CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

PROJECT SIGNATURE PAGE

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

EDUCATION

PROJECT TITLE: Effective Use of Paraprofessionals

AUTHOR: Brandi Heise

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: December 1, 2016

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE PROJECT COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION.

Rebecca Brooks
PROJECT COMMITTEE CHAIR

Annette Nyquist
PROJECT COMMITTEE MEMBER

PROJECT COMMITTEE MEMBER

SIGNATURE

11-28-16
DATE
Effective Use of Paraprofessionals:

The Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals, Education Specialists,

And General Education Teachers

by

Brandi Heise

A Project Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Education

California State University, San Marcos

Fall 2016
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Abstract

Paraprofessionals are key players in the education of students with disabilities. Research shows there is a need in the area of utilizing these important individuals effectively. Paraprofessionals need to be properly trained on their roles and responsibilities, education specialists need to be trained on how to effectively supervise and support paraprofessionals, and general education teachers need additional training on how to properly utilize this additional adult in the room. This professional development is designed to meet the needs of the entire team; the paraprofessional, the education specialist, and the general education teacher working with the student with disabilities. This training will address the roles and responsibilities of each participant, as well as how they can work together to optimize success in the school setting.

Keywords: paraprofessional, paraeducators, instructional assistant, instructional aide, IEP, education specialist, general education teacher, professional development training

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who made it possible for me to write this project. I would like to acknowledge the education specialists credential professors; Jodi Robledo, Jacqueline Thousand, and in particular my chair, Rebecca Brooks, for sharing their infectious passion and their invaluable knowledge and experiences. The three of you have allowed me to find my path in education. I had been traveling just to the side of this path and with your support and guidance, I am finally headed where I am meant to go. I would also like to thank my family, who have made multiple sacrifices along this journey. To my mom who has taken our children countless times, to my children who have been understanding when I couldn’t tuck them in or wake them up,
and most of all to my incredible husband who has stepped up to be super dad, husband and supporter!

Chapter One: Definition of Problem

Paraprofessionals have quickly become a staple in the classroom. Their role has moved from being exclusively in the special education separate classroom, to being a part of everyday life in general education as well. But what are we doing to prepare everyone for this additional person in the class? The simple answer is; not as much as we could. Many paraprofessionals lack the proper training to do the job teachers are asking them to do. Many education specialists lack the training to properly support, supervise and train paraprofessionals. Many general education teachers are unaware of how to best use paraprofessionals in their classroom. While some programs feel slightly lost in their efforts to effectively use paraprofessionals, some programs have found the key to success and are using it to support students with special needs. The following will serve as an introduction to this project identifying the purpose of the project, previewing the literature, previewing the methodology, explaining the significance of the project, and providing needed definitions of terms.

Purpose of Project

Paraprofessionals are either being asked to perform tasks they have not been trained to do, or are not being given direct instruction and are learning as they go. Teachers are also lacking, they are not properly trained in how to best support paraprofessionals. Education specialist are lacking training in how to supervise paraprofessionals and how to adequately train and support them, while general education teaches are lacking the knowledge of how to best utilize the paraprofessionals in their room.
This project will serve as a professional development training for paraprofessionals, education specialist, and general education teachers. The project will be guided by the following questions: What are the paraprofessionals’ roles and responsibilities? What are the education specialists’ roles and responsibilities in regards to paraprofessionals and how to best train, support, and supervise paraprofessionals? What are the general educators’ roles and responsibilities in regards to paraprofessionals and how to best support and utilize them within the general education classroom? Research shows there is a lack of adequate training, however what specific information should be given to paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers is not clear.

**Preview Literature**

Study after study identifies three reoccurring areas of need related to paraprofessionals supporting the learning of students with special needs. Paraprofessionals need more consistent and adequate training and support (Giangreco et al., 2011). Without this proper training, paraprofessionals are left to figure things out as they go, and student learning is compromised. Education Specialists are not formerly prepared to train and support paraprofessionals (Moran & Abbott, 2002). The concept of supervising another adult is missing from the majority of teacher preparation programs. And finally general education teachers lack training on how to support a student with disabilities, particularly while a paraprofessional is in the general education classroom (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000). General education teachers also lack knowledge of how to effectively use and support the paraprofessionals while they are in the general education classroom. These reoccurring areas of need will be addressed through the professional development training by answering the questions of who takes on which roles and responsibilities when educating a student with disabilities.
Preview Methodology

