in the chat? Think about an experience with team disagreement and conflict, what was your style in that situation, and how might it help you to know your own and other people's style when conflict arises? And I know I'm one of those compromising, right?

Like for me, I'm the person I'm like, "Well, can you give, you know, a little bit and you give a little bit and we'll all come together?" And I'm also a person who will say, I say this in meetings often, "All right, well that's not the hill that I'm willing to die on, right?" Like, that's like one of my phrases, like, "All right, I'm just gonna let this go, that's not.

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" 'Cause I'm like saving the hill that I'm willing to die on.

So I see myself in a few of those different situations personally.

So if anybody wants to share in the chat, they are very welcome to, you know, and thinking about how it might help knowing your own, but not just your own but other people's.

Are you with somebody who is always gonna be competing, right? And how do you manage that, particularly if you're an accommodating type person and what that might mean.

So, you know, I'll let you go.

- So one other way to look at this that's a little bit more specific than just the five categories in the Mouton Scale is the difference between having a style that's productive and one that's unproductive.

So here is just a list of examples of what it is on one side of the continuum where you are on top of things and really taking care of details, as opposed to the other side of that scale where you're micromanaging, not allowing others to contribute.

This chart came from a full day workshop that I used to do, and one of the things we asked people to do was to think about the style that they had just identified for themselves, whether it was accommodating or or compromising or whatever, and then apply it to these categories of productive and unproductive reactions.

So asking questions can be a a wonderfully productive thing, particularly in a group situation where you're not sure that everybody's participating fully.

But if you're asked too many questions, constantly asking questions either because you weren't paying attention or because you're trying to make a particular point and you're looking for the answer that you want, those kinds of things can really get in the way of group process.

- Yeah, I was just thinking like, so I was an assistant principal for three years and I felt like it was always a fine balance of wanting people to think that I was on top of things and feeling like I was on top of things, but yet, like, my worst nightmare, my own personal work nightmare when unsupervised is somebody who's a micromanager supervising me.

So finding that balance between being on top of things and knowing what's going on, and not taking control of everything, right?

- Right.

So Cheryl says, "Sometimes what matters is the type of person the talk is coming from, with an OCD personality or if you're put on the spot publicly.

" And I think we tried to reflect some of those ideas and some of those thoughts in the productive and unproductive ways of communicating because the OCD personality or putting

on the spot publicly would all fall into those unproductive strategies of doing something like listening or reflecting or taking ownership of something.

One of the things that we.

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- Sorry, there we go.

Hang on, I'm clicking faster than I need to.

- You're going the other.

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- There we go now, there we go, sorry.

- Okay.

- You let me drive and look and see what happens.

- You're such a good driver.

So when conflict is recognized and addressed directly, it's possible to create compromises, trade-offs and negotiations.

But if we don't directly address the thing that's going on, if we try and accommodate like the kids did with the brownies, then it's much less likely that we're gonna identify and discuss problems.

And this is a quote from a piece of research, again, from "Creating an Accountability Culture.

" It's a booklet from Crucial Learning.

And one of the things that they did was they looked at how healthy relationships or teams were based on how long it took them to identify and discuss a problem.

So the health of a relationship or team or organization is a function of the average lifetime between identifying and discussing problems.

And we can take it even back to the brownie analogy.

Those kids didn't say, "These are terrible brownies, I don't want to eat the rest of it.

" And so what happened was they got offered more.

So they not only created a situation where there was no addressing of the issue, but also the possibility for a repetition of the issue over and over and over again.

And I think you can take that analogy of the brownies and think about how much time it takes in your organization or on your team or whatever conflict or disagreement situation you're thinking of, to really identify and talk about a problem that's happening.

The longer you put it off, the more institutionalized it becomes and the more likely there is for recurrence.

So what we know, huh? Okay, so what we want you to do is to think of someone that you wished you could have an honest and crucial conversation with.

That can be somebody in your family, can be somebody at work, can be just about anybody where you wish you could have an honest and crucial conversation, but you haven't been able to do it yet.

So who is that person? How long have you wished you could have that conversation? And those are the first two questions.

