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Best Practices for Middle School Teachers working with

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by

Cristina Garcia Gasca

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

Across the country, classrooms have increased in diversity, including those students who require individualized supports, regardless of the setting. As a result, paraeducators are designated by legislative mandates to assist teachers provide differentiated instruction in the student's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Based on research findings, general education teachers lack training, knowledge, skills, preparation, or become uncertain to direct the work of special education paraeducators (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay & Stahl, 2001; Brenton, 2010; Giangreco et al., 2010; Riggs & Mueller 2001). Paraeducators who are underutilized, misused, or receive limited training may be working without the quality supervision and direction of the teacher, which jeopardizes the effective delivery of services and is inconsistent with federal law mandates (French, 2001). In order to address the growing gap, a training manual was developed to equip teachers with skills to manage collaborative best practices, knowledge, and strategies to guide their role of managing paraeducators for delivering effective educational services. The training manual adds value to special education, general education, and provides teachers fundamental skills to efficiently work with special education paraeducators.

Keywords: Best Practices, Differentiated Instruction, General Education Teachers, Knowledge, Middle School, Paraeducator, Preparation, Specialized Academic Instruction, Special Education, Collaboration, Skills, Training

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Chapter One

Introduction

The history of training and preparing paraprofessionals is lengthy, yet the history of identifying knowledge, skills, training, and preparation needed by teachers to direct the work of paraprofessionals in a general education setting is not as long (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay & Stahl, 2001; French, 2001; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). There exists an educational discrepancy for general education teachers, which involves the support of those who work alongside children with identified and specialized learning needs. This discrepancy in training and education of paraprofessionals may conflict with upholding the mandates of the law regarding the required skill of those supporting students with special needs.

The federal legislation Individual with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEIA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) both guarantee students with disabilities have the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), as determined by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team (IDEIA Reauthorization, 2004; NCLB, 2001). Students identified as eligible to receive special education services are typically now able to access the general education curriculum with their same age peer groups in order to support their academic, social, and emotional well-being. The reauthorization of the law contains significant changes including accountability, flexibility, expanded options, and new teaching approaches (IDEIA, 2004). The data gathered in American schools positively indicates that three out of four children with disabilities spend more than forty percent of the school day in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2009; Cameron, 2014). In addition, for teachers to meet the student instructional demands in Title I schools, the NCLB Act requires highly qualified paraeducators to provide instructional support services under the direct

supervision of a certificated highly qualified teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Two major concerns remain in special education regarding the law that includes teacher quality and paraeducator quality of training. Research indicates that the type, quality, and amount of training delivered to paraeducators continues to fall short of the instructional demand (Cameron, 2014; Rueda & Monzo, 2002; Mason, R.A., Schnitz, A.G., Gerow, S., An, Zhe G., & Wills, H.P., 2019; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Nonetheless, based upon surveyed and analyzed data, the underlying concern continues to be the communication, collaboration and teamwork quality of teacher and paraeducator teams in general education classrooms that are mandated to support students with disabilities.

Changes in the law have placed a renewed emphasis and importance on not only preparing paraeducators to provide special education services, but also to develop the teachers' collaborative and supervisory role of paraprofessionals in the classroom (Wallace et al., 2001). Many local educational agencies (LEAs), school districts, and teacher preparation programs fail to prepare, train, and support teachers in regard to working with special education paraeducators in the classroom. According to research, "knowledge of effective training strategies is critical for teachers who are often tasked with supervising paraeducators" (Mason, R. A., Schnitz, A. G., Gerow, S., An, Zhe G., Wills, H. P., 2019). Teachers already encounter the challenges of designing mandated curriculum that is interesting, relevant, and accessible (Mackey, 2014). Yet, some teachers do not plan for or delegate tasks to special education paraeducators in mainstream classrooms. There is frequently a sense confusion of who is charged with the responsibility of training and supervising paraeducators, however, general education teachers have the credentials and default responsibility in their own classroom to manage and equip the paraeducator (Mason, R. A., 2019). Special Education paraeducators have value and significance, as their role in the

general education classroom is essential to providing individualized services to students with disabilities. Furthermore, federal and state legislation establishes standards that require the training and preparation of paraeducators in order to deliver services (United States Department of Education, 2009). The stated goal of this training is for teachers to equip paraeducators with the education regarding appropriate roles and responsibilities to maximize their potential to provide services to students who require instructional support.

Research establishes that teachers must have adequate preparation, training, support, and time to carry out the critical supervisory functions in order to be effective with special education assistants in the classroom (Karge, B., Pierson, M., & Robinson, S., 2011). This fundamental criteria for a successful classroom setting have been clearly identified in the research over time. Both the research and federal regulations assert that general education teachers must be prepared to understand how to work with students, parents, education specialists, paraeducators, and other professionals in an educational setting.

Purpose of Project

Some general education teachers work with one paraeducator or several paraeducators as students with IEPs are included in general education classes. Many teachers provide supervision that often does not align with effective practices because there has been minimal training and a lack of potential resources provided for the teacher and the paraeducator (Giangreco, M., Suter, J., & Doyle, M. B., 2010). In addition, just as some teachers have not yet been prepared, the situation exists for many paraprofessionals assigned to classrooms (Stockhall, 2014; French, 2001; Carter, E., O'Rourke, L., Sisco, L., & Pelsue, D., 2009). Studies conducted about the professional development provided to both teachers and paraeducators reveal the need for the local education agency, school districts, or site administration to provide teachers and

paraeducators with opportunities to prepare, and receive training in order to enhance their collaboration in the classroom (Mackey, 2014). This problem is of some concern since some paraeducators may be working without direction, which raises critical questions about how teachers are able to ensure the effective delivery of specialized education services in the classroom. Without effective practices, schools may be dealing with litigation and endangering the overall welfare of students with disabilities, which is a foundational concern for any educational agency or school district in this country (French, 2001).

As teachers in California and numerous other states are now required to teach all students and possibly manage one or more paraprofessionals, it is essential that they be trained adequately, that their concerns be elicited and addressed, and that their professional attitudes reflect a belief in and commitment to the success of all students (Santoli, S., Sachs, J., Romney, E., & McClurg, S., 2008). A closer look into many classrooms reveals an imbalance of instruction and discord between teacher and paraeducator regarding the needs of students, which impact the climate and dynamics of a classroom (French, 2001; Devlin, 2008; Rueda et al., 2002). The research data shows that some paraeducators are underutilized or are misused, particularly when the roles and responsibilities are unclear to the teacher (Giangreco et al., 2010; French, 2001; Rueda et al., 2002).

“Paraprofessionals play as ‘connectors’ among and between students, parents, teachers, and education specialist” (Giangreco et al., 2010). Consequently, when the educational team members are unaware or unsure about the role of a paraeducator, the paraeducator can be excluded from the classroom environment, and the guidance and managing role of a teacher is missing. Further, paraeducators frequently serve as a liaison for communication between teacher and education specialist, yet are not being used effectively for this function due to lack of

training, knowledge, or experience. A variety of trainings exist for paraeducators, but few resources exist for general education teachers who manage special education paraeducators.

The purpose of this project is to research best practices and to provide a viable resource for general education teachers to guide the work of paraeducators in their classroom. When developing the resource handbook, the following questions were considered: (1) How can general education teachers manage the work of paraeducators in a middle school setting in order to deliver effective instruction? (2) What are best practices and strategies for general education teacher and paraeducator to employ that are essential to establish effective teamwork? This training and handbook for general education teachers is a resource designed to train and prepare teachers for paraeducator management in order to implement services and instruction to students with mild to moderate disabilities. Research identifies the deficiencies in general education classrooms regarding teacher and paraeducator (Rueda & Monzo, 2002; French, 2001; Stockhall, 2014). Through training, preparation, and collaboration, the classroom team can effectively work together to improve education for all students including students with disabilities.

Significance of Project

Few empirical studies have been conducted to identify the skills, knowledge, and best practices required of teachers to effectively support and supervise paraprofessionals (Wallace et al., 2001). This project handbook aims to promote the advancement of best practices in education for general education teachers to provide paraeducators with the tools and resources necessary to deliver instruction and support students in the classroom. Teachers who strive to maintain paraeducator relationships and to have trained, informed, prepared, and supported paraeducators show an increase in successful student learning outcomes (Devlin, 2008).

Generally, teachers and other professionals receive little to no formal pre-service or in-service training about working with paraeducators. Most professionals work out their supervisory relationship with paraeducators through on-the-job experience (Riggs et al., 2001). The importance of developing systems for preparing and supporting teachers to manage paraprofessionals in these emerging roles are evident in IDEIA and other legislation. Paraeducators enter the profession with training regarding skills, education, knowledge, and experiences as they are assigned to work in general education classrooms with a wide range of students, but teachers are not made aware of this fact (Riggs et al., 2001). Teachers without guidelines or resources in place may not understand the roles, responsibilities, expectations, or how to direct the paraeducator in their classroom. This training and resource will equip teachers to working with paraeducators and to recognize their value. A teacher's role in providing on-the-job training for and supervising the work of paraprofessionals in educational settings has become vital since paraprofessionals tend to rove between classrooms with students and serve in various educational settings.

Definition of Terms

Accommodations. “Services or supports used to enable a student to fully access the general education curriculum and instruction. An accommodation does not change the content or expectation; rather it is an adjustment to instructional methods. Accommodations must be specified in a student's IEP or 504 Plan” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008).

Differentiated Instruction. “Involves using different strategies such as flexible student instructional grouping, learning stations and learning centers, and two educators in the same classroom” (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2016, p. 369).

Disability. “A documented condition that results in restricted capability to perform a function of daily life; a disability is not a handicapping condition unless the individual with a disability must function in a particular activity that is impeded by his or her limitation” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 307).

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). “The guaranteed right of children with disabilities to receive an education that meets their educational and unique needs at no cost to parents” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 307).

General Education. “A standard curriculum adopted by the state or local school district for all children from preschool to high school; the setting where this instruction routinely takes place” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 307).

Inclusion. “The idea or philosophy related to students with disabilities participating and being educated in the general education classroom/program to the extent possible” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 307).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP). “A legal document designed by a team of educators, specialists, and the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) for students eligible as described in IDEIA 2004; has many required sections, specifying many aspects of a disabled child's education” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 308).

Individual with Disabilities Improvement Education Act of 2004 (IDEIA). A law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children (IDEIA, 2004).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). “LRE refers to the concept that children with disabilities should be educated to the maximum extent possible with children who do not have a disability while meeting all their learning needs and physical requirements; the type of setting is

stipulated in a child's IEP; LRE is an individual determination, where what is right for one student is not necessarily right for another" (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 308).

Local Education Agency (LEA). "A school district, board of education, or other public authority under the supervision of a state educational agency having administrative control and direction of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or political subdivision in a state" (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 308).

Mainstream. "The placement of a student with a disability into a general education classroom or any nonacademic setting (such as physical education, lunch, etc.) for any part of the school day" (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 309).

Modifications. "Changes to curriculum demand or assessment criteria such that the curriculum demand or assessment criteria are altered" (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 309).

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). "A United States federal law that aims to increase the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools, as well as provide parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend" (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 309).

Paraeducator. Paraprofessional. Classroom Assistant. Aide. Instructional Aide/Assistant. Special Education Assistant. Teacher Educational Assistant. "A classified school employee who provides instructional and behavioral support in variety of settings including in one or more general education classrooms, under the supervision of a teacher to service students with disabilities" (Edjoin, 2019, p. 1).

Special Education. "Specialized instruction specifically designed to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability, including classroom instructions, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions" (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 310).

Supplementary aides and services. “Supports that are provided in the classroom, extracurricular, and nonacademic settings to allow a student with a disability to be educated with his nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate; when possible these supports should be scientifically based” (Weinfeld & Davis, 2008, p. 310).

Conclusion

Both the teacher and paraeducator hold a significant place in the education of and instructional delivery to students with disabilities and all students. They both assist students in maintaining and generalizing learned skills, organize the classroom environment for seamless teaching, and deliver valuable instructional strategies (Stockhall, 2014). Each have important roles and responsibilities in the classroom, therefore mutual expectations, collaboration, teamwork, and planning are essential. Equipping teachers with a guiding resource and training may empower them for more effective management of the classroom. Strengthening the teacher and paraeducator relationship is significant and valuable step toward establishing a favorable, healthy and safe educational classroom environment--one that invites positive student learning.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

“The work of education is a lifelong commitment to strengthen and build on teachers’ and paraeducators’ effectiveness in the classroom” (Stockall, 2014). Inclusion in the United States has changed the dynamics of general education classrooms by ensuring that teachers work closely with paraeducators in order to provide educational services to students with disabilities and same-aged peers. The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) and passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), which requires states to address in-service and pre-service preparation and training of all educational personnel which includes teachers and paraeducators. Research has established that the need for specific additional preparation and training to enable general educators to effectively perform an expanded supervisory role of paraeducators is essential to paraeducators efficacy (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay & Stahl, 2001). The availability, presence, and quality training provided to general education teachers and paraeducators are pivotal to ensure that individual students receive differentiated instruction to meet their diverse needs (Nevin, Villa & Thousand, 2009). These educators rely on collaboration and communication skills to be effective in the classroom. The need for training of the best practices to effectively work as a team is essential for any general educator’s job function.

Legislative mandates regarding paraeducators in the classroom

The landscape of special education is built upon federal law. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) “establishes the inclusion of children with disabilities into regular classroom environments and as a result, the need for and use of paraprofessionals has

increased” (IDEIA, 2004). The current legislative in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) mandates that paraeducators must have the required background, qualifications, and meet employment standards. High standards for paraeducators ensure their ability to assist in instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics by passing state or district assessments to meet the diverse needs of students who qualify for special education services (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009). Federal law also requires that paraeducators receive appropriate training and supervision by certificated professionals (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Paraeducators need consistent support from credentialed professionals who can enhance and complement their skills in the classrooms. In order to comply with the law and student’s right to a free and appropriate public education, credentialed teachers are the primary service providers, and paraeducators are designated to assist with planning and delivery of instruction. A paraeducator serves as a key member for many students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Douglas, Chapin, & Nolan, 2016; Wallace et al., 2001).

“Paraeducators have value in the classrooms” (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2008, p. 6). A paraeducator is defined as classified school employee who provides instructional and behavioral support in a variety of settings to students with disabilities. A school district in North County, San Diego describes the job description in Specialized Academic Instruction; “paraeducators assist one or more general education classroom teacher by reinforcing various academic areas according to the teacher’s plan” (Edjoin, 2019, p. 1). In compliance with state and federal law, typical job descriptions in these handbooks include major headings that define the function of a paraeducator, which is beneficial for general education teachers to read and refer to at any point in time. These headings include: (a) Definition, (b) Typical Duties, (c) Bilingual, (d)

Distinguishing Characteristics, (e) Employment Standards, (f) Essential Physical Activities and Work Environment, (g) Required Background, (h) Qualifications (Edjoin, 2019). Gathering accurate and reliable data is one common responsibility expected of a paraeducator, which is essential for guiding decision-making and informing instruction in general education classrooms (Mason et al., 2014). Riggs & Mueller's (2001) literature indicated the importance of training entry-level and veteran paraeducators as a critical element in the effective employment and retention of paraeducators. Research shows that there are challenges in the general education classes where paraeducators are responsible for providing instruction (Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001).