I am creating a Professional Development (PD) training for paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers. This training will focus on each group’s roles and responsibilities as they apply to students identified with special education services. All groups will attend all sessions of the PD. The three groups are a huge portion, and key players, of the individual education program (IEP) team. It is essential that each team member, not only know their own roles and responsibilities, but that they also understand the roles and responsibilities of the rest of team so that each person can be utilized to their fullest in order to positively impact student learning and overall school success. The PD will include a whole group PowerPoint presentation, small group activities, and a handbook to take back to class for each attendee. Administrators will also be encouraged to attend the PD so as to understand the roles of each person on their team. A PowerPoint presentation and a handbook will be created to use in a professional development training for educational specialists, general education teachers, and paraprofessionals. The research reviewed will drive the content of the training. The information will be specific to one particular district in terms of department structure and procedures. Information for the training will be gathered from research articles, books, and reliable websites to paint the clearest picture of a successful collaborative teaching team.

Significance of project

Groom (2006) finds that a successful teacher/paraprofessional relationship is reliant upon trust and mutual understanding of each other’s roles and strengths. By paraprofessionals, education specialist, and general education teachers having a clear picture of each team members’ roles and responsibilities, the impact on student success will be positive. By each team member knowing what is expected of them and trusting the other team members to do...
their part, the process of educating students with disabilities in both the special education classroom and the general education classroom will be much more efficient and successful. Students will be equipped with tools and strategies that allow them greater access to the general curriculum through consistency of staff procedures. With each team member knowing their role in the process, students can seamlessly be part of the class as a whole and therefore increase their work time and decrease any downtime that may happen due to the adults shuffling to figure out what the student should do and what they are capable of doing. This PD training will fill a gap that is threefold; paraprofessionals will be trained on their roles and responsibilities in the classroom and with the students, education specialists will be trained in how to best support and supervise the paraprofessional, and general education teachers will be trained in how to best utilize and support paraprofessionals while still taking ownership of each student’s education while they are in the general education classroom. With a collaborative, trained team, each team member; paraprofessionals, general education teachers, and education specialists, will feel valued, empowered, and prepared to do what they are all there to do; help students achieve and succeed. There is more than a gap in this area, there is a gaping hole, and this will do its part to start to fill it.

Summary of Chapter

Paraprofessionals are in the special education classroom and the general education classroom to support students identified to be eligible for special education services. With a lack of training for paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general educators this additional “help” in the classroom may actually turn out to be a detriment to student success. Trainings need to focus on supporting paraprofessionals in their roles and responsibilities, teaching education specialists how to train and support paraprofessionals, and educating general
educators on how to effectively collaborate with paraprofessionals within their classrooms. This project consists of the development of a Paraprofessional Development (PD) training and handbook for all staff and educators. This PD training is geared toward this group of educators who are focused on student success and will help them to optimize the resources they have and utilize each team member to its fullest. The PD is created to fill the gap research shows in the area of training adults who work with students with special needs in the general education classroom. The PD will consist of a PowerPoint presentation as well as several handouts in the form of a handbook that will be provided to all participants. The handouts will include strategies to use with students and to use in preparation of working with students. The next chapter is a review of past and current literature that demonstrates the need for the PD training to address the issues of paraprofessionals lacking training, education specialists lacking supervisory skills, and general education teachers lacking knowledge of how to best utilize paraprofessionals in their classroom.

**Definitions of Terms**

Education Specialist- Special education teachers work with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. They adapt general education lessons and teach various subjects, such as reading, writing, and math, to students with mild and moderate disabilities. They also teach basic skills, such as literacy and communication techniques, to students with severe disabilities. Education specialists hold a special education credential and may or may not have a single subject or multiple subject credential.

General Education Teacher- Teacher who work in a general education classroom, primarily with general education teachers. General education teachers hold a multiple subject or single subject credential.

Individual Education Program (IEP) - legally binding document that every child age 3-22 who received special educations services must have. The IEP is specific to the child’s unique learning issues and will include specific education goals.

IEP Goals- goals related to the students disability/areas of need that are reviewed annually. Progress on goals must be tracked and data collected.
IEP Team- group of people working together to help a student have success at school. The team includes; student, parents, education specialist, general education teachers, admin, service providers…

Least Restrictive Environment- students with disabilities must be educated in the general education classroom to the maximum extent possible with students without disabilities.

Paraprofessional- individual employed by school district in order to support student’s educational success.

