Moving from a Problem-based to a Strength-based Approach

Some considerations for consultants in moving from a problem based to a strength based framework include:

- Focus energy on the family skills, knowledge and abilities- look for the positive. Work on opportunities for families to test new strategies. "When you read that story to Zachary did you see how he nestled into the couch next to you and his eyes brightened?"
- Encourage parents to take control, choosing activities for their child and suggesting activities for the classroom setting. Avoid “taking over,” creating the tendency for families to defer to your knowledge and lose sight of their own. "What is working at home that you think Zachary's teacher might also benefit from doing for Zachary?"
- Share positive feedback with families, point out successes. "Zachary went to his cubby and got the book you sent in for him today. He brought it to his teacher to read." That was a great idea to share something from home.
- Link parent’s action to desired change. “You getting the pediatrician to make a referral for a language evaluation really helped get to the heart of the problem.”
- Avoid negatively labeling the family (e.g., “dysfunctional,” “hard to reach,” “non-compliant”); labels tend to determine how we view and interact with families and becoming self-fulfilling
- Believe the family can learn, grow and change-keep optimistic about progress and change "We have some work to do together and I believe with your help Zachary can continue to learn new ways of getting his needs met."
- Focus efforts on the present versus past history as the predictor of success.
- Take time to reflect on what it must be like to be this family. Practice empathy versus judgment. “You are going through a lot right now, which must be challenging."