“The presence of paraeducators makes it possible for *all* students' instruction to be differentiated,” however, there are current challenges (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2008, p. 6). Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle's (2012) research identified factors, issues, and concerns with paraeducators lack proper training, supervision, and clarity in roles. Paraeducators report insufficient preparation prior to entering general education classrooms and reliance on the supervising teacher is necessary for instruction and support (Riggs & Muller, 2001; Wallace et al., 2001). Paraeducators are frequently given responsibilities for which they have not received adequate training. “Paraprofessionals generally desire more interaction, training, and planning time with their collaborating teachers to increase their competence and assume important responsibilities” (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009, p.355; Wallace et al., 2001).

A study conducted by William Brenton (2010) queried paraeducators and educators working in K-12 public schools in the state of Maine. The instrument developed for this study consisted of a questionnaire with four major parts, and portions of the questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert-type scale. The returned surveys were coded, tabulated and scored; the mean scores

were computed using *ANOVA* to test differences. This research revealed that 39.5% of respondents had direct interaction with educational specialists on less than a weekly basis, and 15.9% reported that they never had received guided consultation on instruction, which lead researchers to conclude that many paraeducators are “on their own” in general education classrooms to perform instructional duties (Brenton, 2010). Findings by Chopra, Sandoval-Lucero, & French (2011) support the premise further in that they affirmed that paraeducators were only effective when the supervising teacher clearly defined their roles and provided them with appropriate direction and guidance.

Perceptions & Attitudes of General Education Teachers

Studies reveal the ways in which teachers describe positive perceptions and areas of concern in the field of special education. In any academic year, general education teachers may find themselves managing and supervising one or more paraprofessionals in their classrooms. Paraprofessionals represent a growing and important segment of an educational team to provide support for students in inclusive classrooms (Devlin, 2008; Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2008; Douglas et al., 2016). The presence or absence of positive beliefs are evidenced in some teachers' areas of concern in various studies (Santoli, Sachs, Romney, & McClurg, 2008; Cipriano, Barnes, Bertoli, Flynn, & Rivers, 2016).

The fact that many school site cultures do not support paraeducators is not new. Research indicates that “school cultures are not structured to support collaboration between teachers and paraeducators, and that a hierarchical structure of social relations exists that influences how teachers and paraeducators relate to each other” (Rueda, & Monzo, 2002, p. 2). In this study, teachers perceived that the role of paraeducators was to simply supervise activities in which he or she participated, rather than focusing on other, more relevant academic or instructional

information. The same teachers tended to use all paraeducators in similar ways, regardless of their experiences, skills, or future career goals (Rueda, & Monzo, 2002). A critical finding in this study was that teachers did not recognize that paraeducators possess knowledge, skills, and perceptions. Of further importance was that paraeducators shared knowledge of the students' culture and community (Rueda, & Monzo, 2002).

Another study points to teachers' negative feelings in response to having additional staff members present in the room, including feeling as though they were being watched and judged by paraeducators (Cipriano et al., 2016). These perceived constraints revealed a teacher's attitude of the subsequent need to reassert his or her position of authority (Rueda, & Monzo, 2002). In contrast to the findings in this study, another study highlights how teachers perceive a positive connection and in turn, stress the importance of treating the paraeducator as an equal (Douglas et al, 2016). There are many benefits from learning information about the paraprofessional's skills, strengths, experiences and other qualifications essential for tapping into students' prior knowledge and interests (Karge et. al., 2011; Rueda, & Monzo, 2002). There is a connection in the literature which describes the fact that teachers play no formal role in the hiring, assigning, and releasing information for paraeducators, which identifies the absence of the valuable information regarding the paraeducator (Karge, Pierson, & Robinson, 2011; Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2008; Rueda & Monzo, 2002). This shows a major gap in communication, as interactions between teacher-paraeducator may hinder relationships and affect students with greatest learning needs.

Some educators do realize that students may suffer when professionals who are "undertrained, overworked, and underappreciated" provide services (Riggs & Mueller 2001; Brenton, 2010). These researchers interviewed teachers, and the findings specified that most of

the teachers saw that “supervision skills were often noted by teachers including trial and error on the job, personal life experiences, or guidance from mentor teachers, administrators, and significant others” (Douglas et al. 2016, p. 68; French, 2001). Nonetheless, “teachers expected paraeducators to be professional, maintain confidentiality, and demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills” (Douglas et al., 2016, p. 66). Additionally, this study concluded with several areas of teacher concerns which highlighted planning, communication, providing and receiving adequate training, and conducting quality evaluation for paraeducators. The importance of quality supervision of paraeducators will continue to become more urgent as students are identified as needing individualized education.

Research concludes that “teachers are on their own to make sense of inclusion, navigate co-teaching strategies, and manage paraprofessional activity” (Mackey, 2014, p.16). Other studies show teachers to have perceived lack of responsibility or ‘not in charge’ for the education of included students with disabilities (Cameron, 2014). Contrary findings by Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle (2010) showed that general education teachers tended to be more engaged with their students with disabilities, a critical feature necessary for meaningful inclusion, when paraprofessionals were assigned to their classroom rather than to an individual student. Likewise, teachers were more likely to provide supervision, training, and work collaboratively with paraeducators assigned to their classroom. Positive, decisive action to collaborate is needed to ensure quality education for all students (Cameron, 2014; Cipriano et al., 2016; Devlin, 2008).

Teachers face many challenges, and a positive outlook is key in the classroom. An attitudinal survey study showed that general educators indicated the desire for more time to consult and plan (Santoli, Sachs, Romney, & McClurg, 2008; Wallace et al., 2001). Educator’s attitudes toward inclusive education depended upon the degree of administrative support for the

practice of inclusion (Santoli et al., 2008). It becomes apparent that if students with disabilities are to receive high quality education in inclusive settings, general educators must view themselves as responsible for the learning and training of paraeducators. Providing school-level support and teacher training about how to adapt instruction in inclusive classrooms is a first step towards accomplishing this goal. This literature review confirms that an important theme for this collaboration in the classroom is the need of preparation and training of general education teachers.

Need for Preparation and Training for Supervisory Role of Paraeducators

Successful educational experience for students with disabilities in classrooms requires a team of education professionals (Alquarini & Gut, 2012). General education teachers play a significant role in improving the quality of inclusion for students who receive special education services (Alquarini et al., 2012; Wallace et al., 2001). Therefore, it is essential that professionals gain adequate skills and preparation to assume the supervisory role of paraeducators in the classroom (IDEIA, 2004; NCLB, 2001; French 2001; Wallace et al., 2001). Other studies seek to identify who typically assumes supervision of paraeducators in general education classrooms. Traditional models of supervision in which education specialists are the primary supervisors is problematic since they are not readily available in all the general education classrooms. One of just three significant studies in current literature that focuses on the supervision of paraeducators includes Wallace et al. (2001), in which there exist alternative collaborative models of supervision. This study explores the value of an educational delivery model in which teachers work together to encourage and manage paraeducators to train, prepare, and collaborate with one another (Wallace, Shin & Stahl, 2001). This is limited research about effective supervision supports for paraeducators; however, a review of the Wallace study is significant. These

researchers considered seven skill areas as important: a) communication with paraprofessionals, b) planning and scheduling, c) instructional support, d) modeling for paraprofessionals, e) public relations, and f) training and management of paraprofessionals. These seven areas represent the basis for developing training programs and may be used as criteria for assessing the collaboration work between teachers and paraeducators (Wallace et al., 2001).

Paraeducators who service students with mild to moderate disabilities spend much time of the school day with general education teachers, and out of view of the special education teacher (Alquarini & Gut, 2012). Data shows that children with disabilities spend more time of the school day in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2009; NCLB, 2001). However, research suggests that “teachers have not slipped easily into the supervisory role; as they are typically prepared to work with children, not adults” (Riggs & Mueller, 2001, p. 60; Wallace et al., 2001). Review of existing research conducted by Giangreco et al. (2010) revealed that there are limited studies that focus on the quality supervision of paraeducators. The authors describe what supervision is not: “Supervision is not expecting a paraeducators to learn how to perform the job on his or her own, focusing only on a paraeducator’s errors, or leaving a paraeducator alone to design and deliver instruction. It is illegal for paraeducators to be the primary service provider because this violates the student’s right to FAPE” (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009, p. 84; IDEIA, 2004; NCLB, 2001). In contrast this study described what supervision is: “Supervision is... ensure that the paraeducators have the knowledge and skills to do the job based on observations on the job. Have clear communications systems and face-to-face time to transmit information and provide direct modeling, coaching, constructive feedback, to improve instruction and student learning” (Nevin et al., 2009, p. 84).

Repeated studies highlight the fact that general education teachers are untrained, undertrained, or hesitant to direct or supervise paraprofessionals (Brenton, 2010; Giangreco et al., 2010; Riggs & Mueller 2001; Wallace et al., 2001). It is critical for teachers and paraeducators alike to be equipped, learn to effectively work together, and receive continuous job training. Douglas, Chapin, & Nolan (2016) found, under the theme of *recommendations for the field*, “teachers keep track of the training provided to paraeducators, such as a packet of information for paraeducators [and] with a checklist of all the topics to be covered” (p.70). Recent data points to the importance of role clarity and boundaries for teachers and paraprofessionals is essential (Giangreco, Suter, & Dole, 2010; Wallace et al., 2001). In a study conducted by Mason, researchers found that paraeducators agree that coaching and receiving feedback from their supervising teacher was beneficial because the suggestions were insightful (Mason, Gerow, et al., 2019; Wallace et al., 2001). Karge, Pierson, & Robinson (2011) primary areas of focused study is developing and supporting partnerships. This study concludes that teachers must understand their role as supervisors and take time to build strong partnership. Due to the findings in this research, “the university brought an expert, Gerlach, who created workbooks that focus on collaboration and supervision of paraeducators” which benefited all educational personnel (Karge et al., 2011, p. 8).

The Karge study identified concerns about practices being employed regarding paraprofessionals. One research item revealed that most general education teachers did not plan for the paraprofessionals. Among those teachers who did plan for the paraprofessionals, the majority of these transmitted their plans orally. This concern shed light on the fact that that paraeducators, who may have received little or no training, are working without written direction, with hastily constructed or easily misconstrued oral directions (French, 2001;

Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010). These types of planning and decision-making tasks are never appropriate for non-credentialed professions and may compromise the integrity of the instructional program (French, 2001; Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009). The findings of the study reveal that when teachers did not involve paraeducator in the planning process, [he or she is] likely to “have some difficulty understanding why such activities are important, how they connect to other lessons, and how they contribute to the students’ overall development” (Rueda & Monzo, 2002, p. 26). Other surveys exposed that teachers did regard the work that paraeducators do as necessary to their success as a teacher and to the safety, health, and academic success of all students (PAR², 2005-2018). Nancy K. French (2001) found that supervisory functions such as planning, delegation, and communication provide job-specific orientation, and is effective only when conducted face-to-face. Time constraints are one of the most significant challenges for teachers and paraprofessionals revealed regarding planning, collaborating, asking questions, providing direct instruction to paraeducators. The issue remains that teachers cannot make changes to schedules, create conflicting schedule times, particularly in the absence of professional development and/or lack of support from administration. (Santoli et al., 2008; Stockhall, 2014). Overall, the research shows that the training and development for paraprofessionals includes “the role of the teacher as the leader of ongoing and daily professional development for paraprofessionals is critical to the field, since students with disabilities need and deserve instruction from highly qualified teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals” (Stockhall, 2014, p. 204 ; IDEIA, 2004; NCLB, 2001).

Teamwork Aspects of Teacher-Paraeducator Interaction

Patricia Devlin (2008) supports the idea that collaborative team efforts between paraeducator and teacher has become essential in general education classrooms. The research by

Cipriano, et al. (2016) captures the concept that interactions between teacher-paraeducator essentially improve student, teacher, and paraeducator outcomes. Researchers concluded that positive adult relationships support the student learning environment and also provides students a model for positive interaction. The literature further describes teacher-paraeducator interactions as a strong reflection of unity of purpose, positive emotional classroom climate, and mutual respect. When respect is present, collaboration is easier and more effective, and people feel more open to work with one another. Supervision through “an engaged teaching partnership” relies on effective, ongoing supervision job training (Karge, Pierson, & Robinson, 2011). More research shows that “classrooms are run more effectively, and students receive more support” (Karge, Pierson, & Robinson 2011, p. 8). Through quality supervision of paraeducators, assistants have the knowledge and skills to do the job based upon the interactions of observations on the job, clear communication, direct modeling, coaching, and constructive feedback to improve instruction and student learning (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009). Inclusion research shows the effectiveness of co-teaching and open collaborative relationships interwoven with administrative, school, and district support are highly effective (Mackey, 2014).

Summary

The quality of educational services for all students relies on the abilities, qualifications, training, and competencies of all educational personnel who provide services (Carter et al., 2009). Students with disabilities have increasingly been included in general education settings, and the number of paraeducators have also increased (Alquarini & Gut, 2012). High standards set forth by IDEA and NCLB place increased demands upon educators who are held accountable for learning to train paraeducators and to improve quality teaching in order to meet the diverse needs of students (Mackey, 2014). A positive attitude and outlook from general education teachers is key to accepting the supervisory role of paraeducators. The literature identifies the need for ongoing training and preparation for educators to assume the guiding role of paraeducators in their classroom. Quality supervision promotes effectiveness in paraeducators because of clearly defined roles, appropriate direction and guidance, and there exists collegiality through team collaboration, planning, and participation (Douglas, Chapin, & Nolan, 2016; Wallace et al., 2001). The following chapter identifies the methodology used to develop this project by outlining the steps and essential information gathered to create a handbook as a resource to train, prepare, and support teachers to carry on the supervisory role of paraeducators.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The managing of paraeducators is an essential role that consistently adapts to the demands of special education students in general education classrooms. General education teachers are credentialed teachers with the skills, abilities, qualifications, and competencies to fulfill this critical role in their classroom. Teaching students with disabilities requires teachers to have recurring professional development training, especially if they are to manage one or more paraeducator in the classroom.

In contrast to the extensive training of a teacher, paraeducators have reported never having received adequate training or explicit direction from certificated professionals (Carter et al., 2009). The school administrator, typically known as the principal, has the legal responsibility of evaluating the paraeducator, however, explicit training and direction must be provided prior to evaluation, and the training is typically from the teachers to whom they are assigned (Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Teachers more frequently possess far more abundant knowledge of the students, as well as the skills regarding the management of their classrooms, therefore, they need to be providing the paraeducator with guidance and training about the expectations in the classroom. Most teachers require and need fundamental training and knowledge acquisition in order to direct paraeducators in the classroom. Best practices and most current strategies are what teachers need to be most effective in the classroom.

