



Facilitation

The art of leading people through processes toward agreed-upon objectives in a manner that encourages

Participation

Ownership and

Creativity

for all involved

David Sibbet, *Principles of Facilitation*

Facilitation is a term used for a set of principles, skills and practices aimed at helping groups and teams improve their work together.

A **facilitator** is a person trained in facilitation skills and processes who intervenes in the group to increase the group's effectiveness by how it identifies, discusses, and solves problems, and makes decisions. A facilitator is typically more concerned with the process or "how" of the group's work. The process includes such things as the methods used by the group, how relations are maintained, the tools being used, the rules or norms set by the group, the group dynamics, and the climate within the group.

Ingrid Bens, *Facilitating with Ease*

When might a neutral, independent facilitator be helpful?

When discussion has become intense; emotions are high; the team seems stuck; or there are strongly held positions that lead to disagreement.

What training do independent facilitators have?

Facilitators obtain training from a variety of sources including Education Service Centers, Universities, and Dispute Resolution Centers. Training topics usually include: meeting management; communication skills; identifying problems based on interests; decision-making; and consensus building. Other training might cover: trust building; team building; group dynamics; conflict resolution and prevention; mediation and negotiation.

Is facilitation the same as mediation or negotiation?

There may be some similarities, but facilitation is not the same as mediation or negotiation.

Where do schools and parents locate independent facilitators?

Each of the twenty Education Service Centers in the Texas train individuals in facilitation and maintain a list of available trained facilitators. Region 13's list is posted in the FIEP LiveBinder at <http://bit.ly/iepfacilitation>.

How do you arrange for a neutral facilitator?

1. Parent and school agree a neutral facilitator might be helpful.
2. School contacts the Education Service Center in their area to identify possible facilitators.
3. School contracts with facilitator; provides contact information for school team and parent.
4. Facilitator talks (by phone or in person) with school and parent regarding logistics, role, neutrality, possible tools and techniques that might be used to assist in communication and problem solving, etc.
5. After the facilitated meeting, all parties complete the TEA FIEP survey available at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FIEP>.