

# Creating a welcoming, collaborative environment

Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E., Soodak, L., & Shogren, K. (2011). Families, Professionals and Exceptionality. Positive Outcomes through Partnership and Trust.



## Communicate within a team context:

Model shared responsibility for all team members

- Communicate openly and honestly
- Provide clear roles for caregivers on the IEP team:
  - Ask families what role they want to have. Some will prefer to be active participants while others will prefer a more passive role.
  - Value all contributions family members provide.



## Nonverbal Communication

- Physically attend to family members
- Maintain and sustain eye contact
- Use proximity to show that the parent is part of the team
- Listen actively

## Use Positive Interpersonal Communication Skills

### Verbal Communication

- Respond to parent contributions
- Use minimal encouragers - short but encouraging responses (head nods, facial expressions, gestures)
  - Use “verbal following” – restating the main points, emphasizing words, using the language system of the family whenever possible (*the language system is defined as the primary language the student and family use in their home*)
- Paraphrase
  - Use your own words to restate the family members message
  - Maintain a positive point-of-view
- Respond to Affect
  - Ensure that you have an accurate perception of the other person’s feelings
  - Communicate that you understand the other person’s feelings
- Ask effective questions
  - Closed-ended: ask for specific information (keep to a minimum, tend to limit responses)
  - Open-ended: unstructured, tend to facilitate more meaningful conversation

## Solve Problems Collaboratively & Creatively

### Remember cultural competence

Respect the perspective of different cultures

- Honor cultural diversity
- “Translate” westernized approaches to convey intended meanings
- Avoid making assumptions