This handbook project is designed to meet the needs of general education teachers' role of managing paraeducators so that they can be better prepared to meet the needs of students. The resource handbook is divided into chapters that provide best practices, resources, and strategies

to effectively work with one or more paraeducators. In this chapter, the focus audience and setting are identified, along with the procedures for developing the project.

Audience and Setting

This training manual is designed for general education teachers who support students with mild to moderate disabilities in a middle school setting. Teachers who teach any subject in a secondary level setting, including English, mathematics, science, foreign language, social studies, physical education, and all subjects in which students with disabilities are included, may use this handbook. The setting is targeted to a public school in North County, San Diego. There are fifty-three credentialed teachers and about nine hundred ninety enrolled students at this specific middle school. Roughly ninety-four percent of students identified as Hispanic or Latino decent, two and a half percent identified as White, others less than one percent, included Black or African American, Asian, and American Natives. There are about forty-two percent identified English Learners and thirteen and a half percent of students with disabling conditions. The school used for this study receives Title I funding to support teaching and learning for all students. Additionally, there is specific federal and state funding for special education paraeducators to support students under federal law in general education classrooms. There are general education teachers who work with special education paraeducators in their classrooms in various academic subject areas. In developing this resource handbook, the consideration of teachers and paraeducators are the target audience of this handbook.

Best Practices for Middle School Teachers working with Special Education

Paraeducators: A Training Manual is designed for all middle school teachers providing Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) with the assistance of a special education paraeducator in a general education classroom. Guiding the work of special education paraeducators is a

critical and needed skill, as teachers are expected to work with students with special learning needs, and to determine how to best work and direct paraeducators in the classroom. Teachers benefit from an accessible reference guide about effectively working as team, which is the product of this study. This handbook can be a resource for both novice and experienced teachers who are seeking guidance in working with one or more paraeducators who are beginners or experienced in the classroom.

Procedures for Developing the Project

Through the pre-service teacher preparation program, the education specialist teacher candidate gathered information regarding the role and responsibilities for training and supervising special education paraeducators. This information led to the development of an action plan for training special education assistants. As a result of this information, the question arose about special education paraeducators working with general education teachers and students. The expectation was that pre-service programs for general teachers had information working specifically with paraeducators. Upon this question, research was gathered regarding the supervision of special education paraeducators, roles and responsibilities, and current federal law regarding the issue. Based on this research, it was revealed that an educational gap exists in that general education teachers lack the pre-service training, in-service training, resources, and knowledge of managing and working with special education paraeducators in the classroom. Surveys have shown that the need for preparation, resources, and best practices is strong. Douglas (2016) and researchers surveyed teachers who recommended and emphasized training for teacher working with paraeducators because teachers and paraeducators alike lack training opportunities due to lack of funding (Douglas et al., 2016, p. 69). Due to these factors, a training manual was developed to support general education teachers and paraeducators. By equipping

them together and providing them with the resources and knowledge they need to work cooperatively benefits all students in the classroom.

There is an increase in the number of students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms. Teachers may be required to work with one or more paraeducators. Few in-service trainings exist, and limited useful information is available for teachers working with paraeducators. As a result, a resource handbook has been developed that addresses effective strategies, best practices, training, and resources for collaboration between general education teachers and special education paraeducators. *Best Practices for Middle School Teachers working with Special Education Paraeducators: A Training Manual* is designed for any general education teacher in a middle school setting who provides differentiated instruction to students with disabilities and requires the support of a special education paraeducator. The following chapter describes the results of this project focusing on the format and design.

Chapter Four

Results

In response to the educational discrepancy identified in the research, a training manual for middle school teachers working with special education paraeducators was developed. According to various surveys and research testimony, the lack of training and resources about how to approach and manage the work of a paraeducator in order to deliver differentiated instruction and accommodate the diverse needs of students with disabilities was evident. Teachers and paraeducators alike desired more training and interaction to collaborate with one another despite time constraints. As more special education paraeducators are integrated and providing services in general education classrooms, the need for training is particularly crucial for teachers who direct the work of the paraeducator. Acknowledging this dilemma, a training guide designed to provide best practices, resources, and strategies was developed. This training manual is intended to be used by middle school teachers and provides several options so that teachers are able to select and practice from various strategies to implement in the classroom.

Best practices for Middle School Teachers working with Special Education

Paraeducators: A Training Manual is a resource manual for novice and veteran teachers alike. It is for those seeking additional resources in how to direct and support the special education paraeducator. The researcher also added information for both a beginning and experienced paraeducator to maintain implementing best practices at any level. Teachers need usable information to support and guide paraeducators while delivering instructional support. The manual contains four chapters, which cover (a) the value of special education paraeducators, (b) personal support, (c) professional support, and (d) working efficiently as a team. The chapters are built upon each other in an organized way, so it can be delivered sequentially if desired.

Every chapter provides information, explanations, descriptions, visuals, and strategies to implement when working with a paraeducator. Each chapter also highlights training points, best practices, and recommendations using icons to note key items. Throughout the manual, there are potential support materials for teachers to utilize and adapt according to the structure and direction in his or her personal classroom. Strategies are listed in order to equip teachers to collaborate with paraeducators. The layout of the handbook is designed with specific headings to use as a quick reference guide for best practices. The handbook is convenient since it is a tangible item that teachers can utilize individually over the course of a semester. The creation of this model offers a solution for teachers to know what the law requires about training and skills of those serving students with exceptional learning needs. The manual is obtainable for professional growth as teachers adapt to new changes. The overall intention of the handbook is to empower middle school teachers to provide quality direction and support to paraeducators serving in a Specialized Academic Instruction setting. The final chapter describes the limitations of the project, next steps, and lessons learned.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Based on research findings, the researcher designed *Best Practices for Middle School Teachers working with Special Education Paraeducators: A Training Manual* to address the lack of resources, strategies, training for teachers and paraeducators working in specialized academic instruction setting. The purpose of the project is to empower and equip both teachers and paraeducators to develop effective skills that maximize the learning and development of students with learning disabilities. The handbook provides teachers with a solution to fulfill their job functions effectively alongside the paraeducator while complying with the law. Federal law requires continual training and development of teachers and paraeducators working with students who require differentiated instruction to address their diverse learning needs (IDEIA, 2004, NCLB, 2001, U.S. Department of Education, 2009). One of the ways this need can be met is by providing general education teachers best practices, strategies, information, and training to support and manage paraeducators and deliver effective instruction. This chapter addresses the limitations of project, next steps, lessons learned and education implications.

Limitations of Project

There exist limitations to the project developed. While this project offers a solution to address the concern of the lack of training for teachers managing paraeducators, this manual is not a finalized solution that includes all the strategies available. The manual contains research-based solutions, however the number of solutions is limited and aimed towards specific classrooms in a limited setting. This project was created for teachers at a public middle school in North County, San Diego, CA, with class periods lasting forty-eight minutes of instruction per subject. The researcher included personal experiences from interviewed staff at this school site

and other sites, as well. This manual is aimed at teacher professional development in Specialized Academic Instruction settings, which includes the teacher and paraeducator supporting the needs of students with disabilities with same-aged peers. Education Specialists may also benefit from this resource, but the manual does not refer to a separate setting such as a Special Day Class wherein all students have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Essentially, this training is designed to be accessed and implemented easily by all educators. Throughout the training guide, the researcher recommends that the teacher create a job responsibility chart and other visuals that pertain to their specific subject and class management strategies. The researcher also considered next steps for the project.

Next Steps

The researcher has some ideas as to the next steps after developing the training manual. While the design of the handbook is intended to provide an overview of paraeducator roles, as well as how to effectively manage him or her, there is more study and development that requires research. This training manual has the potential to be developed more fully in order to become a part of a teacher preparation program. Through pre-service training, single and multiple subject teachers can gain skills and foundational knowledge to work with paraeducators in their career from the outset. In addition, the developer would take great pleasure in seeing this manual be expanded into an in-service training for teachers who advocate to have more training, knowledge, and skills in this area. Furthermore, a training among existing teachers, education specialist, and paraeducators is ideal. The researcher is determined to share this resource with teachers and paraeducators at the middle school upon which it is based. The following section describes the lesson learned by this researcher and educational implications.

Lessons Learned and Educational Implications

Reflecting on lessons learned and educational implications is a vital step in the process of any academic project. The research provided the researcher an insight into how much this training resource is needed for general education teachers working with special education paraeducators, since so little training exists in this area. The development was meaningful and valuable for the researcher in that the realization of the dearth of training for teachers and paraeducators warrants further study on the topics covered in the manual. In the opinion of this researcher, local education agencies and/or school districts need to consider and evaluate the teacher-paraeducator relationship and interaction that occurs in the classroom and seek out solutions and trainings to equip these professionals. The researcher acknowledges and values that students are being included in general classes with same-aged peers and considers the resource relevant to this population. Instructional minutes, regardless of the setting, are significant and training is needed for professionals to coherently and methodically maximize instruction. Overall, the training guide is advantageous when teachers make adaptations for their classroom setting.

Conclusion

Strengthening the teacher-paraeducator relationship in the classroom is my fundamental goal. Students deserve and need quality education services from highly qualified teachers and paraeducators alike. As noted in this study, researchers have identified numerous benefits in the classroom when teacher and paraeducator work effectively as a team. Teachers need to invest time in developing the relationship with the paraeducators assigned to their classroom. Generally, paraeducators desire more training, interaction, and want to feel included in the classroom. I remain hopeful that teachers and paraeducators alike can benefit from this manual

and additionally can commit to remain coachable and desire to learn and grow professionally together. I am deeply humbled to be able to contribute a training handbook to assist in one of the many aspects of special education.

"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

– Babe Ruth

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Appendix A

Best Practices for Middle School Teachers working with
Special Education Paraeducators:
A Training Manual

*Best Practices for
Middle School Teachers working with
Special Education Paraeducators:
A Training Manual*

By

Cristina Garcia Gasca

Summer, 2020

Rationale & Purpose: A Letter to Teachers

Dear Esteemed Teachers,

A teacher's role continually involves learning, growing and adapting to new changes. You may find yourself supervising one or more paraeducators in your classroom. Working effectively with a paraeducator requires, first and foremost, the recognition of the value that a paraprofessional brings to the classroom. Students who need and qualify for special education services with adaptations to general education curriculum require additional assistance. The paraprofessional can be a powerful force and teammate in ensuring student success. It is fundamental that the paraeducator(s) in your classroom be equipped to support students and help teachers carry out differentiated plans.

This handbook is created with the specific intention of providing a resource tool for teachers in guiding the work of novice or experienced paraeducators in the classroom. In addition, this handbook provides guidelines for establishing a strong partnership with paraeducator(s), which can and ultimately enhance the education of all children in the classroom. The sections, presented in chapters format, contain research-based topics, best practices, strategies, and resources. Throughout the training manual, there are icons posted that suggest best practice, sample documents, and high-priority notes for teachers.

With encouragement for growth,

Cristina Garcia-Gasca

Key

Key for essential points to implement



: Recommendation of Best Practice



: Resource Safekeeping



: Important to Note

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Chapter One

The Value and Role of Special Education Paraeducators

“By definition, the word ‘para’ means “alongside. Therefore, a paraeducator means working alongside an educator” Gerlach, Kent, M. Ed

Teachers recognize that “paraeducators have value in the classrooms” (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2008, p. 6). Many paraeducators working in schools have various levels of education, experiences, and training. Paraeducators can bring insight and ideas that contribute to the quality of the educational program. In addition, paraeducators are often members of the communities in which they are employed which may bring insights about students’ culture, language, and community (Rueda & Monzo, 2002).

Special education paraeducators provide the individualized support for children in inclusive classrooms. Research shows that trained paraeducators leads to improved outcomes in terms of academic engagement, social interactions, inclusion with same-aged peers, student independence, and disruptive behavior (paracenter.org). Researchers argue that positive teacher-paraeducator relationships support student learning in critically important ways, and also provide students with a model for positive interaction styles (Cipriano, Barnes, Bertoli, Flynn, & Rivers, 2016). The research makes it clear that overall, paraeducators are assets who hold a vital place in the education of students with disabilities.

Based on valuing paraeducators for their major contributions in education for students with disabilities, this chapter focuses on personal support, which is fundamental in creating positive teacher-paraeducator interaction and team. Research data highlights that paraeducators who are underutilized and misused is due to the lack of support and unclear roles and responsibilities (Griangreco Suter, & Doyle, 2010, French, 2001; Rueda & Monzo, 2002). Paraeducators are not alone, they need personal guidance, training, information, advice, and direction. If teachers help direct the work of the paraeducator, it is pertinent to understand the roles and responsibilities through the definition, job description, teacher-paraeducator role chart, and learn about some of the limitations of a paraeducator’s job provided in this chapter.

Definition of Special Education Paraeducator

Under the supervision of a site administrator, a special education paraeducator is a school employee who works under the direction of a certificated teacher to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to children or youth with learning disabilities (Puget Sound Educational Service District Paraeducator Program, 2007).

Previous job titles include:

- Aide
- Classroom Aide
- Teacher Aide
- Teacher Assistant
- Classroom Assistant
- Inclusion assistant
- Instructional Aide
- Instructional Assistant
- Paraprofessional
- Special Education Assistant

☞ “Paraeducator” is the current and most generally accepted and recognized job title for many school districts.

☞ The teacher is responsible for the daily direction of the paraeducator in the classroom. The principal or site administrator oversees hiring, terminating, and/or evaluating; however, a credentialed teacher may be requested for contributions.

Job Description

The district or Edjoin website has the entire job description of a special education paraeducator. Figure 1 is a sample from a public school in North County, San Diego, CA.

 Download, print, review their job description from the school district. Highlight or make notes in order to become familiar with the role of a paraeducator in a general education setting.

 Include a job description in a binder for paraeducator(s) to reference or have quick access at any time.

Paraeducator I / Paraeducator I – Bilingual (language)**DEFINITION**

Under the supervision of a site administrator and daily work direction of a credentialed teacher(s), provides instructional assistance to individual or small groups of students in a classroom or other learning environment; assists in the supervision of students in the classroom, at lunch, or during play; relieves the teacher of routine clerical duties; and performs other related duties as assigned.

The typical duties and employment standards are representative of positions within this classification. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential duties of the specific position.

TYPICAL DUTIES Instructs individual or small groups of students, as directed by the teacher, in various academic areas such as reading, writing, vocabulary, math, science, computer skills and other subject areas; reinforces lesson concepts and skills or provides remediation of skills by explaining, re-presenting, or guiding activities; explains teacher instructions, activity directions, etc. to students as necessary; guides small group discussions to develop higher-level thinking skills; utilizes teacher provided materials or selects instructional activities and techniques within a limited range consistent with the teacher's lesson plans to meet the needs of individual students.

