

# Understanding the Role of the Teacher

- The role of the teacher is distinct from the role of the parent(s) and family in that the relationship is for the specific and more formal task of learning. This relationship is relatively short term. The parent(s) and family are the child's primary attachment figures and first teachers and hold the history, hopes, and dreams for their child. This relationship is for a lifetime.
- The teacher provides and maintains a learning environment and or materials that support the developmental needs of each child in each of the developmental areas.
- The teacher is attentive and attuned to the strengths, needs, effort, and progress of each child through careful observations and positive, intentional interactions that include ideas for supporting children's thinking and the admiration of children's effort and accomplishments.
- The teacher uses a guidance approach to support children's use of play and curiosity or exploration to master skills and feelings in order to develop a positive sense of self or healthy self-worth.
- The teacher must remain in the "role of the adult" at all times. Becoming a playmate or peer with children can be confusing and frightening. Children are still developing an understanding of real and pretend. (Examples include the adult teasing or laughing at children, chasing children, pretending to be an animal or monster, including herself in hide and seek games, using equipment such as climbers, slides, and swings along with children.) Knowing the adult is present and can keep them safe provides children with a sense of trust.
- Teachers cannot take the place of a child's parents. They cannot make up for things that a child does not have and cannot fix problems in a child's life. The best a teacher can do is focus on developing a relationship with the parent that allows for open communication and provides support.
- Because of the amount of time children spend in the childcare setting, teachers can develop deep feelings of affection and care for the children in their care. Teachers need to remind themselves that regardless of how close they feel to a child or family, they are not a friend, relative, or step-parent.

- Teachers help children learn that expectations at school may be different than those at home. Teachers must refrain from expressing judgment of the rules that exist in children's home.
- Teachers must respect boundaries regarding children's clothing and grooming. Tasks like caring for children's hair are the responsibility of the parent and are not included in the teacher's role.
- Preschool teachers must maintain physical boundaries with children. Showing affection to children with hugs and arm rubs may be appropriate, while kisses and picking children up are signs of affection that should be reserved for parents. Children should be encouraged to sit closely to teachers rather than sitting in teachers' laps.