But then how could you create an environment where that lag time is as short as possible? And I know when we've done this session, in previous times, one of the people that really struck me was somebody who said, "I need to talk to my sister-in-law about a very specific thing, but it's been four years and so I can't even figure out how to bring it up.

" I think the lesson for us, and please, if you have stories to share, we'd love for you to type them in the chat, but the lesson for us becomes, the longer we wait to address conflict or disagreement, the more likely it is that it will recur and affect the health of the relationship in general.

So let's go to the next slide and say, "Whatever the problem, effective teams identify, raise and resolve it.

" They're talking about it, it's a disagreement maybe, but it doesn't devolve into conflict.

"If it's keeping them from reaching their goal, effective teams try and do something about it, they don't ignore it and hope it goes away.

" And if leaders ignore conflict, Beth and I have both had that experience of not wanting to magnify a conflict, so maybe hoping that it might go away on its own.

If leaders avoid conflict, the message you send is that conflict is unmanageable and can cause people to just say, "Well, there's nothing we can do about it.

"

- Yeah, and I was thinking, like, back to a situation that I was in where I was an assistant principal and my principal had done something in a meeting that I wasn't comfortable with and I was really hesitant.

I didn't feel like I had a strong relationship yet, I didn't know her that well, and I was really hesitant to go and speak to her about what had bothered me.

But when I finally did, like, right, it took a little bit of time, but I finally did and she was like, "Wow, I'm so glad that you came to me, I didn't realize that I had done that.

" Like, she had given sort of like a physical cue in the meeting that I shouldn't chime in and she's like, "Wow, I didn't realize that I was doing this," what I interpreted it as.

And so it was so important that I expressed that conflict, right? Like, said, "I just wanna let you know when you did this, this is how it made me feel.

" And I was so glad ultimately that I had been able to say that because it had never been her intention, there was miscommunication on our part, and if I had let it go on longer, our

relationship could have really devolved into something that was not productive, not just for us, but for our whole work environment.

And so by having addressed it, we were able to move on and be a stronger team together, a stronger admin team together.

So you put yourself out there sometimes when you are trying to talk about something where there's conflict or where there's disagreement and where there's conflict in particular, but again, when we don't address it, it could have led to things being much more challenging than even that difficult conversation was, which leads us into talking about a concept called "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team."

"So "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team," I'm like looking around 'cause I know I have the book here somewhere, but I don't know where I put it.

The "Five Dysfunctions of a Team" is actually a book by Patrick Lencioni.

And in it he talks about, it's really, it's a wonderful book, it's a very easy read, it's told sort of as a fable.

And in the book he talks about these five components as dysfunctions of a team.

They're created in a pyramid because the base of the pyramid, without the base, right, you're never gonna make it to the top.

And so this is done as a negative, right? Like the dysfunctions of a team are the absence of trust at the bottom level, and then when you have an absence of trust, it is going to likely lead to a fear of conflict.

Now those are the two things that we're gonna be focusing on today, but if you think back to the Knoster Model and some of the other things that we're discussing, when you have a fear of conflict, it's gonna show a lack of commitment ultimately, right? Because if you're not willing to get into a discussion that might be a difficult discussion and express differing opinions and disagreements, how committed are you really to the outcomes? And when there's that lack of commitment, it's gonna lead to an avoidance of accountability and ultimately in attention to results.

And so all of these things compound one another.

So we're gonna dig a little bit more deeply into the bottom two layers of this pyramid, that absence of trust and fear of conflict.

Right, trust is that foundation.

So this is a quote from the book, "Great teams do not hold back from one another.

They admit their mistakes, their weaknesses and their concerns without fear of reprisal.

"And so what I'm gonna lay out next is, so trust in teams is being able to be comfortable being vulnerable with each other, which is really hard, but teams without trust have some of these different behaviors, have some of these outcomes.

So feel free to like raise your hand digitally or put it in the chat or just raise your hand with, you know, like where nobody can see it.

It's okay too if you've ever engaged in any of these behaviors, right? Where you conceal weaknesses and hide mistakes and you hesitate to ask for help, you fail to provide constructive feedback to somebody else, right? Because there isn't trust there.