Monitors the classroom to motivate and encourage students to stay on task; follows the teacher's plan for assertive discipline and orderly classroom management; confers with the teacher regarding student performance, progress and problems.

Prepares for daily activities by setting up work areas, displays and exhibits; distributes and collects paper, supplies and materials; prepares instructional materials and tests; types, files, duplicates, assembles, and laminates materials as directed; maintains written and computer records of student progress for the teacher; operates a variety of office and instructional equipment as assigned.

Assists in monitoring teacher-prepared written tests/quizzes, and standardized achievement tests; corrects tests, classwork, and homework with objective format using pre-established procedures and norms.

Monitors assigned areas such as playground, halls, etc., enforcing safety and appropriate behavior; accompanies students on field trips as assigned; monitors the classroom while the teacher is busy or absent for short periods of time; performs other related duties as assigned.

Bilingual

In addition to the above duties, bilingual positions also translate orally and in writing, between English and a designated language. Interprets for the student or the teacher, as required, to assist in delivering core curriculum in the primary language and may serve as translator for the teacher in parent conferences.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The **Paraeducator I** assists one or more general education classroom teachers by reinforcing lesson concepts and skills in various academic areas according to the teacher's plan. This is the entry-level classification in the instructional support series.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Knowledge of: Reading, writing and mathematics exceeding the 12th grade level; basic principles of child behavior and development.

Ability to: Read, write and speak English proficiently; assist in instructing or assist in instructing readiness for reading, writing and mathematics in a classroom or assigned learning environment; reinforce instruction to individual or small groups of students in an assigned subject area as directed by the teacher; perform basic mathematical computations accurately;

Work cooperatively and effectively with teachers and follow their directions; work cooperatively with co-workers school staff, parents and others; motivate, gain the cooperation of, and relate well to students as an adult role model; monitor and discipline students according to approved policies and procedures;

Be flexible and able to adapt to changes in routine and duties; be organized and manage time effectively; maintain records; be reliable in attendance, punctuality, and follow-through; perform routine clerical duties and learn to operate instructional and office equipment;

Maintain grooming and dress appropriate for job duties and as an adult role model; learn basic instructional methods and techniques, classroom procedures and appropriate student behavior and basic recording keeping techniques.

Bilingual positions require the ability to speak, read, and write a designated language in addition to English.

Essential Physical Activities and Work Environment: Sufficient stamina to stand, walk, sit, kneel, squat, bend, crawl, twist and reach on a daily basis to perform various activities in a classroom and playground area; sufficient strength to occasionally lift, move and/or carry various items in the classroom up to 25 lbs. (e.g. tables, chairs, A/V equipment, play toys, tricycles, etc.);

Sufficient visual acuity to read text in a wide variety of typed/written formats and monitor student activities; hearing sufficient to understand normal conversations; clarity of speech sufficient to explain instructional concepts to students and discuss them with adults; finger dexterity sufficient to operate a variety of office equipment, write and grasp, push and pull various light objects and equipment in a classroom setting; mobility sufficient to visit classrooms and other locations on campus.

Work is performed in primarily indoor environments but the necessity to go to different locations involves some exposure to the outdoor elements.

Required Background: Possession of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and one of the following: 1) completion of at least two years of study (minimum 48 semester hours) at an institution of higher education; 2) possession of an associate's (or higher) degree; or 3) passing a rigorous assessment that demonstrates the knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics at a level meeting State and Federal requirements.

Paid or volunteer experience working with children is desirable.

Qualifications: In order to be considered qualified for a vacancy in this classification, a candidate must possess the required background and successfully demonstrate such background, knowledge, skills and abilities through an examination process.

Figure 1. Adapted from Edjoin. (2019). *Paraeducator I/Paraeducator I-Bilingual*.

Teacher and Paraeducator Roles & Responsibilities

Teachers and paraeducators are partners in education. Each member fills specific roles and responsibilities in a general education classroom. Explicit roles and responsibilities are essential elements of a successful educational program. Research data points to the importance of role clarity and boundaries for teachers and paraprofessionals (Giangreco, Suter, & Dole, 2010; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001).

After careful review of the paraeducators job description, the tasks of the paraeducator must adhere to what he or she has been hired to do, which is to supply, instructional support. It is foundational to the partnership to establish clear roles and responsibilities outlined and understood in order to provide him or her with appropriate direction and guidance. When an educational team has carefully defined roles and responsibilities, they know the expectations of the job and the goal of their work. Through consistent practice and routine, the team works efficiently. Each classroom is unique in regard to certain subjects, diverse learning needs, and specific management strategies, however the paraeducator has general tasks that can be applied to any general education classroom. Working as a team to provide a unique educational experience for each child or youth is ultimate goal.

Researchers Rueda & Monzo (2002) indicated through their research that teachers received no information about the types of roles in which paraeducators must be or could be engaged. The following chart provides a best practice strategy to use for the classroom using the paraeducators job description from the school district. This chart visually guides a teacher to see the specific responsibilities in each part of the process, with explicit details that abide by state and federal laws. The chart may also benefit the paraeducator as a written plan to follow during specific tasks without being directed by the teacher.

In figure 2, teacher and paraeducator's responsibilities are outlined so that the teacher understands each individual role. Equipped with this understanding, the teacher effectively delegates specific tasks to the paraeducator. The chart compares and contrasts some typical roles and responsibilities.



Use as a guide or create one with specifics to your classroom.



Create a guide specifically for your classroom and include a copy for paraeducator(s).

Figure 2. Adapted from Puget Sound Educational Service District Paraeducator Program. (2007). *Working with Paraprofessionals*.

Lesson Planning

Teacher	Paraeducator
Designs & develops lesson plans for entire class and individual children	Implements the teachers lesson plan and assists coordinating and managing activities as specified by the teacher
Determines needed materials	Obtains needed material
Aligns lesson plans with standards, objectives, Individualized Education Plans, and/or student needs	Assists in preparation of Individualized Education Plan (IEP)-required materials (accommodated materials), coordinating and managing activities Implements lessons to meet child's instructional objectives
Plans room arrangement and learning centers	Assists and monitors class, small group, and individuals with designated lessons

Instruction

Teacher	Paraeducator
Plan all instructional activities and student groupings	Reinforce and review initial teacher instruction as planned by teacher
Deliver all initial instruction to the entire class	Provide struggling learners with supports, prompts and cues directed by the teacher
Obtain and provide data sheets, prepare and train paraeducator to collect specific data	Collect data on student progress as defined by teacher
Direct classroom paraeducator in his/her role during instruction	<p>Ask questions about the lesson, activities, role, etc.</p> <p>Request feedback on performance</p> <p>Provide follow-up instruction after teacher-directed instruction and monitor class, work with small groups, or individual students as directed by the teacher</p>
Assist students as needed with individual work	Assist individual students as directed by the teacher
Design reteach as necessary and provide direction to paraeducator on the who, what, and how	<p>Ask clarifying questions to gain better understanding of the lesson</p> <p>Follow teacher-directed plan with specific students</p> <p>reinforce concepts, skills, or provide remediation of skills by explaining, re-presenting, or guiding activities</p>

Evaluation of Student Learning

Teacher	Paraeducator
Administers tests to students Assess individual children	Assists monitoring and maintaining a safe classroom environment
Assigns final grades for assignments and overall class	Based on teacher-direction, may assist in grading objective assignments/tests (multiple choice, fill in, homework, vocabulary etc.)
Partner with special educator to determine mastery for students who receive special education services, as directed by IEP.	Maintain updates and communication regarding students who receive special education services
Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if concerns/questions exist regarding student's IEP and/or any lack of expected progress.	Communicate with teacher and case manager May be provided with IEP at a glance May be asked about specific students, work, or assignments
Responsible for data collection on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives.	Assist in data collection using criteria, checklist developed by education specialist

Behavior Management

Teacher	Paraeducator
Designs classroom management system for students in the class	Assists and reinforces classroom management system by using same emphasis, strategies, and techniques as teacher (establish classroom routines and procedures as directed by teacher)
Implement individual student's Behavior Improvement Plans, as required by IEP.	Assist in the implementation of the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).
Responsible for data collection on student mastery of behavior related IEP goals/ objectives.	May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior goals/ objectives using criteria/ checklist developed by special educator
Responsible for asking education specialist for a review of IEP if student is not making adequate progress on behavior IEP goals/ objectives and/or if BIP is not effective.	Follow up with teacher or student's case manager May be requested for input

IEP Development

Teacher	Paraeducator
Provide information regarding student's abilities, including strengths and weaknesses, IEP team to use in development of Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance and IEP goals/objectives.	Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/ administrator(s) for development of the IEP.
Give input into development of IEP.	May be asked to provide input by education specialist.
May attend as one of the general education teachers to participate in the IEP meeting	May be invited to IEP as a paraeducator who assists the teacher in the classroom
Receives updated IEPs and implements new IEP in lesson planning (revises instructional program, designs new instructional material)	Carries out new teacher's plan for the child, monitor student progress and relates findings to teacher

Communication

Teacher	Paraeducator
Communicate when attending in-service meetings and professional development training	Participate in district trainings to develop knowledge and communicate the day out of the classroom
Communicate to paraeducator the expectations, assignments, objectives etc. when a substitute teacher will serve in the classroom	Support the classroom under the substitute teacher and assist students by carrying out the plans May have own substitute plans when out sick
Meets with parents and communicates individual student progress	May be invited to attend meeting with parents, refer concerns expressed by parent or student to teacher or case manager
Initiates conferences concerning student's progress	May attend parent conferences and meetings when appropriate and approved
Communication daily with special education case managers and paraeducator	Communicate daily with case manager and teacher to work with them for ideas, problem resolution, strategies, and supports

Fade Supports

Teacher	Paraeducator
Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate.	Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate.
Assist paraeducator with understanding of how and when to fade supports to students, as appropriate	Ask questions, practice, and request feedback when fading supports, as appropriate
Document fading of supports per student's IEP.	Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s) and may be called for input or suggestions

Administrative Duties & Duties Outside of Classroom

Teacher	Paraeducator
Responsible for reporting accurate attendance information	May assist in collecting and recording attendance information (service minutes, etc.)
Delegate specific clerical duties	May assist with other clerical duties in classroom (i.e. organization of materials, making copies, etc.) as directed by teacher
Supervise hallways, school functions, crossing streets, etc. as directed by administration.	Monitor and assist students in a variety of setting such as the cafeteria, bus loading area, school field, hallway, or auditoriums as required by IEP

☛ Paraeducators should spend most of the time on instructional duties, not administrative duties.

Limitations of Roles & Responsibilities of Paraeducators

Now that the significance of clarifying roles and responsibilities are explained, roles that are not designed for a paraeducator are defined. Paraeducators are great assets in the classroom, however there are limitations on roles and responsibilities set forth by the law. As cited by Nevin, Villa, & Thousand (2009) special education paraeducators may not serve as a sole designer, deliverer, or evaluator of a student's educational program (p. 9). If such practices occur, the school and district may be dealing with serious litigation and jeopardizing the student's quality of learning experience. The teacher is the one who takes the lead on designing and delivering instruction. As a result, under the direction and supervision of a credentialed teacher, a paraeducator may provide services required by a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The following table, figure 3, shows some of the inappropriate roles of paraeducators.

	Paraeducator cannot....
General Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individually plan or create lesson plans without teacher • introduce or teach completely new concepts and skills without teacher knowledge • assume full responsibility for any student or of the class • make major decisions about subject matter, retention, or promotion • complete report cards or assign grades
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • administer, score, and interpret assessment instruments
Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend IEP meetings in place of the general education teacher • make program decisions with other education professionals • implement own behavior plan without the knowledge of education specialist • be responsible for writing individualized education programs • make referrals for additional services
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report to student, parent(s), family, or others concerning any aspect of child's services, progress, or status without certificated teacher
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • substitute for certificated teacher, unless paraeducator is recognized as an official by the school district • assume full responsibility for supervising students during school functions (assemblies, field trips, etc.) • supervise and/or evaluate student teacher

Figure 3. Adapted from Gerlach, K. (2016). *Let's Team Up*.

Chapter Two

Personal Support

“Act with initiative and courage, as if it all depends on you” Kent Gerlach, Ed.D.

Teacher-paraeducator interactions are paramount to the success of the classroom and therefore essential to address. Invest time and support to the paraeducator(s) assigned to your classroom. Devlin (2008) says to “integrate the paraeducator into the entire classroom setting.” Feeling as though you belong and are included in the classroom is basic need. Welcome the paraeducator in your classroom and display a formal introduction, where the teacher explains the purpose and role of the assistant and offers students an opportunity to know the paraeducator who will personally be supplementing instruction.

This necessary connection sends a powerful message not only to the paraeducator, but to students, that the other adult in the classroom has been acknowledged, recognized, and therefore has value. Additionally, teacher must initiate formal introductions between the paraeducator and each individual student who qualifies for special education services. Each student needs to be aware that the paraeducator is there to facilitate instruction and provide each person with academic, behavioral, or social-emotional support.

Offering paraeducators support not only gives encouragement, but predominantly aids in their personal development. Based on several research studies, teachers who strive to maintain personal support with their paraeducator show greater student learning outcomes (Devlin, 2008). When there is a lack of support, appreciation, and training, may result in paraeducator attrition. Just like any person, every paraeducator brings strengths and relative weakness in the classroom. Making a simple personal connection before any correction will facilitate teamwork. In other words, make it a point to get to know your paraeducator and keep him or her informed of school site news, school culture developments, and staff collaboration, then when the time comes to give constructive feedback, the paraeducator may be more susceptible and accepting to change or adapt.

A parallel example to this explanation is that once teachers verbally praise, appreciate, and value him or her, then the paraeducator will accept constructive feedback as part of their growth and development in the field. This chapter includes visual supports to utilize as best practices when working with paraeducator(s).

Getting To Know You (GTKY)

While the concept of “Getting to Know You” (GTKY) is straightforward, it cannot be underestimated. Similar to the significance of getting to know all the students in the classroom in order to differentiate instruction, incorporate interests, and make the lesson interesting, teachers must also make a connection by getting to know the paraeducator(s) who will provide educational supports and services. This practice creates the foundation of a successful teacher-paraeducator partnership. Rueda & Monzo (2002) make a critical point that teachers are frequently unaware that paraeducators possess a key knowledge about the student’s culture and community.

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) established that there are required background accomplishments in order to become a paraeducator. These include, (a) completion of at least two years of postsecondary study, (b) obtain an associate’s degree from a community college, or (c) demonstrate knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing in reading, writing, and mathematics by passing a rigorous formal or local academic assessment meeting State and Federal requirements (Nevin et al., 2009).

The knowledge and skills a paraeducator possess can be incorporated into the lessons, making them more meaningful to students. There are numerous practical ways to approach this idea and this handbook provides solutions that teachers may provide to paraeducator(s). Figure 4 includes several positive ice breakers for initial introductions and create an opportunity to learn more about a novice or experienced paraeducator.



