Consensus, Not "Majority Vote" at Team Meetings
(Source: LRP Team Trainer, August 2015)

"All those in favor of Joey receiving 45 minutes of speech/language therapy per week raise your hand!" Despite the fact that such a statement at a Team meeting would elicit laughter and that IDEA regulations specify that decisions made on a "majority vote" are inappropriate, some parents (or others not familiar with the IEP Team process) may consider "majority vote" as the most democratic process for making decisions at a Team meeting.

Below are a few ideas that may encourage consensus-building at Team meetings:

✓ *Air concerns at the beginning of the meeting* ... in many cases, the most important thing to be discussed tends to be near the end of the agenda (thus delaying conflict and increasing anxiety)

✓ *Team meetings that work well are "decision-making" meetings, not meetings where information is shared for the first time* ... parents and other Team members that arrive at the meeting well informed may assist with the decision-making process.

✓ *(for staff) "no surprises"* ... there should be no surprise comments by staff members at the Team meeting ... soliciting opinions of the staff prior to the Team meeting is allowable and a good practice.

✓ *Explain consensus* ... consensus means that everyone can support the team's proposal at some level ... A Team can reach consensus even when some members have some reservations about certain portions of the proposal.

✓ *Phrase the proposal* ... "Here is our recommendation ..." is consensus–building language. This will allow Team members to disagree with parts of the proposal without feeling forced to agree or disagree with all of it.

✓ *Team members should know that disagreement will require that they provide a suggested alternative* ... Simply dissenting stalls the Team process and does nothing to encourage consensus.

✓ *When there is a struggle for "consensus," the Team facilitator might suggest a limited trial for the proposal* ... Certainly, such a decision should be made infrequently.