Special Education Services- services determined by the IEP team to be necessary for student to be successful.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Paraprofessionals have a key role in the classroom, the problem is there is not enough clarity as to what that role is and what responsibilities paraprofessionals must take on. This project will be addressing the following guiding questions: What are paraprofessionals’ roles and responsibilities? What are the education specialists’ roles and responsibilities in regards to paraprofessionals and how to best train, support, and supervise them? and What are the general educators’ roles and responsibilities in regards to paraprofessionals and how to best support and utilize them in their the general education classroom? This chapter will analyze the following themes; training paraprofessionals on roles and responsibilities, supervision of paraprofessionals by education specialist, and effective use of paraprofessionals in the general education classroom. Following the review of the literature, a PD training will be created for paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers. This PD will identify the roles and responsibilities of each team member in regards to the paraprofessional and the support they provide to students with disabilities. Team members will walk away from the PD with a clear understanding of the paraprofessional’s role in supporting students and best practices for classroom support, as well as a handbook as a reference.

Training Paraprofessionals on Their Roles and Responsibilities

Paraprofessionals are being utilized more often than ever before as classroom support and individual support for students with disabilities (Giangreco & Broer, 2009). However, there is debate as to what are appropriate roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals regarding instruction (what kind and to what extent), planning and adapting activities, role in assessment, communication with parents, and clerical duties (Chopra et al., 2004; Davis et al., 2007; Giangreco
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

& Broer, 2005; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2001, 2002; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2001; Mindomono, Myer, & Xin, 2001; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Werts, Harris, Tillery, & Roark 2004). With debate comes inconsistency. Without clarity of roles and responsibilities paraprofessionals and teachers will be left to their own judgment as to what is considered appropriate for each team member to take on. This inconsistency can have a negative impact on student success.

Paraprofessional roles vary depending on the setting they are assigned to. Some paraprofessionals are assigned to support a specific classroom for a given period of time, while others are assigned to support one specific student for a given period of time. For the most part, paraprofessionals are underprepared for their support role in a classroom (Giangreco et al., 2011). Paraprofessionals who are assigned to one student, are well versed in that student, but are not adequately trained on how to support that student effectively. Often times, less is more, when working with students one on one. In two separate studies students reported that they often feel rejected by their peers when a paraprofessional is with them (Giangreco, 2010; Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2011). Malmgrem & Causton-Theoharis (2006) found that if a paraprofessional is within close proximity (within 3 feet of a student) for a prolonged amount of time, it decreases that student’s peer interactions.

Giangreco, Broer, and Edelman (2002) find that paraprofessionals rate instruction as the most common role for them to fill on a daily basis. In this same study, other common roles reported are behavior support, clerical work, supervision of students, planning, and other-personal care. In 2003, Wallace found that paraprofessionals tend to report that they have more responsibility in their roles than they feel is appropriate for their position. If paraprofessionals are not comfortable with the roles and responsibilities that are being asked of them, it needs to be determined if the responsibilities are incorrectly assigned or if the paraprofessionals are not properly trained.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA 2004), mandates that paraprofessionals are adequately qualified and properly trained. There is no debate that more adequate training is needed for paraprofessionals (Davis, Kitecki, Harvey, & Oliver, 2007; Giangreco et al., 2002; Griffen-Shirley & Matlock, 2004; Riggs, 2001; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Whitaker, 2000). The amount of responsibility being placed on the paraprofessional is disproportionate to the preparation and training they are being offered. The least qualified educator, the paraprofessional, is often the responsible for instruction of students with the most significant needs (Brown, Farrington, Ziegler, Knight, & Ross, 1999; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 1999). Paraprofessionals are less effective in their role and negatively impact student learning when they are not properly trained (Giangreco, Backus, Cichoski Kelly, Sherman, & Mavropoulous, 2003; Griffin-Shirley & Matlick, 2004; Rispoli et al., 2011; Tompkins et al., 2012). What each state, school district, or school needs to determine is who will provide the needed training and what will it look like.