A ‘thank you’ expression or card always goes along way.



Create your own “GTKY” document for each paraeducator. Follow up with an informal discussion about anything you learned or want to know more about.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU
GETTING TO KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU

Personal Information

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Hometown: _____ School email: _____

Current City: _____

Do you have a mailbox? **Yes** **No** **I don't know** Birthday (mm/dd): _____

More about You

Students may call me: _____ # of years as a paraeducator: _____

Current status: full-time part-time Bilingual?: Yes No

Knowledge, background, skills, & abilities as a paraeducator:

Likes

Favorite color: _____ Favorite sport: _____

Favoite animal: _____ Favorite food or drink: _____

Favorite snack or fruit: _____ Favorite store: _____

Three words that describe you

*

*

*

Figure 4.

Teacher & Paraeducator Expectations

After welcoming the paraeducator to the classroom, teachers need to initiate a conversation about expectations with the paraeducator. Expectations keep teacher-paraeducator focused in their role.

When discussing the expectations, place each expectation in writing and go over each sentence with the paraeducator. It is pivotal that the teacher and paraeducator generate these expectations together so that each person is held accountable, and there is no misunderstanding. Teachers must understand that this best practice is a critical part of successfully leading and managing the paraeducators.

The following chart is a list of suggested expectations. The top chart describes some teacher expectations of the paraeducator. The bottom chart states what paraeducators can expect from the supervising teacher.

Some overarching words that may be used are reliable, respectful, proactively, clarify, feedback, direct, participate and teamwork.



Begin a discussion about expectations and note them down together.



Include a copy in the paraeducator binder

Paraeducator....
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect and show a positive attitude toward school, teachers, staff, and children• Be dependable and reliable on job performance and practice confidentiality• Be proactive to assist in the instructional process without being asked, and to share student's progress, needs, or concerns• Be reliable to perform non-instructional duties such as record keeping, classroom maintenance, clerical duties, and collecting learning materials• Become acquainted with school/district policies & procedures as it applies to you and your work• Use good judgment• Ask for clarification when you do not understand lesson/activity; communicate any questions, concerns, suggestions, or feedback; share knowledge that benefits instruction or students• Participate in training to develop skills and become a more effective paraeducator• Believe that together, we should be a working team
Supervising Teacher.....
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept and value paraeducators in education• Properly direct their instructional duties, provide clear and explicit instructions, and include him/her in planning• Introduce him/her to the students• Explain classroom procedures, policies, and management• Give praise and constructive feedback on performance• Respect his/her individuality and utilize skills, talents, and experience during classroom instruction• Invite him/her as a member of the school culture and community• Inform him/her about training opportunities and encourage him/her to participate• Believe that together, we should be a working team

Figure 5. Adapted from Gerlach. (2016). *Let's Team Up*.

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check

As stated in the research, paraeducators bring skills, experiences, and training to the classroom that are not automatically obvious to the teacher. In order to resolve this issue, a paraeducator self-check is beneficial to know what skills and experiences match with the tasks performed in the classroom. Additionally, teachers need to know which tasks paraeducators need further training, explanation, and practice. Teachers need to utilize the paraeducator to the maximum extent possible so that instruction and services are delivered appropriately, however, the needs must be identified as the first step.

The survey describes as many possible roles of a paraeducator during each of the following: a) lesson planning, b) instruction, c) evaluation of student learning, d) behavior management, e) IEP development, f) communication, g) fade supports and h) administrative duties and i) duties outside of classroom.

The teacher is to give the paraeducator the survey and explain the instructions. The paraeducator is to notice that there are four categories on the top that define the level preparedness and experience he or she has in the field from unprepared to highly skilled. Based upon the four categories, the teacher will gain a sense of the responsibilities paraeducators are prepared for and the ones that need more development.

The results must prompt the teacher to carefully review and plan for training accordingly. This strategy will support and further the teacher-paraeducator productivity in the classroom. Figure 5, a survey, serves the purpose of gathering data to know more about the skills, experiences, and knowledge the paraeducator possesses in order to use their expertise and identify training needs in the classroom.



Create a survey with specific roles and responsibilities that are essential.



Create a copy for paraeducators to store and revisit at the end of the year.

Figure 6. Adapted from Nevin, et al. (2008) *Guide to Co-teaching with Paraeducators*.

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check (1)	Unprepared	Observed	Minimal Experience	Experienced	Highly Skilled
Planning					
• Plan alongside teacher					
• Assist coordinating and managing activities as specified by the teacher					
• Locate materials and equally distribute					
• Assist to differentiate instruction					
• Implement lesson to meet child’s instructional objectives					
• Assist teacher with room arrangement, or sets up learning centers as directed by teacher					
Instruction					
• Assist and monitor class as planned by teacher					
• Comfortable working in small groups					
• Assist individual students in the classroom					
• Help students use computers and software					
• Operate classroom equipment (CD, DVD, projectors, tape recorders)					
• Participated and engaged in co-teaching strategies as requested by teacher					
• Review teacher lesson plan					
• Reinforce concepts, skills, or provide remediation of skills by explaining, representing, or guiding activities					
• Understands examples of support prompts and cues					
• Provide struggling learners with supports					
• Experience with data sheets					

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check

(1)

	Unprepared	Observed	Minimal Experience	Experienced	Highly Skilled
• Requests feedback on job performance					
• Asks clarifying questions to gain better understanding of the lesson					

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check (2)	Unprepared	Observed	Minimal Experience	Experienced	Highly Skilled
Evaluation of Student Learning					
• Assist in maintaining a safe classroom environment					
• Facilitate peer support					
• Assist in grading objective assignments/tests (multiple choice, fill in, homework, vocabulary etc.) as directed by teacher					
• Maintain updates and communication regarding students who receive special education services					
• Close communication with case manager					
• Knowledge of IEP at a glance					
• Communicating about specific students, work, or assignments with teacher					
Behavior Management					
• Reinforce classroom management system by using same emphasis, strategies as teacher					
• Model classroom routines and procedures					
• Assist in the implementation of the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)					
• Knowledge of behavior goals and objectives					
• Observe and chart student behavior					
IEP Development					
• Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/ administrator(s) for development of the IEP.					
• Attended an IEP					

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check

- **(2)**

	Unprepared	Observed	Minimal Experience	Experienced	Highly Skilled
• Knowledge of annual updates on IEP					
• Provide struggling learners with supports					

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check (3)	Unprepared	Observed	Minimal Experience	Experienced	Highly Skilled
Communication					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in district trainings to develop knowledge and communicate the day out of the classroom 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the classroom under the substitute teacher 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal substitute plans when out sick 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended meetings with parents along with the teacher 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer student, parent, and staff concerns to the teacher or case manager 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended parent conferences when appropriate 					
Fade Supports					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faded supports to individual students, as appropriate 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s) 					
Administrative Duties & Duties Outside of Classroom					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and record attendance information 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and record service minutes for students with an IEP 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervise students in hallways, lunch area, library, gym, bus loading etc. 					

Paraeducator Preparedness Self-Check

- **(3)**

	Unprepared	Observed	Minimal Experience	Experienced	Highly Skilled
• Provide struggling learners with supports					
• Experience with data sheets					

Communicate to Students about Paraeducator

The teacher must introduce the paraeducator to the class in order to help establish the value and role of the paraeducator. Students are curious and wonder about the role and purpose of another adult in the classroom. Due to the roving nature of the job, there are many settings wherein formal introductions of the paraeducator to the students is overlooked. This situation causes a dilemma and confusion because students notice that the paraeducator is not an equal, but a “less than”, which is not conducive to a good partnership or to the strength a paraeducator can be for the teacher.

When formal introductions are established, all students have a general and familiar sense of the role of the paraeducator and tend to be more academically involved with him or her. This simple action models mutual respect for everyone in the classroom and sets a standard that the paraeducator is treated and addressed as another adult in the classroom.

Regardless of his or her experience, paraeducators need to be respected and held in high esteem by the teacher, especially while he or she shares about his/her life or experiences. If the paraeducator is a beginner, it is helpful to review the introduction first with the paraeducator to support him or her. Springing the introduction may be seen as a negative set up socially. If the paraeducator has been at the school for many years, then a simple request before the fact allows the paraeducator to review what to say.

Students enjoy listening to adults share and even attempt to make a connection. This establishes a healthier learning environment for everyone. Figure 7 is a guide to help teachers discuss the main points regarding the role of the paraeducator in the classroom to the students. Teachers may be unsure or unaware how to describe a paraeducator, therefore, this chart provides key topic points to touch upon.



Use as a guide when introducing major topics regarding the work of the paraeducator in the classroom.



Discuss with the paraeducator how you will be formally introducing him or her to the class, encourage him or her to share information about himself or herself. Initiate a general introduction to the class about the role of a paraeducator. Set time aside for the paraeducator to personally introduce himself or herself to the classroom. Students may be encouraged to ask him or her appropriate questions to build rapport with him or her.

Communicate to students about the Paraeducator in the classroom

- Clearly define the role of the paraeducator to the students
- Describe how the teacher and paraeducator will work together to communicate with them and their parents
- Explain that the paraeducator is there as a support and needs to be respected as teacher because he/she is another adult in the classroom
- Explain that the paraeducator is an essential part of the learning community and describe how he/she is here to help the students be successful
- Individually introduce students with learning disabilities to the paraeducator and describe to them the necessary supports the paraeducator will provide according to each individuals' IEP
- Explain that the paraeducator is there to assist with work completion, but each student should strive to do so as independently as possible
- Describe how the paraeducator's role regarding classroom expectations and consequences will mirror what is currently in place

Figure 7. Adapted from Education Service Center, Region 20 & Texas Education Agency. (2018). *Working with Paraprofessionals*.

Record & File Keeping

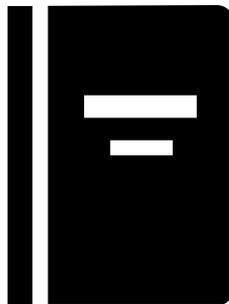
Communication is a principle skill between two people working together to meet the same goal. Some teacher-paraeducator communication will require written notes, plans, templates, and documents. It is best for teachers to determine the best way to safekeep the documents in the classroom: in-class mailbox, folder, binder, filing cabinet, or box.

This manual consistently suggests documents to print and keep, so as to have these documents always at the ready in a secure location. There must be a designated area in the classroom where record keeping between teacher- paraeducator takes place. Additionally, if more than one paraeducator assists in the classroom, individual systems are necessary because of new class periods with different students and the diversity of needs from class to class.

This concept is a proactive way to establish teamwork. It is critical to share information such as lesson plans, activity sheets, new or updated IEPs at a glance, student information, seating charts, behavior logs, email communications, substitute plans, data logs, logging information, training opportunities, and more. With the abundance of written documents, teachers must discuss organizational needs and support paraeducators by providing time and direction to keep an organized and neat binder and space where papers can be retrieved.

This strategy not only aids the paraeducator professionally, but personally as well. Good organization skills reflect a role completion. When teacher-paraeducator teams maintain an organized binder, the greater the reliability, which translates to less stress.

 A binder with dividers for each class period a paraeducator serves must be provided, it is recommended as best practice because there are constant communications, information and documents to share throughout the school year.



Personal Schedule

Typically, special education paraeducators move to other general education and/or special education classrooms. A best practice is knowing the paraeducators personal/professional rotation schedule during the school day. This way, as emergencies, or unexpected events arise, retrieving the paraeducators schedule is managed without stress or loss of important minutes.

For example, in an event where a student needs to know the location of the paraeducator in order to retrieve his folder left behind from the previous class period, the teacher can quickly access the paraeducator's schedule and locate him or her.

Another useful strategy from the paraeducator schedule is that the teacher can reference the paraeducator schedule in order to work around their breaks and proceed with learning centers when he or she returns. The following chart is an example of a schedule sheet.



It is recommended that the teacher create a schedule sheet for every paraeducator to keep as a reference, in case of an emergency, and to respect their break times.



Remind the paraeducator to update it every trimester/semester or when changes/switches are made throughout the school year.

Middle School

Paraeducator: _____

Fall Semester 2019

Period	Time (traditional)	Time (early release)	Course	Teacher	Room #
1	8:00-8:47	8:00-8:38			
2	8:51-9:38	8:42-9:20			
Break					
3	9:49-10:36	9:31-10:09			
4	10:40-11:27	10:13-10:51			
Lunch	11:31-12:01	10:55-11:25			
6	12:05-12:52	11:29-12:15			
7	12:56-1:43	12:19-12:57			
8	1:47-2:35	1:01-1:39			

Spring Semester 2020

Period	Time (traditional)	Time (early release)	Course	Teacher	Room #
1	8:00-8:47	8:00-8:38			
2	8:51-9:38	8:42-9:20			
Break					
3	9:49-10:36	9:31-10:09			
4	10:40-11:27	10:13-10:51			
Lunch	11:31-12:01	10:55-11:25			
6	12:05-12:52	11:29-12:15			
7	12:56-1:43	12:19-12:57			
8	1:47-2:35	1:01-1:39			

Figure 8.

Child Development

Teachers can support paraeducators by offering knowledge and background information about the development of middle school students. Whether the paraeducator is novice or expert, a child development guide better helps paraeducators to understand middle school students' physical, social-emotional, language and cognitive behavior through a developmental lens.

This middle school age group goes through many changes physically, emotionally, and cognitively, therefore it is significant for paraeducators to understand individual background information as well as the general developmental considerations in order to improve how she or he offers differentiation and relates to certain students. It is best practice that teachers deliver the guide director to paraeducators to read and reference both on their own and to have for students at any point.

Supporting paraeducators in learning to understand the general characteristics of children is crucial in order to meet students' diverse needs. Teachers who provide learning information equip the paraeducator and in turn, foster the education of the student's in the classroom.



Provide a child's developmental guide for your paraeducators to read and review.

Figure 9. Adapted from Wood, Chip. (2007). *Yardsticks*.

