

## What is My Role as a Parent/Guardian?

Parents are valued members of children's educational teams. You are an expert on your child. You know your child's history, strengths and needs. You are the constant member of your child's educational team. Some of the roles you play:

**Parent as Advocate:** You know your child best and are an important member of your child's educational team. Ask who should be your main point of contact at the school, and ask how to contribute constructively to support your child at school. Use what you know about your child and what you learn about services and options to make the best possible recommendations and decisions. As a parent, you see your child in many different situations - at home, on the playground, around the neighborhood and in many other settings. You know how your child acts in new situations, reacts to adults and other children, and makes needs and wants known. All of this information is relevant and will help other team members learn about your child's strengths and needs.

**Parent as Teacher:** You are a constant teacher for your child and know your child's educational history. You can share your experience and ideas with school staff and discuss what your child does at home and what works for you and your child. You can also reinforce lessons taught at school by helping your child practice skills when you are at home and elsewhere. By encouraging good communication, you can help create opportunities to teach/reinforce key lessons across settings, inside and outside of school.

**Parent as Partner:** Identify your child's needs and discuss your expectations, hopes, and dreams with the team. Share your input and advice with the team, be a clear communicator, and solicit and seek the advice of your team when needed. Offer your thoughts about the level of involvement and collaboration you prefer and discuss the best way to partner constructively with school-based team members.

**Parent as Narrator:** Be sure new programs and service providers have up-to-date records. Always request and save copies of all reports and documents about your child, organize the data chronologically in files, notebooks, flash drives or other technology storage systems, and keep track of the services your child receives during his/her lifetime. This information helps determine the services your child will receive at school and may become necessary to access adult services once your child transitions from a school setting to adulthood.