You jump to conclusions without trust, you may hold grudges, definitely, without trust, and you dread meetings and spending time together without trust.

So Lorna put in, "As a Mandt instructor, I love seeing this even for adults."

" And I have no idea what Mandt is, so now I'm gonna have to make a note and make sure that I look that up after this, Lorna, 'cause I don't know what that is so I'm gonna have to learn from that.

So these are all behaviors that we may engage in when we are on a team where there is not a basis of trust as the foundation.

And so, what does trust actually look like? It looks like admitting that you don't know something, and that can be hard to do, but actually it's really freeing to say, "You know what, can we stop? I'm not sure I know what you're talking about right now.

" Or, "Can you just.

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"

- And you just modeled it.

- Right, exactly, exactly right.

I don't know what Mandt is, now I'm gonna have to like look that up.

It means taking responsibility for a mistake or a misstep and saying, "You know what, yeah, that was me.

I'm sorry.

" It means asking for help and accepting input and guidance from other team members.

And when you are asking for input and guidance, you're asking for feedback, if your teammate is asking for feedback, you have to take some risks in offering feedback.

But that means that you trust each other and you trust somebody's willingness to listen to your feedback.

It means appreciating others' skillsets and experiences.

We don't all have the same skills, we don't all have the same experiences, and offering and accepting apologies without hesitation.

Nothing is worse, right, and more detrimental than when somebody offers an apology with sincerity, but you're not able to take it.

And then looking forward to working together as a group rather than in a silo.

It is so, so easy to be siloed in education rather than working together as a group, and yet that can be one of the biggest detriments to developing trust is when we are so siloed and we don't get to know each other.

So let's talk about some simple things that can be done in order to build trust on teams.

Now there's a lot of different, you know, you can look up, you know, exercises and activities to build trust, and there's lots of them out there.

So these are just a couple of different ideas that I'm gonna talk about on this side and the next slide.

So the first one is called a personal histories exercise.

This is a pretty low risk exercise, it can take as little as like 30 minutes depending on how big of a team that you're on.

And it's where you go around the team and answer non-intrusive questions, things like, you know, How many siblings do you have? What's your hometown? Is there something, you know, a unique challenge of your childhood? Which sometimes I feel like that can be a little bit more intrusive depending on how somebody interprets it that, but things like, what's your favorite hobby or what's your first job? Or what was your worst job? Because we can often bond over these things, "Oh my gosh, you have four siblings, I have four siblings also.

" Or, "Oh my gosh, you have four siblings? Wow, what was that like? I only had one or I was an only child.

" So Lorna asked in the chat, "What do you do about staff who express they think things like these are a waste of time.

" So I think there's a big difference between icebreakers and team building, right? And I get it, there are people who really hate icebreakers and don't wanna get to know the person over there, but if you're actually a part of a team, you need to find things that you have in common, you need to know a little bit more about someone in order to work collaboratively with them. So, you know, I think some of it's part of that building that trust, but you know, asking them, you know, "I know, I know.

Can you give me just 30 minutes? Like, we don't have to do this every time.

" And again, you don't have to do this at every single meeting that you're in, but starting off with some of those types of activities and explaining, it's because we can build a better team when we know a little bit more about each other, and that's the tack that I would take.

I happen to know.

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- You know what, I sit on a team where all our meetings are virtual because we're all over the country, and one of the things we've done to institutionalize that, but also to help address this issue of getting to know each other, is we agreed that instead of the meeting starting at 12:30, it would start at 12:15, and the first 15 minutes are just for conversations like this, may be be formal or they may be, you know, how's your daughter doing on her sports activity? Could be anything, but to acknowledge that that is important.

And I have to admit that I was a late comer to that idea because I just wanted to, you know, get to work, we had so much to do so.

But I really have come to value the trust building aspects.

- And yeah, I wanna address too, somebody said like, "I'm an introvert, right?" It doesn't always have to be out loud kind of conversations, I mean, these are things that can happen if there are people who find it challenging to have those kinds of conversations orally, right? There's different ways you can do that.