	11-year-olds
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restless and very energetic • Evidence of physical maturity (weight & height) • Experience more colds, flu, ear infections etc. • Needs lots of food, physical activity, and sleep
Social-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs lots of time to talk with peers; heavy users of the phone, cellphone, instant messaging, and email • Need adult empathy, humor, and sensitivity to help them cope with their rapidly changing minds and bodies • Impulsive-often talk before thinking • Have trouble making decisions • Likes to challenge rules, argue, and test limits
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy arguing and debating • Appreciate humor • Imitate adult language
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would rather learn new skills than review or improve previous work • Becoming more adept at abstract thinking (justice) • Improved reasoning skills • Able to see the world from various perspectives

	12-year-olds
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very energetic, needs lots of sleep, exercise, and food • Enjoy physical education and sports • Growth spurts in boys and girls • Girls begin to show signs of puberty; most are menstruating
Social-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult personality begins to emerge • Capable of self-awareness, insight, and empathy • Enthusiastic and uninhibited • Care more about peer opinions than those of teachers and parents • Initiate their own activities without adult prompting
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and enjoy sarcasm, double meanings, word play, and more sophisticated jokes • Enjoy conversation with adults and peers • Value peer vocabulary (slang)
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More able to think abstractly • May begin to excel at a subject or a skill • Can see both sides of an argument • Very interested in civics, history, current events, politics, social justice, and environmental issues, as well as pop culture and the latest clothes, watches etc. • Increasingly able to organize their thoughts and their work

13-year-olds	
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of physical energy • Skin problems are common; hygiene becomes more important • Most girls are menstruating and have reached almost full physical development • Most boys are showing first signs of puberty and are physically awkward
Social-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very concerned about personal appearance, not necessary their personal environment • Often quieter than twelves or fourteens • Like to be left alone when at home • Moody and sensitive; anger can flare up suddenly • Their feelings are easily hurt and they can hurt other's feelings (stems from being insecure or scared) • Girls tend to focus on close friendships; boys tend to travel in small groups or gangs and horseplay • Girls show more interest in older boys than in boys their own age • Spend hours on the phone, computer, playing video games, and watching TV • Feel peer pressure • Strong interest in sports • Worry about schoolwork
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to know and use current peer language • Answer parents with a single word or loud extreme language
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some beginning to be more capable of abstract reasoning • Tentative, worried, and unwilling to take risks on tough intellectual tasks • Like to challenge intellectual as well as social authority

Beginning of the Year Checklist

There are many things to organize in the beginning of the academic year, both for teachers and for paraeducators. In order to establish quality support for the paraeducator, a checklist, which includes best practices, is best provided to paraeducator(s) within the first two weeks of school. In this way, he or she feels prepared, welcomed, and appreciated.

The checklist, figure 10 below, focuses on key points mentioned previously, such as roles & responsibilities, formal introductions, and file & record keeping. In addition, five critical points are part of the checklist since the effective, efficient, and respectful utilization of the paraeducator works best with these items in place:

Teachers must have a designated place in the classroom for paraeducators to store their belongings. Whether or not paraeducators have a locker or space in another classroom, the paraeducators may carry items with them like a purse, wallet, water bottle, keys, sunglasses, other personal items, as well as student folders and documents which require safe storage. Proactively communicate that there is a place where items can be stored for the duration of the class period(s).

Usually, staff members obtain a mailbox. As a teacher working with one or more paraeducators, be on the look out to locate his or her mailbox in case you need to deliver useful documents. There are instances when spare room keys are available; offer that the paraeducator to ask the office manager if one is available, as this allows two people to help students in an emergency. While a key may not be available, showing your level of trust in the paraeducator supports the development of the relationship.

Teachers are reminded to take the time to serve as a tour guide around the classroom, so that the paraeducator is able to locate materials, supplies, and documents. Teachers want to utilize the paraeducator as much as possible by giving him or her access to materials or supplies.

Most importantly, assume that the paraeducator needs the teacher's assistance to identify the students with disabilities. Some paraeducators may already know, however, verifying that the paraeducator is aware of every student with an IEP even if the student has different case managers is essential communication. Along with proper identification, teachers may provide paraeducators with a class seating chart, IEPs at a glance, data sheets, service minutes documentation or other sources required for their

role in the classroom. Each of these items are of use to promote the relationship between the teacher and paraeducator as well as that of student and paraeducator.

 Complete the checklist after the first two weeks of school and follow up on any incomplete items in the second month of school.

Best Practices	Yes	No	Notes/ Follow up
1. Provided a place for paraeducator to store personal belongings (safe and secure)			
2. Established a way to share information & communicate (folder, mailbox, binder)			
3. Obtained paraeducator's information, schedule, and school email			
4. Initiated informal discussion to learn more about paraeducators' skills, education, experiences, and knowledge (GTKY)			
5. Paraeducator has a school mailbox			
6. A room key is provided			
7. Familiarized him or her with the classroom (materials, supplies, activity sheets, schedule, and more)			

Best Practices	Yes	No	Notes/ Follow up
8. Paraeducator received information on students to be serviced			
9. Introduced paraeducator to students			
10. Paraeducator shared information about self to the class			
11. Established roles, responsibilities, and expectations within the classroom			

Figure 10.

Chapter Three

Professional Support

“You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending” -C.S. Lewis

After reviewing best practices for providing personal support, it is just as crucial to provide professional support for paraeducators. The law states that the credentialed teacher is to direct the work of the paraeducators. According to recent research, paraeducators are given responsibilities for which the teacher has not yet trained them. As a result, paraeducators require the training, knowledge, information, and resources to provide support in the instructional process. Teachers regard the work that paraeducators do as necessary to the safety, health, and academic success of all students (PAR², 2018).

In order to provide professional support, the teacher must be inviting, trusting, and have a positive outlook toward the teaching profession. The teacher needs to take a proactive approach to invite paraeducators to be part of the school and classroom culture. Whether a novice or experienced paraeducator, providing these resources is a way to demonstrate to the paraeducators that they are appreciated, valued, and ultimately accountable for their role. Professional support offers paraeducators growth and development. Teachers need to guide the work of paraeducators by training, delegating specific tasks, and by explaining the classroom instruction, policies, procedures, and more. Nevin, Villa, & Thousand (2009) describe quality professional support by describing what supervision is not and what supervision is:

“Supervision is **not** expecting a paraeducator to learn how to perform the job on his or her own, focusing only on a paraeducator’s errors, or leaving a paraeducator alone to design and deliver instruction. It is illegal for a paraeducator to be the primary service provider because this violates the student’s right to free and appropriate public education from a highly qualified teacher...

Supervision **is**: to ensure that the paraeducators have the knowledge and skills to do the job based on observations on the job” (p.84-85).

Supervision, through “an engaged teaching partnership”, relies on effective, ongoing supervision job training (Karge, Pierson, & Robinson, 2011). Research shows that “classrooms are run more effectively, and students receive more support” (Karge, Pierson, & Robinson 2011, p. 8). This section contains several resources to assist

teachers in delivering effective professional support to special education paraeducators. The topics discussed are a) ethics and confidentiality, b) chain of command, c) data collection, d) behavior management, e) supplementary aids and supports, f) training and staff development, and g) substitute plans. The following topics provide specific information that must be discussed with all paraeducators.

Confidentiality and Ethics

Confidentiality is an essential aspect of the paraeducator's job. School districts must complete confidentiality training so that paraeducators understand laws regarding how to protect student information. According to IDEIA, school employees must follow guidelines to preserve the privacy rights of students and parents (Gerlach, 2016). Teachers must provide professional support by reviewing and communicating the "district norms that exist in order to ensure that confidentiality of student information is protected and that any communication outside of the district norms could violate student confidentiality laws" (Education Service Center, Region 20 & Texas Education Agency, 2018). Begin a discussion about how school employees have access to student's personal information and their families. Confidential information about a student may include: (a) personal and family information, (b) assessment results (formal and informal), (c) academic performance and progress, (d) social, behavioral, and psychological actions in structured and unstructured settings and data, (e) educational program goals and objectives (f) financial status, (g) family personal matters/relationships. Inform the paraeducator that all information must be kept confidential and made available only to school employees or agency who require it to ensure the rights, health, safety, and physical well-being of the student. Figure 11 is a checklist with talking points to communicate the importance of confidentiality. Additionally, figure 12 is a list of tips regarding confidentiality and suggested actions a paraeducator may take when faced with a situation.

"A code of ethics for paraeducators defines and describes acceptable practices. A code for paraeducators would examine specific responsibilities of the paraeducator, as well as the relationships that must be maintained with students, parents, teachers, school and community" (Gerlach, 2016). Review the suggested code of ethics for paraeducators. This list in Figure 13 includes information about accepting responsibilities in the workplace and maintaining positive and healthy relationships with teachers, school personnel, students, parents, and the school.

 Discuss confidentiality and ethics at the beginning of the year

 Provide any documentation or tips on confidentiality and ethics according to the school policy for reference at any point during the academic year

Confidentiality: Talking Points	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidentiality must be maintained <p>Federal laws, state laws, and local policies require it and it is our obligation to comply.</p>	√
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information that must be kept confidential <p>-student and family information -family relations - financial status -assessment results (formal and informal) -academic performance and progress -social, behavioral, and psychological actions in structured and unstructured settings and data -educational program goals and objectives.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who may access written or oral information of a student <p>School personnel who are responsible for the design, preparation, and delivery of education and related services and require it to ensure the rights, health, safety, and physical well-being of the student.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who do not have access to written or oral information of a student <p>Anyone who is not included on the child’s IEP does not have access to any written or oral information of a student.</p>	

Figure 11. Adapted from Gerlach. (2016). *Let’s Team Up*.

Confidentiality Tips for Paraeducators
Tip 1. Never discuss a student's educational plans in public places (e.g., faculty room, playground, hallway, community park, grocery store).
Tip 2. When meeting to discuss a student's educational plan, only discuss information that is directly relevant to the issues at hand.
Tip 3. If someone approaches you and begins to breach the confidentiality of a student, provide a kind but clear response. For example, "I'm not on that student's educational team, so I don't think it is appropriate for me to be involved in discussing his educational program."
Tip 4. When the teacher or the paraprofessional are no longer on the student's team, you must continue to maintain confidentiality about any information that you have learned about the student and/or family.
Tip 5. When in doubt, put yourself in the shoes of the parent or student and ask yourself: "Would it be okay for people to be talking about me or my family in this manner, in this same location, and for the same purpose?"

Figure 12. From Education Service Center, Region 20 & Texas Education Agency. (2018). *Working With Paraprofessionals*.

Paraprofessional Code of Ethics
1. Practice the standards of professional and ethical conduct approved by the school/district agency.
2. Recognize and respect the roles of teachers as supervisors and team leaders.
3. Recognize and respect the differences in the roles of teachers, other professional practitioners, and paraprofessionals.
4. Recognize the teacher's responsibilities for planning learner programs, modifying curriculum and instruction, assessing learner progress, and developing behavior management programs.
5. Perform tasks that are within an identified scope of responsibility for paraprofessionals in different position levels.
6. Share information with parents about their child's performance as directed by the supervising teacher.
7. Refer concerns expressed by learners or others to the supervising teacher or other professional practitioner.
8. Share appropriate information about learner's performance, behavior, progress, and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher in the appropriate setting.
9. Discuss confidential issues and school problems only with the supervising teacher or designated personnel.
10. Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all learner's, families, and staff members.
11. Refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a learner's disability, race, sex, cultural background or religion.
12. Follow the guidelines established by the district agency to protect the health, safety, and well-being of all learners and staff.
13. Represent the school district or agency in a positive manner.
14. Follow the chain of command established by the district to address policy questions, system issues, and personnel practices.
15. When problems cannot be resolved, utilize the agency's grievance procedure.
16. Participate with administrators and other stakeholders in creating and implementing comprehensive systems of professional development for paraprofessionals.
17. Participate in continuing staff development.
18. Know school policies and procedures.

Figure 13. From Education Service Center, Region 20 & Texas Education Agency. (2018). *Working With Paraprofessionals*.

Chain of Command

Expectations and class norms may differ from classroom to classroom. A chain of command creates collaboration, physical, and emotional safety. Respect for chain of command is essential for successful management.

A special education paraeducator typically roves from classroom to classroom working with a variety of teachers. Teachers can only control what goes on in their classroom as they direct the paraeducator in that setting. Therefore, best practice is for the teacher to communicate to the paraeducator(s) that when a problem arises or a situation occurs in a specific classroom, the paraeducator must communicate immediately to the supervising teacher in that setting in order to resolve it together. If the problem or situation occurs with specific student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the teacher is duty-bound and must make the case manager aware of the occurrence.

Teacher-paraeducator teams need to establish a method to have an open discussion about this matter. Teachers want to know when problem arises or occurs so that he or she can resolve the issue first. In order to avoid chaos, the teacher needs to explain this course of action explicitly to the paraeducator. When student events are reported randomly to whomever, trust and communication are disrupted in the process.

In terms of effective strategies, the practice of providing a visual to the paraeducator is beneficial. The chart may be used as a point of reference in case the paraeducator has doubt or uncertainty. The visual reference shows that the teacher must be notified of all events when it occurs in their classroom setting. The teacher would delegate any issues or concerns up the chain of command if necessary. The paraeducators input or recall of event may be required.

In these training conversations, make sure that paraeducator asks questions and that he or she is clear about the procedures for responding and actions to be taken on this topic. The following figure is an example of the chain of command in a public middle school in North County, San Diego.



Review the chain of command with paraeducator.



Include one in their binder if one is not included

CHAIN OF COMMAND
Middle School
North County, San Diego, CA

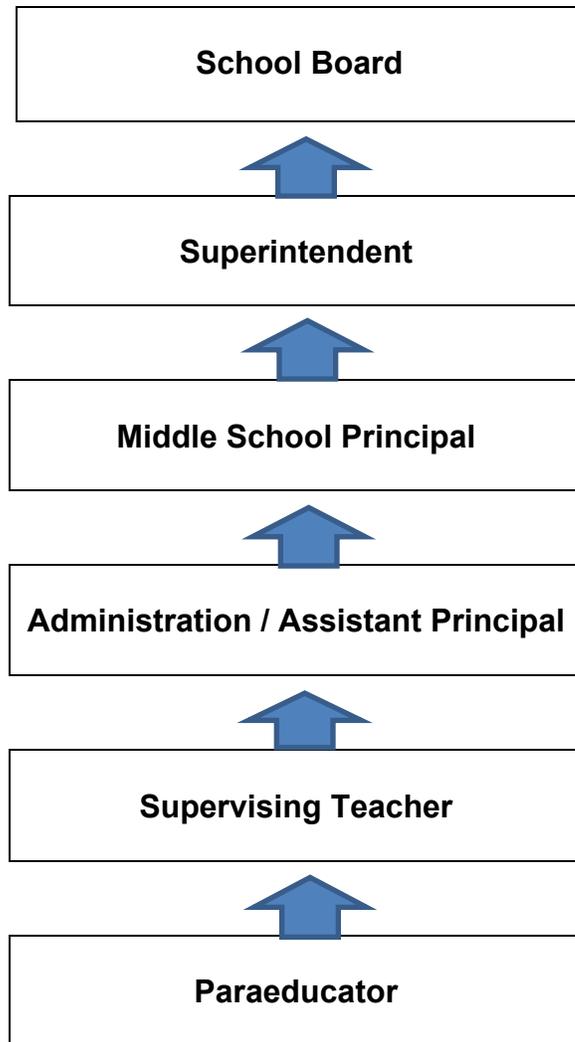


Figure 14.

Data Collection

The definition of data collection is that it is written formal documentation that is recorded. In order for the assessment process to be successful, there must be a procedure for the collection of information. Paraeducators may assist to provide data as directed by the teacher. The teacher will determine what documentation is required: anecdotal reports, checklists, formal and informal observations, work completion, logs and more. Each of these methods require focused and skilled data collection abilities.

