What should I think about approaching negotiations?

Less successful negotiators think that:

- If I ignore it, it may go away.
- Issues left alone tend to self-repair.
- There's just one right way this should turn out.
- If the other side doesn't know what we think or want, then we're ahead.
- If we can satisfy our demands, we'll get a good outcome.
- A little intimidation is OK.
- Keeping people off-balance is a good strategy.
- If we keep hitting their weak spot, we'll get the best gain.
- Winning is the only thing.
- Negotiation is like a hard sell.

More successful negotiators think that:

- The best outcome meets most of both side's needs.
- The negotiation is better informed if we can quickly understand each other's needs and reasoning.
- If we can keep each other focused, unthreatened and not defensive during the negotiation, we'll have a better process and outcome.
- A good relationship is crucial to effective negotiations and the most necessary when you least feel like maintaining it.
- Negotiation is chiefly about listening and trying to understand people.
- Negotiations occur when people openly inform and influence each other, motivating insight and commitment.

What are the opportunities in negotiation?

- Parties determine the outcome themselves
- The outcome yield for both parties can be maximized
- Parties can influence each other's thinking in a way that leads to productive change.
- People may establish a relationship, which is a strong foundation for this and subsequent negotiations.
- Parties can evaluate not just their separate positions, but the full terrain of interests and concerns, in order to explore optimal solutions

Prepared by Art Stewart, VADOE, Special Education Mediation Service