So whether it's, you know, filling out, you know, adding to forms around the room, like somebody, you know, even on breaks, like, go ahead and fill this out on your room and then a sharing out at the end.

I think there's different ways that you can do this where people can see it not as a time waster, but as a team builder.

A little bit more of a risk exercise is this one.

And so I think this comes after you know people a little bit, right, after you've worked together for a while, but it's a team effectiveness exercise where each person on the team identifies the single most important contribution that each of their peers make to the team.

Now, depending on the size of the team, it might be that you're doing it for everyone on your team, or it might be that maybe you're doing it for the person that you're sitting next to or, you know, the person that's on your left and so you're building it that way.

But once people have had, everybody in the team has heard something that's an important contribution, they've heard from someone else an important contribution that they make to that team is, then they respond with something that they wanna improve upon and change.

So you've gotten to hear, right, good things, you've gotten pats on the back that are real and they're meaningful because it's about what's a contribution to the team, but then you're also sharing because it's a way of asking for feedback, things that you wanna improve upon or change.

Now it's not asking for feedback in that moment, but it's letting someone know, "Hey, this is an area that I wanna work on.

" And so now your team members know that and can support you in working on something that you want to change or build upon.

So let's talk a little bit, we're moving up the pyramid here about engaging in conflict.

So teams that fear conflict.

And we've talked about conflict is hard and it's messy and it's not pretty, right? But conflict is something that we actually have to engage in in order to make progress.

Conflict is unavoidable, but teams that fear conflict, they have boring meetings, they have environments where back channel politics thrive, right? Where people are saying things behind each other's back and teaming up against, you know, to create something different.

And with that, there's creation of informal groups and underground networks.

They ignore controversial topics that are actually critical to the team's success, and they fail to assess the perspective of all team members.

And so when we have these things that are happening, we're going to have that inability to engage in conflict and to manage conflict.

So what does engaging in conflict actually look like? It means that you have, excuse me, lively meetings where disagreements are explored and that it means extracting and examining the ideas of all the team members and finding ways to do that in a manner that is not putting somebody on the spot, but is letting them know that their voice is really important.

It means solving real problems quickly, putting critical topics on the table for discussion, and admitting that differing ideas actually enrich the conversation, that you are welcoming those opportunities to engage in disagreement and to examine conflict.

And so a couple of strategies for overcoming a fear of conflict on a team.

So you can take on a role called the minor of conflict.

Now this could be the team leader or it could be like a rotating role on the team whose role is to bring disagreements into the light, right? And so for the duration of a discussion or for a meeting, the minor is objective, right? And they're facilitating discussion.

So they might be at that moment not contributing to the discussion in other ways, but they'd be the person who might turn to someone who's not contributing and saying, "You seem to be hesitant, would you please share your concern?" Maybe they're looking for that body language, "I sense you may not agree, do you have a different thought?" So it's their role to sort of help everybody be able to express differing ideas, differing opinions, and engage in conflict constructively and in a healthy manner.

Another strategy is called accept, legitimize, deal with or defer.

Now sometimes everybody's sort of like on the same path, except for there might be one person who is in conflict with the majority, and instead of just brushing past that person, you wanna be able to respond neutrally and ask them what's going on, right? So asking them, you know, "Tell me, you don't seem to agree" or, "I understand that you're not agreeing with this, you know, let's talk about it.

" Having them say what their concern is and then legitimize that concern, right? So, you know, "You're convinced we're not getting anywhere, that's okay, you might be right," and "Would you be willing to hang on for 10 more minutes and see what happens, right?" So we're legitimizing that concern and still having a means to move forward.

You know, you might say to somebody, "The issue you raised is important, but it's not on our agenda right now because it's critical to get through to our agenda, I'd like to put this on our issues list and we can discuss it at our next meeting.

Is that acceptable to you?"

So that's a means of deferring it, but still being able to move forward.

So whether you're dealing with it at that moment, like, "Hang on for 10 minutes and let's see what happens and keep discussing it," or, "We don't have time for this today, but your thoughts are really important.

Can we put this on our list for the next meeting?"

So just another way that you can engage in conflict and without things falling apart from that.