Using objective skills of observation and taking data are relevant to a paraeducator's job. This information is essential in determining the student's skills, met goals, and needed skills/unmet goals. Written data is useful for all observation activities. Issues may arise when people are not reporting or reporting inaccurately. Inform the paraeducator(s) that observation is key and train the paraeducator about objective vs. subjective observation. Subjective information is based on opinions, personal experiences, judgements, assumptions, rumors, personal beliefs, and personal cultural backgrounds. Objective information is based on facts and details omitting interpretation as much as possible. It is pertinent that objective observation is done for a purpose, and that paraprofessionals record facts and details on student observations (what they say and do) without placing any personal biases or prejudices.

Teachers must train, explicitly teach, and delegate a data collection task to the paraeducator. There are several methods to keep data:

a) A checklist is a formal list of specific skills and/or behaviors. The paraeducator carefully watches the student and records whether the behavior is observed. Depending on the checklist, it may be 'yes' or 'no,' a scale from zero to four (or up to six), tally marks, or other similar qualities.

b) Anecdotal records consist of a few sentences on a specific data sheet that describes the child's activity at a specific moment during structured or unstructured instruction.

c) Interviewing consists on asking the student certain questions regarding interests, feelings, likes or dislikes, and so much more. Writing the student's precise words is crucial.

d) Service logs are like attendance sheets, with specific markings to show when students are present or absent. These logs keep track of each student's service minutes in general education which is needed for special education records.

e) Frequency or Duration logs/notes refers to how often or how long a behavior is occurring. The paraeducator must be clear about the differences in these terms and be encouraged to ask questions. For example, Frequency: The student screamed 5 times during the hour observation period. Duration: One instance of screaming lasted 35 seconds.

A checklist with best practices is created to create a reliable system for data collection. The checklist has basic components which teachers need to review with paraeducator to effectively take data collection. The teacher must be sure that the paraeducator has the basic knowledge of why data is needed and what its importance is relative to goal and task achievement. The checklist proceeds with a step-by-step in making sure that the paraeducator is consistently trained, gains knowledge, their questions have been answered, as well as proper safekeeping, and monitoring/feedback is practiced.



Create a checklist to provide a system of teaching and training data collection.

Checklist: Review Data Collection Process with Paraeducator	√
1. Understands the importance of collecting data: it informs instruction, helps develop an educational program, intervention supports, identifies when change is needed	
2. Knowledge that data is needed to better inform IEP, behavior, group instruction, and social interactions goals and objectives	
3. Identify student(s) that will be observed	
4. Provide forms and additional copies for each individual student	
5. Review forms: “how” is data taken	
6. Answer questions, provide clarification, practice	
7. Neat and organize sheets with dividers and names as appropriate	
8. Allocate a safe area in the classroom where the forms will be placed.	
9. Provide a data schedule if necessary	
10. Provide post it notes for data to be transferred at a later time	
11. Monitor the data sheets	
12. Give constructive feedback: positive messages and areas to improve	
13. Provide support to help paraeducator improve data collection as directed by the teacher	

Figure 15.

Behavior Management

In each classroom environment, the teacher manages behavior and classroom functions in a variety of ways. It is pivotal to the success of the classroom management plan that the teacher explains and models the classroom management system to both the paraprofessional and to the students. Once the paraeducator is assimilated into the classroom environment, he or she can reinforce the consistency of the expected behaviors in the classroom as directed by the teacher.

Strategically speaking, the teacher needs to review the paraeducators role regarding behavior management. A fundamental proactive strategy is to build good relationships with the students. Good relationships harvest care, trust, teamwork, consistency, and cooperation. When working with students, teachers and paraeducators must have a proactive behavior management and behavior management system in place and carry equal weight when it comes to reinforcing the plan. Support the paraeducators by explaining the established plan in the classroom, and better utilize them by imbuing them with that power.

Teachers need to review and discuss behavior expectations and interventions with paraeducators. Teachers must create a healthy, positive environment wherein students can trust and respect paraeducators. Reviewing classroom and behavior management plans is essential to paraeducators.

The teacher must verify and review how to deliver warnings, removing privileges, and consequences. The following checklist provides paraeducators with some proactive behavior management strategies. Additionally, the second checklist assures that teachers have communicated critical elements regarding behavior management to the paraeducator and the students.

 Create a proactive and management strategies used in your classroom. Include a copy for the paraeducator(s)

Behavior Management: Proactive Strategies	√
Establish a good and positive relationship with the students	
Establish clear expectations for desired behavior: posted in the classroom for everyone to see	
Use non-verbal cues: smile, nod, make eye contact	
Use proximity: move closer to student who is off task	
Show respect/regard for all students: use calm voice, say 'thank you,'	
Provide praise to individual students and as groups	
Use student's names in examples during instruction	
State expectations before an activity	
Restate or repeat directions	
Maintain eye contact	
Minimize distractions	

Figure 16. Adapted from Puget Sound Educational Service District Paraeducator Program (2007). *Paraeducator Handbook*.

Behavior Management	√
Practice consistency	
Discuss any exceptions for students with disabilities: more opportunities	
Expectations are established and posted in the room for everyone to see	
Set consequences for specific problems: know what they are	
Deliver the consequences each time the negative behavior occurs	
Follow through with the consequence: phone call home, behavior chart, lunch detention, after school detention, etc.	
Reward & Praise more frequently for students to notice expected and acceptable behavior	
Use humor	
Communicate to students that the adults are in charge	
Avoid arguments, speak privately if necessary	

Figure 17. Adapted from Puget Sound Educational Service District Paraeducator Program (2007). *Paraeducator Handbook*.

Supplemental Supports, Aids, and Services

Often, paraeducators have a general idea about some of the supports that students with disabilities require in general education classrooms. Students with disabilities have every opportunity to be included and participate in general education classrooms, as stated in their IEP. The multipage chart below, figure 18, is included with the supplemental supports, aids, and services, that students at the middle school may require. A list such as this helps teachers and paraeducators to see possible supports the student has access to in the classroom.

Teachers receive students' complete IEP and IEP at a glance. The IEP at a glance lists the supports, aids, and services that each student requires. It is best practice to review all students IEPs at a glance with the paraeducator to make notes on the chart or the daily schedule of the required supports stated in each individual IEP. This way the teacher-paraeducator can together create a quick reference for each student during that class period.

Once the paraeducator has charts for every student, the teacher may ask the paraeducator what are the appropriate adaptations or modifications for each student during assessments, instruction, or for assignments. As a team, discuss what other recommendations and instructional interventions would be helpful to each of the students, while keeping the case manager informed.

This strategy assists the paraeducator to become better informed, while incorporating relevant and appropriate supports, aids, or services each student uses in the classroom. In addition, by providing this resource, the paraeducator has a list as a guide to which he or she can refer to during any point during the school year.

 Create a supplemental supports, aids, and services chart for each class period for students who require differentiated instruction and review with the paraeducator.

 This guide needs to be provided for paraeducator's reference

Figure 18. Adapted from Nevin et al. (2009). *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators.*

Environmental	√
Preferential Seating	
Study Quiet Areas	
Flexible Seating	
Reduce/Minimize Distractions (Visual, Spatial, Auditory, Movement)	
Teach positive rules for use of space	
Other:	

Instruction	√
Extent time requirements	
Vary activity often	
Allow Breaks	
Omit copying in timed situations	
Copy of teacher notes, presentation, or documents	
Send additional materials home	
Other:	

Presentation of Subject Matter	
Teach to student's learning style/strength intelligences	√
Use active, experiential learning	
Use specialized curriculum	
Record class lectures and discussions to replay later	
Provide prewritten notes, outline, or organizer	
Copy of classmate's notes	
Present, demonstrates, and models	
Other:	

Presentation of Subject Matter	
Use manipulatives and real objects	√
Highlight critical information or main ideas	
Pre-teach vocabulary	
Make and use vocabulary lists	
Additional language levels of assignments, books, or documents	
Use visual organizers/sequences	
Use paired reading/writing	
Use diaries or learning logs	
Reword, Repeat, Rephrase instructions and questions	
Preview and review major concepts in primary language	
Other:	

Material	√
Limit amount of material on page	
Audiotape, texts, and other class material	
Pencil grips	
Study guides and advanced organizers	
Use supplementary materials:	
Provide note-taking assistance	
Copy class notes	
Scan tests and class notes into computer/laptop/iPad	
Large print or Braille material	
Use of communication book or board	
Provide assistive technology software	
Other:	

Specialized Equipment of Procedure	√		√
Wheelchair		Walker	
Standing Board		Positioning	
Computer/iPad/Laptop		Computer Software	
Modified keyboard		Video	
Switches		Augmentative communication devices	
Restroom equipment		Braces	
Customized mealtime materials		Other:	

Assignment Modification	√
Give directions in small, distinct steps (written/picture/verbal)	
Provide written directions for oral directions	
Use pictures as supplement to oral directions	
Lower difficulty level	
Shorten assignments	
Raise difficulty level	
Reduce paper and pencil tasks	
Read or repeat directions to student(s)	
Give extra cues or prompts	
Allow students to record or type assignments	
Adapt worksheets and packets	
Provide alternate assignment, when demands of class conflict with student capabilities	
Ignore spelling errors	
Ignore penmanship	
Develop alternative rubrics	
Other:	

Self-Management/Follow-Through	√
Provide pictorial or word daily or weekly schedule	
Provide student calendars	
Check for understanding/review	
Request parent reinforcement	
Have student repeat directions	
Teach study skills	
Use binders to organize material	
Design/write/use long-term assignments timelines	
Review and practice in real situations	
Plan for generalization by teaching skill in several environments	
Other:	

Testing Adaptations	✓
Provide oral instructions and/or read test questions	
Use pictorial instructions/questions	
Read test to student	
Preview language of test questions	
Ask questions that have applications in real setting	
Individualized administration of test	
Use short answer	
Use multiple choice	
Shorten length	
Extend time frame	
Use open-note/open-book tests	
Modify format to reduce visual complexity or confusion	
Other:	

Social Interaction Support	√
Use natural peer supports and multiple, rotating peers	
Use peer advocacy	
Use cooperative group learning	
Structure opportunities for social interaction	
Focus on social process rather than the end product	
Structure shared experiences in school and extracurricular activities	
Teach friendship, sharing, negotiation skills to classmates	
Teach social communication skills __Greetings __Conversation __Turn Taking __Sharing __Negotiation __Other:_____	
Other:	

Level of Staff Support (Only consider after previous categories)	√
Consultation	
Stop-in support (one to three times per week)	
Part-time daily support	
Co-teaching (parallel, supportive, complementary, or team-teaching)	
Daily In-class staff support	
Total staff support (staff are in close proximity)	
One-on-one assistant	
Other:	

Specialized Personnel Support	Time Needed
Instructional Support Assistant	
Health Care Assistant	
Behavior Assistant	
Signing Assistant	
Nursing	
Occupational Therapy	
Physical Therapy	
Speech and Language Therapist	
Augmentative Communication Specialist	
Transportation	
Counseling	
Adaptive Physical Education	
Transition Planning	
Orientation/Mobility	
Career Counseling	
Other:	

Training and Staff Development

There are ongoing opportunities for paraeducators to be involved in professional development trainings as provided by the district and/or special education department in the district. Encourage and motivate paraeducator(s) to attend, as it is pivotal to gain a working knowledge of students with disabilities. An alternative to attending is noted here for the state of Texas.

“While teachers may not have the authority to send a paraprofessional to professional development, if a teacher has the capacity, he/she could make suggestions or help the paraprofessional find appropriate training opportunities so that the paraeducator can develop skills specific to the responsibilities he/she is responsible for implementing” (Education Service Center, Region 20 & Texas Education Agency, 2018).

Consistent and continuous training ensures that paraeducators are up to date on providing supports in academic and functional settings, skill sets, implementing students’ IEP goals, objectives and benchmarks, and to understand when and how these a particular strategy is appropriate. Studies show that when well-trained paraeducators work with students, this leads to improved outcomes in academic engagement, social interactions, inclusion with same-age peers, student independence, and less frequent disruptive behavior (PAR²A Center, 2018).

Consequently, an intermittently trained or untrained paraeducator can raise liability concerns for schools. Recommend that paraeducators regularly check email updates to seek training opportunities. The following list, figure 19 provides examples of pertinent trainings that the district or special education department in the district may offer. Other entities that do not charge employees for training include the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) or the County Office of Education, both of which are regional alternative professional development sources.

☛ Encourage paraeducator(s) to be informed and attend the trainings and staff development trainings

List of possible trainings and staff development

- CPR/First Aid
- Autism training
- Inclusion training
- Fading of supports training
- Academic topics
- Behavior management
- Assistive technology
- Special Education training (Speech & Language Pathologist, Adaptive Physical Education Teacher, Physical Therapist, and others)
- Physical Restraint Training (CPI)
- Data collection training
- California Paraeducator Conference

Figure 19.

Substitute Plans

There are days in the academic year when the paraeducator is inevitably absent. A substitute paraeducator may take his or her place. The teacher must encourage paraeducators to have a generalized substitute plan at the ready, so that in the event he or she is absent, the substitute aide can know about the basic routines found in the classroom.

This practice has numerous benefits and is often undervalued. Similarly, as a teacher prepares for a substitute, the paraeducator needs to have a plan and share general classroom information for the substitute paraeducator. The purpose of this is that when paraeducators are absent, the teacher can share the lesson plan or specific roles with the substitute paraeducator. Conversely, with teacher substitute lesson plans, the paraeducator will know what to expect from the substitute teacher.

Equivalently, this provides an opportunity for the paraeducator to be the creator of a lesson plan for a possible substitute, thus supporting growth in the profession. This best practice helps teacher-paraeducator teams to be accountable for their roles and responsibilities even when he or she is absent. This provides an opportunity for the paraeducator to practice planning to understand the components of instruction.

In addition, the paraeducator may receive a summary to know the objective from the previous day and then be able to obtain a general idea of what comes next. The lesson plan provided below is designed so that there is general information at the top pertaining to the specific class. Working together, ask the paraeducator to complete a substitute plan for the specific subject and review it together in order to give feedback, provide clarification or missing information about the instruction.

  The following is an example substitute plan form for the paraeducator. Include additional copies and/or create one online. Safekeep with important documents.

Substitute Plan	Date/Time: _____
Teacher: _____	Room #: _____ Grade level(s): _____
Subject: _____	Current topic: _____
General information about instruction:	
_____ _____ _____ _____	
Specific tasks:	
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
Problems/Issues/Concerns: _____	
_____ _____ _____	
I hope this information helped to make your time in this class pleasant as possible. I would appreciate a note summarizing your time with our students in this class. Thank you so much!	
Summary: _____	
_____ _____ _____ _____	

Figure 20. Adapted from Puget Sound Educational Service District Paraeducator Program (2007). *Paraeducator Handbook*.

