

Advocacy is: speaking for another person or cause

An Advocate is NOT an Adversary!!

## An Effective Advocate:

- Assumes that everyone at the table cares about the child
- Is optimistic about an agreement being reached
- Leaves “personal baggage” at home
- Understands an advocate’s role – knows the difference between a support person and an advocate
- Clearly understands the expectations of the family
- Makes sure they are willing to advocate for the family’s position
- Has clearly identified the issues.
- Knows that there are NO personal issues
- Understands that there are usually two sides to every story
- Truly believes that there is only one side- the student’s
- Is assertive
- Is a good negotiator
- Knows how to document
- Knows how “the system” works
- Has a good understanding of laws and procedures
- Recognizes the power of the IEP or other individualized plans
- Knows how to get answers to legal or procedure questions
- Knows when they are in “over their head”
- Clearly understands the special education process
- Understands when and how to use which complaint/dispute resolution process: complaint, facilitated IEP, mediation, due process
- Never takes steps without the parents complete understanding and agreement
- Educates the family
- Does not become a “crutch”

**LEAVE THE SITUATION BETTER THAN IT WAS BEFORE THEY BECAME INVOLVED**