- In order to do that, one of the things that we have to be able to do well and particularly in the teams that we work in, is to develop a shared pool of meaning, to develop a concept of what we are about as a team, not the meaning of the actual topic at hand, but the understanding of how we work as a team and what our high stakes and sensitive controversial opinions are, what our feelings are about things, and understanding each other and how we share that information.

One of the best ways I know to understand that is to think about the dynamics of group decision making.

I think when we're working on a team, whether it be a team about what's, you know, the transition placement for a adult with autism who's moving out of the school setting or whether it's a team deciding how we're gonna remodel our school building or anything like that, what we tend to think when we're working with a team that needs to make a decision is that it's a pretty linear process.

And Kaner's "Facilitators' Guide to Decision Making" has been a wonderful tool to help me understand that this picture you're seeing on the screen right now is not how teams work together and how groups make good decisions.

So here's what is more likely to be true, that we get a new topic, "Let's talk about, you know, remodeling the school building to accommodate more technology in all of our classrooms, accommodate one-to-one technology.

" In that situation, that's our new topic, how we gonna remodel in order to accommodate technology, and what we tend to see is that as we start the conversation, we're moving along at a kind of linear straight line kind of place.

But then you'll see that as more questions arrive, as more issues arrive, as we get more differences of opinion, that movement tends to spread out, it actually gets more diverse over time if we're doing a good job of group decision making.

What we see is that we start out with a new topic, with divergent thinking, we come up with all the ideas that we could possibly come up with, and then at some point we say, "Okay, we've got enough information here.

" And I think, Beth, if you click again, you'll see that middle, yeah, that middle section is where we're still on topic, we're still talking about whatever it is we need to make a decision about, but the ideas and the opinions about what should be done have gotten widely divergent.

It's at that point where with good leadership and good team process, we begin to narrow those things down.

So we start to think about, "Well, what are the ideas that would work? And what are the ideas that maybe we should save for another time?"

So that's good group process.

But there's another thing that Kaner talks about that I really like, which we can see here, which is, when we start talking about a new concept, like how to remodel the school building for technology application, or what placement should Nathan have after he leaves the school setting, we start with a more narrow diversity of ideas.

We start in that pointy part of the triangle, and our ideas tend to cluster together.

As we move forward, what we start to see is that familiar opinions aren't giving us the solutions that we want.

So that's when we start to break out, we start to widen our ideas, that's when somebody in the meeting says, "Oh my gosh, that never even occurred to me to think about, you know, turning the cafeteria into a computer center.

" I'm making things up now, so that's probably a bad idea, but "It never occurred to me to do that off the wall, out of the box thinking that we might wanna do.

" But that's when you actually get good decision making because you have a lot of differing opinions, that triangle gets wider and wider, and then, as we said before, we have to pull it back together.

So when we begin to pull it back together, there's a extra slide here, I think, go to the next slide, yeah, that's where I wanna be.

We'll have to cut that one out, it doesn't mean anything.

So when we get to that point where we have to pull things back in and start to come up with a decision point, what we tend to run into, and this is why we're talking about this today, is a struggle in the service of integration.

And Kaner talks about this struggle as an important part of a group decision making model because we've got lots and lots of opinions, if we've done a good job, we've got lots and lots of

participation and feedback, but then we hit a point where we struggle in order to integrate our ideas and our thoughts and come up with a really good solution.

And it is at this place where some groups shut down because of the disagreement and the possible conflict that they run into, all those things that we talked about earlier about lack of communication, lack of trust, tend to happen in this center part in the struggle for integration of ideas.

And then if we can get through that part, we can come to a shared decision making.

So whatever the decision making method you're using, whatever system you use and whatever the topic is, the more we understand the shared pool of meaning, the more we all understand our choices and what our team members are all aimed at, the more likely we are to come up with a good decision and avoid conflict and disagreement.

So the time you spend upfront establishing that shared pool of meaning allows for a much more unified and committed action when you actually get to the decision point.

- So let's talk about some strategies that you can use to have an effective discussion, right?