Chapter Four

Working Effectively as a Team

“Together we can do great things” -Mother Teresa

Working effectively as a team is fundamental to the success of the delivery of services by the general education teacher and paraeducator. By providing personal and professional support, the teacher-paraeducator relationship share a common vision to meet the needs of all children. A good working relationship focuses on team goals and work towards achieving the goals. As stated in the beginning, paraeducators are a bridge to students, parents, and teachers and play a critical role in improving student achievement.

Communication, mutual respect, and recognition is the foundation for an effective team. The teacher is the leader to promote open communication, provide leadership, and supervise with guidance. As stated in many topics in this manual, the teacher needs to be proactive to initiate discussions about all topics that are essential to the success of a team. Team members must work together to build trust, commitment, cooperation, and open communication necessary for a productive classroom environment. There are times when paraeducators are left without direction, instruction, and guidance. It is especially important that teachers explain expectations, define roles, describe goals, and provide information about the learners. Additionally, teachers need to determine the extraordinary skills, interests, knowledge, and training that each member brings as well as relative weaknesses to improve the delivery of instruction. Teachers need to communicate ‘we are a team’ and show it by integrating the paraeducator(s) to the classroom environment. Paraeducators must be willing to ask for clarification and assistance when something is not understood. Failures arise when there is lack of understanding of the roles or expectations. Another factor contributing to failure of a team is the lack of respect for each other’s culture, feelings, skills, or an unwillingness to cooperate, or an unnecessary need to assert one’s authority over another. It is crucial to acknowledge, understand, and respect each other’s attitudes and feelings.

Cipriano, Barnes, Bertoli, Flynn, & Rivers (2016) captures the concept that interactions between teacher-paraeducator essentially improve student, teacher, and paraeducator outcomes. Researchers have consistently concluded that positive adult relationships support the student-learning environment and provide students a model for positive interaction. The literature further describes successful teacher-paraeducator

interactions is a strong reflection of unity of purpose, positive emotional classroom climate, and mutual respect. “When respect is present, collaboration is easier, more effective, and people feel more open to work with one another.” Gerlach (2016) states “team effectiveness can be achieved by sharing expectations with one another, by allowing the paraeducator to participate in the planning process, by appreciating each other’s unique personality traits, by respecting diversity, and by demonstrating a positive attitude toward teamwork” (p. 3). This chapter discusses planning & delegating, training model & co-teaching, and evaluating the team through an assessment.

Planning & Delegating

Karge and other researchers identified concerns about practices being employed regarding paraeducators. One research item revealed that most teachers did not plan for the paraeducators. Among those teachers who did plan for the paraeducators, the majority of these transmitted their plans orally. This study is concerning because paraeducators, who may have received little or no training, are working without written direction, with hastily constructed or easily misconstrued oral directions (French, 2001; Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010). These types of lackadaisical planning and decision-making tasks are never appropriate for non-credentialed professions and may compromise the integrity of the instructional program (French, 2001; Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009). The findings of another study reveal that when teachers did not involve paraeducator in the planning process, the paraeducator is likely to “have some difficulty understanding why such activities are important, how they connect to other lessons, and how they contribute to the students’ overall development” (Rueda & Monzo, 2002, p. 26). It is fundamental to plan and delegate decision making to the paraeducator.

When planning together, it is wise to think ahead about the specific roles and responsibilities the paraeducator will have during the instruction. If not, the teacher may be asked consistently ‘what should I do next?’. Teacher-paraeducator are an academic team who need to work efficiently together. The teacher needs to maximize the support of the paraeducator during the specified instruction time, and the paraeducator must deliver the needed intervention in a timely manner.

As a primary step, the teacher must communicate the objectives and purpose of the lesson. Some ideas include updating a bulletin board with objectives, an academic schedule, or a weekly plan. During the lesson, there are many job responsibilities that he or she can partake. Once the teacher has a clear idea of the specific jobs for the

paraeducator(s), the teacher must have a specific written plan with explicit steps to follow, see figure 21. Along with the steps, the teacher needs to verbally explain the plan, answer any questions, and provide materials needed prior the delivery of instruction. This step requires much time and deliberate planning. The teacher must also delegate tasks for the paraeducator to implement during the lesson.

Delegating tasks ensures that teacher as the leader is not working alone and cannot do everything by his or herself. Devlin (2008) states, “delegating empowers and motivates a paraeducator, thereby allowing the teacher to make the most of their time with students” (p. 43). Delegating tasks helps the overall team get instruction started with intention and purpose. It is important that teacher delegate tasks to make the instruction more manageable and reach the objective. When delegating tasks, consider their skills, resources, training, materials, and practice.

Teachers need to provide the right instructions, allocate specific time, and provide material or resources by writing them in the plan. During instruction, the teacher must observe and monitor the task delegated to the paraeducator. At the end, it is valuable to show appreciation and feedback to the paraeducator that is appropriate for the classroom setting. Corrections, criticisms or displeasure are never appropriate to discuss in front of students. Review the results of the task by checking students work or evaluating how effectively the task was performed. Based upon the results, the teacher then needs to provide constructive feedback including positive messages and areas to improve are crucial to discuss. Additionally, invite the paraeducator to opionate and contribute about the instruction. Figure 22, is a checklist for teachers to ensure the plan of delegating.

In order for the paraeducator to improve, the teacher needs to provide specific support such as direct modeling, which is covered later in this chapter. A checklist is provided here for teachers to review all components of effectively delegating tasks.

 Create a written lesson plan with objectives, activities, and delegate tasks to incorporate the paraeducator. Consider their skills, experiences, and training when delegating tasks. Practice and be consistent.

 Review the checklist to identify that all best practices are achieved

Paraeducator Plan			
Lesson Objective:			
Specific tasks before the lesson?			
Specific tasks during the lesson?			
Specific tasks after the lesson?			
Debrief and evaluate the outcome of the lesson:			

Figure 21. Adapted from Nevin et al. (2009). *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators.*

Checklist: Delegating Tasks	√
Carefully plan the lesson (beginning, middle, end)	
Objective is clear	
Review task(s) with paraeducator	
Include written plans	
Plans include all needed information and materials/resources necessary	
Clearly allocate specific time frame	
Monitor the task	
Show appreciation at the end: say 'thank you'	
Review the results: how effective was the task performed and how does the paraeducator evaluate the instruction	
Give constructive feedback: positive messages and areas to improve	
Provide support to help paraeducator improve instruction as directed by the teacher	

Figure 22. Adapted from Nevin et al. (2009). *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators*.

Training Model & Co-teaching

Through quality supervision of paraeducators, paraeducators have the knowledge and skills to do the job based upon the interactions of observations on the job, clear communication, direct modeling, coaching, and constructive feedback to improve instruction and student learning (Nevin, Villa, & Thousand, 2009). Paraeducators have reported that they never received adequate training or explicit direction from certificated professional (Carter, O'Rourke, Sisco, & Pelsue, 2009). "If the supervision and [trainings] of teachers requires face-to-face meetings, it seems reasonable to expect that the supervision of paraeducators would require no less (French, 2001). While this has been reiterated, the importance of training and collegiality cannot be underestimated. Researchers revealed that paraeducators agree with coaching and receiving feedback from their supervising teacher because it was beneficial and the suggestions were insightful (Mason, Gerow, et al., 2019; Wallace et al., 2001).

Coaching and mentoring are an area in which the teacher can empower the paraeducator to become a "second teacher" in the classroom. Stockall (2014) states that individual coaching with teacher-paraeducator appear to be the most successful model. She recommends the direct instruction training model (DITM) which "can promote independence and confidence while gradually releasing responsibility to the learner" see figure 23 (p. 198). Additionally, this model reflects best practices in special education for students but may be used for adults as well. The teacher defines the objective, plans, instructs, guides, observes, and provides feedback. The paraeducator actively listens, responds, ask questions, clarifies, practices, and self-evaluates. This training model takes practice and consists of six steps defined in figure 24.

Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to use this model to implement co-teaching practices. The overarching goal of co-teaching is to gather additional human resources to support student learning (Villa et al., 2009). Teacher-paraeducator classroom generally begin with supportive co-teaching because it involves less planning and coordination. As skills and practice in the classroom strengthen, it is recommended as best practice to use parallel, complementary, or team teaching in the classroom. These approaches require planning, more time, and knowledge of one another's skills (Nevin et al., 2009). This manual will be suggesting and commenting on parallel co-teaching as a strategy to deliver instruction with the paraeducator once teacher has trained and recognizes the paraeducators skills. Parallel co-teaching is described to have seven variations (a) split class, (b) station teaching or learning centers, (c) co-teachers rotate, (d) cooperative group monitoring, (e) experiment or lab monitoring, (f)

learning style focus, or (g) supplementary instruction. Grouping becomes an important component as it must be heterogeneous each time. Teacher must decide when the students and paraeducator(s) are ready for this new approach. Figure 25 describes each of the seven variations of parallel co-teaching to implement as best practice. Finally, a lesson plan template, figure 26 is adapted from *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators*, to help incorporate co-teaching strategies as determined by the teacher.

 Review and practice the DITM model with paraeducator(s). This is a great strategy to teach parallel co-teaching.

FOR THE PARAPROFESSIONAL	WITH THE PARAPROFESSIONAL		BY THE PARAPROFESSIONAL
I DO IT 	I DO IT 	WE DO IT 	YOU DO IT
Identifies goals & obj. Provides instruction	Teacher Demonstration	Guided Practice	Independent Practice
TEACHER Explains, provides reasons, defines terms	TEACHER Models, explicitly identifies skills, suggests	STUDENT Initiates, approximates, practices	STUDENT Initiates, self-directs, self-evaluates
PARAPROFESSIONAL listens, asks questions	STUDENT Questions, responds	TEACHER Asks questions, encourages, clarifies, confirms	TEACHER Observes, provides performance feedback
INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT Prompting Techniques	INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT Prompting Techniques	INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT Prompting Techniques	INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT Prompting Techniques

Figure 23. Stockall. (2014). *When an Aide Really Becomes an Aid.*

Step	Task	Lead Person(s)	Explanation
1	Identify training goal & objectives	Teacher & Paraeducator	Based on instruction and student's needs, establish objectives: teaching, prompting skills, fading support, precision request
2	Instruction	Teacher	Explain the skill, steps, and rationale.
3	Demonstration	Teacher	Demonstrate and articulate the skill with several students or individual students by stating exactly what to do.
4	Guided Practice	Teacher, paraeducator, student(s)	Work with paraeducator to complete the skill together. Teacher guides and suggests how to implement the skill. Paraeducator is encouraged to ask questions.
5	Observe independent practice	Teacher, paraeducator, student(s)	Teacher shifts responsibility over to the paraeducator. Paraeducator executes the skill set while teacher observes. Paraeducator initiates, self-directs, and self-evaluates his/her own practice.
6	Provide performance feedback	Teacher	Provides immediate feedback, explain what was correct, areas of improvement, and what needs reinforcement.

Figure 24. Adapted from Stockall. (2014). *When an Aide Really Becomes an Aid.*

Split Class	Each co-teacher is responsible for a particular group of students, monitoring understanding and providing guided instruction including re-teaching the group, if necessary.
Station Teaching or Learning Centers	Each co-teacher is responsible for assembling, guiding, and monitoring one or more learning centers or stations.
Co-Teachers Rotate	The co-teachers rotate among two or more groups of students, with each co-teacher teaching a different component of the lesson. This is similar to station teaching or learning centers, except that in this case the teachers rotate from group to group rather than having groups of students rotate from station to station.
Cooperative Group Monitoring	Each co-teacher takes responsibility for monitoring and providing feedback and assistance to a given number of cooperative group of students.
Experiment or Lab Monitoring	Each co-teacher monitors and assists a given number of laboratory groups, providing guided instruction to groups that require additional support.
Learning Style Focus	One co-teacher works with a group of students using primarily visual strategies, another co-teacher works with a group using primarily auditory strategies, and yet another may work with a group using kinesthetic strategies.
Supplementary Instruction	One co-teacher works with the rest of the class on a concept or assignment, skill, or learning strategy. The other co-teacher (a) provides extra guidance on the concept or assignment to students who are self-identified or teacher-identified as needing extra assistance, (b) instructs students to apply or generalize the skill to a relevant community environment, (c) provides a targeted group of students with guided practice in how to apply the learning strategy to the content being addressed, or (d) provides enrichment activities

Figure 25. From Nevin et al. (2009). *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators*.

<p>Date:</p> <p>Content Area:</p> <p>Co-teachers:</p> <p>Lesson Objective(s):</p> <p>Content Standards Addressed:</p> <p>Co-Teaching Approach(es) used: supportive parallel complementary team teaching</p> <p>Room arrangement details and/or picture:</p> <p>Materials needed by co-teachers:</p> <p>Student learning assessed by both teachers (describe):</p> <p>What specific supports, aids, or services do select students need:</p> <p>Evaluate the lesson:</p>

Figure 26. From Nevin et al. (2009). *A Guide to Co-Teaching with Paraeducators*.

Team Assessment

A team of two will have strengths and weaknesses. It is powerful when a team comes together to assess the overall effectiveness of the team. This skill is necessary to enhance the teamwork because it improves goal attainment, enriches teacher-paraeducator relationship, and enhances the performance of each team member. In parallel, successful teams measure accomplishments, identify issues, and strive to correct any problems.

This team assessment is from Gerlach's *Let's Team Up* (2016), in which he suggests assessing teacher-paraeducator effectiveness. The teacher-paraeducator team is unique in that they share a common goal: to deliver high quality instruction to all students while differentiating instruction for students with disabilities. This educational team needs to be committed to this goal and other specific goals as well. The team's behavior and performance reflect to fulfill the purpose.

Taking the time and commitment to build teacher-paraeducator relationships is relevant. The sample assessment addresses goal, communication, planning, problem-solving, respect, accountability, roles & responsibilities, expectations, and appreciation which are essential to address. Offer opportunities for both teacher-paraeducator to assess how the team is functioning. Together, changes can take place to improve the effectiveness of the team.

 The team needs to assess their effectiveness to consistently work to make progress, achieve goals, and set new goals.

Team Assessment: Teacher-Paraeducator	Yes	No	Needs to Improve
Team agrees that the mission is clear, and goals are established			
Roles, responsibilities of each team member are clearly established			
Team expectations are communicated in a climate of trust and openness			
Team understands each person's role in any decisions that must be made			
Team is clear about what we expect from each other in order to get the job done			
Team member keep one another informed of issues affecting the team			
Team listens to each other's ideas			
Team members are recognized and appreciated for the work we do			
Team has a planning time			
Planning time is effective and productive			

Figure 27. From Gerlach. (2016). *Let's Team Up*.

Resources

The following web sources address different topics including direction to improve supervision of paraeducators, education about paraeducators, coaching guide, building teamwork, trainings, templates, and various other resources.

Council for Exceptional Children Professional Standards

<https://www.cec.sped.org/Standards>

Education Service Center, Region 20 & Texas Education Agency. (2018). *Working with Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Educators of Students with Disabilities*. Retrieved from Working with Paraprofessionals

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