When we're in that messy part in the middle, that struggle in the middle, you know, we wanna, you know, what are some ways that we can get so that we can narrow down to that decision? So I'm just gonna really briefly go over, Gayl and I have done this like as a three hour, now we're doing it as an hour and a half, we're gonna be doing it as a two hour, so we're trying to figure out our timing.

So we appreciate you all for hanging in with us right now as we try to figure out like what can we cut, what can we keep?

But there's some attributes to having effective discussions, right?

To resolve differences.

One is to be collaborative, two is to be strategic.

Like, what's the best pathway or approach for this conversation in order to get where we need to go?

One is to be receptive and flexible, right?

That your openness to alternative ideas and to adjust based on new information, right?

When we're in that middle where we've got all of these divergent ideas, but then ultimately that we're gonna have a shared responsibility, and that we hold ourselves and each other accountable for success.

And another way of looking at it is just with this graphic here where that shared responsibility for success kind of comes into the middle and everything is gonna connect into it.

But being collaborative, strategic and receptive and flexible are attributes that we wanna be able to have and cultivate.

And so some ways that we can really work on collaboration is using two particular processes, one is inquiry and the other is advocacy.

So let's just define those and talk a little bit about what they might look like.

So inquiry is a process for understanding someone else's point of view, and advocacy is a process for influencing someone's thinking and behavior by talking about your opinions and suggestions, right?

So inquiry and advocacy.

Now there's a continuance, it's not all or nothing, right?

We looked at the continuum, with the Mouton Scale before.

This is also a continuum.

This might be something like, especially if you are engaged in any coaching activities that you find yourself, you know, being able to apply to that as well, right? So right here, if we've got inquiry from top to bottom and then we have advocacy from left to right.

And so if you are using lots of inquiry, you're asking lots of questions, but you're not necessarily advocating, you might be more facilitating somebody else's ideas, you're not necessarily offering solutions, but you are allowing somebody to discover possible answers, right?

Based on the questions that you're asking.

If you are low inquiry and low advocacy, you are just asking reflective questions, repeating back to somebody what they're saying, right? You're not asking lots more information and you're not pushing an agenda either.

When you are guiding, right, you're asking lots of questions, but you're also advocating for solutions.

And then when you're directive, you're not asking others questions, you are instead informing or offering your thoughts on why something should be, and so that's a more directive way of doing it.

These can all be types of collaborative conversations, one isn't necessarily better than the other, it depends on the situation that you're in.

But we have like about eight minutes left and I wanna make sure that we have some time to answer some questions from folks.

But let's just talk a little bit about some possible inquiry techniques, some different ways that we can engage in inquiry.

And so these are actually specific techniques that you can practice and reflect on.

So bracketing, it's a way of centering someone else's voice, right? It's really opening up your mind so that you can listen free from your own filters, right? And I personally find this one of the most difficult things to do.

So to ask more questions, like, "Can you tell me more? I'd like to know more about that.

What did you mean by that, right?" So I'm not putting my own thoughts in, it is for me to understand someone else.

Now paraphrasing, I think it really helps validate and confirms to somebody else that you're listening, and it helps you confirm that you've heard what you've heard, right? So it's saying things like, "Can I put this in my own words? Am I hearing you say this? Let me restate what you are saying.

" So it's making sure that you are understanding what someone's saying and it's validating what they're saying.

So another couple of ways that you can engage in inquiry are by checking perceptions, right? Confirming or clarifying something that you believe your partner might be thinking or feeling.

And so a good way to, a statement for that might be, "I'd like to check something with you.

I'm wondering if you're concerned.

" So let's say the example might be that somebody is the transportation group, the bus driver is concerned that a student's communication device on the bus, it's not in there safely, that somebody might get hurt or the communication device might get hurt.

And so when they've expressed that with you, a way to check that, "I'm wondering if you're concerned that there's not a safe way to provide access to communication on the bus.

" Asking probing questions helps gain more information and can deepen your understanding of the things at hand.

Like, "Can you tell me more about, help me to understand.

" So let's do one, I think what we'll do, Gayl, if it's okay with you, and Jim, if it's okay with you, we'll go through this inquiry technique case study, but we will not have time for the advocacy case study.

So let's go ahead, and here's an example that you might have found yourself to be in.

I'm sorry, Gayl, I'm stepping on your description here.

- That's okay.

This is an experience I think many, many of us have had in our work, both with assistive technology and students with disability.

So here's a story, and what we want you to do is to think about how you might use some of the inquiry techniques that Beth has talked about in order to solve this situation, or at least to address it directly because we know we need to address it directly.

So here's the story, in your every other week visit to a self-contained classroom, the teacher tells you that one of the other service providers who sees the child has made a new recommendation, and that new recommendation directly affects the program that you've set up for the child, and you have deep concerns about it.

You feel you need to talk with your coworker about the new approach but when you try to do that, she insists that the change is essential to the child's progress and safety and wellbeing.

So I certainly have had this experience, and the question here becomes not, what's the answer, but how will you address the communication with this service provider with whom you have a disagreement? Or at this point, we don't know if there's a right or wrong or who's right or wrong, but what are some of the things that you might say in this situation in order to help, find out what's really going on.

Beth, do you have a suggestion?

- Yeah, so like in this one, right? If we're talking about inquiry here, right? So we are wanting to find out more information and maybe ask some guiding questions.

So I might go and say as one way to bracket, right? I find that really hard for me to like open myself is, "Could you tell me exactly, you know, what you are thinking about this, right?" Just inviting them instead of me trying to cut them off and say, "I don't think this is gonna work.

" "Tell me more about this, I'd like to understand more about this.

" So that might be something that I have.

Nope, thank you, Patty, I was just looking at what Patty had.

So that might be some way that I bracket this is just by asking for more information and being there to listen.

If that individual is telling me, you know, a way that I might paraphrase might be, "I wanna make sure I'm hearing you correctly.

Am I hearing what you're saying is that if we don't do this, this child is not going to make progress? That in order for the child to make progress, we need to implement this recommendation?" So that I can hear what that person's gonna say to clarify, am I actually hearing this correctly? Because our own perceptions are gonna come in and influence this. So again, being able to do that.

And I know some people are having to move on 'cause we're at the end of our time.

So we're gonna leave you with thinking about a situation like this, and some ways that you can use inquiry in order to help understand somebody else's reasons for things.

We're gonna skip our advocacy, but you guys have the slides.

We know that we just dipped our toes in the water with this and that there's so much more to team decision making and difficult conversations and the idea of CPR conversations, content, process and relationships.

We're gonna leave you with a little bit of recommended reading.

I can't recommend more highly, "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" by Patrick Lencioni.

Again, it's an easy read, goes well with the picture before of a beach read.

I actually, I know, I read professional development books on the beach.

And then, Gayl?

- Well, and "Crucial Conversations" for me is the book that made the huge difference in my approach to having those one-to-one conversations with people, using some of the inquiry and advocating methods that Beth's talking about, and also helped me learn to address important conversations directly rather than trying to be too accommodating.

- So we know we haven't left much time at all for questions, but if you guys have questions, you're more than welcome to post them in the chat.

Jim, I don't know if anybody posted any questions in the Q and A?

- [Jim] I have not seen any come in.

- So I think we had a very interactive session where people were asking questions all along the way.

Leaves a lot of room for more questions probably in your head that you're gonna have to come up with.

But hopefully, maybe AbleNet will have us back, Gayl, where we can dig a little bit deeper into some of these ideas around conflict resolution.

- Well, and I wanna encourage you as you go away, to think about first of all, what is your style under stress? And then secondly, what are the kinds of things that you can do to directly address dysfunctions of a team and the things in your situation before they get out of control and get out of hand.

So it was a pleasure to be with you today, thank you all for coming.

- Thank you.

- [Jim] All right, thank you both, Beth and Gayl for your terrific presentation.

For those of you still with us, you should receive an email tomorrow with a link to access the certificate of attendance.

If you don't receive that, please feel free to reach out to customer service.

You should also have my email address, [jarocco@ablenetinc.com](mailto:jarocco@ablenetinc.com), and then we can get that straightened out for you.

Thank you everyone.

- Bye everyone.