Stockall (2014) implemented a Direct Instruction Training Model (DITM) as a training tool for paraprofessionals. The goal of this training model is to use effective training in order to use paraprofessionals to positively impact student learning. There are six steps to Stockall’s DITM. First the education specialist must identify what they want to teach the paraprofessional. This identified skill or knowledge will be explicitly taught to the paraprofessional. Next the paraprofessional will observe the education specialist demonstrate this strategy with a student. The education specialist and the paraprofessional will do the skill together, the paraprofessional can ask questions and the education specialist can provide support. Next the teacher steps back and allows the paraprofessional take the lead. The teacher still corrects and supports as needed. Finally performance feedback, both positive and areas of need, are given to the paraprofessional by the
education specialist. DITM is a proven method of teaching that has shown success in areas such as frequency, duration, interval data collection strategies, visual supports, functional assessment data collection, precision requests, and much more (Stockall, 2014). When paraprofessionals are provided with adequate training, such as DITM, there has been a proven positive effect on student learning from paraprofessional support (Hall, Gundon, Pope, & Romero, 2010).

Darch, Shippen, Darch, Patterson, & Massey (2014) have proposed another model for training paraprofessionals. There are four strategies for this model and the process can be applied to a multitude of circumstances related to paraprofessional supports. Strategy one suggests providing clear expectations. Each activity that the paraprofessional is being asked to complete, should be accompanied by a strategy provided by the educational specialist. Strategy two suggests providing a rationale as to why this teaching/management technique is important. Providing a rationale will increase the chance that the paraprofessional will perform this task with consistency. Strategy three suggests providing frequent positive feedback and being as specific as possible. Strategy four suggest providing clear areas of needed improvement. Limit these areas of improvement to one or two at a time. This basic model can not only be used to train the paraprofessional, but it can easily be transitioned as an instructional strategy for paraprofessionals to use with students.

Training of paraprofessionals does not need to fit in a box. Research shows that paraprofessionals can be trained in a variety of formats (Giangreco, Backus, Cichoski Kelly, Sherman, & Marvropoulos, 2003). Training can be equally effective if taught once a week for a couple of hours each time, over an intense three-day period, or even through self-guided interactive trainings. Research shows that paraprofessionals can be effectively trained in a multitude of task including, but not limited to, embedding teacher-planned instruction (McDonnell, Johnson, Plychronis, & Risen, 2002), facilitating social interactions (Causton-Theoharis & Malmgre, 2005;
Paraprofessionals report feeling more confident in their knowledge and skills, as well as increased empathy toward students, following effective training for their roles and responsibilities (Rose & Forlin, 2010).  

**Supervision of Paraprofessionals by Education Specialist**

A paraprofessional is defined as “an individual who assists with delivery of services and acts under the direction of licensed staff” (Picket et al., 2002). There is no debate that paraprofessionals are assisting with the delivery of services, however, “acting under the direction of licensed staff” is not consistent across the board, in each state, in each district, or even in each school. Brock and Carter (2013) created a training package for paraprofessionals that showed positive results in the classroom. However, this training was conducted by the research team exclusively. The leadership team of the schools that participated in the program were not trained on how implement the training for future paraprofessionals. This means the training cannot be duplicated in future years with additional paraprofessionals. While successful training is the goal, having staff trained at the district or school site level to conduct that training is the long-term answer.

Education specialist get a great deal of training on how to work with students and how to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities in teacher preparation programs. What is often missing from those programs, is the training to work collaboratively with, and the skills to supervise paraprofessionals (Jones, Ratcliff, Sheeham, & Hunt, 2012). Wallace (2003) finds the same result as Jones, Ratcliff, Sheeham, and Hunt (2012), reporting that education specialists, not only lack the training to work with paraprofessionals in the teacher preparation program, but they also lack such preparation in their in service trainings provided on the job.
While the lack of preparation for this supervisory role is prevalent, the actual act of supervising paraprofessionals has been a part of the education specialists’ role for years (Alexander 1987; French & Pickett, 1997; Pcket 1980, 1986, 1989; Vasa, Steckelberg, & Ulrick-Ronning, 1982). Much like paraprofessionals are doing the best they can with little direct guidance, educational specialists are doing the best they can to figure out how to supervise and train paraprofessionals. In order to streamline the process of education specialists’ taking this training/supervision role, and running with it, it needs to start from the beginning. One third of educators contacted in one study reported they were not involved at all in the hiring process of the paraprofessional they were to work with (French, 2001). Including the educational specialist in this process will give that individual more buy in to the person as whole, as well as help them to embrace the role of training and supervising that individual. Having the education specialist be part of the hiring process could also give the paraprofessional a different perspective as to the education specialist’s role in supervising that individual.

Giangreco, Sutter, and Doyle (2010) reported that, of the 32 studies they reviewed, education specialists devoted a shocking 2% of their time to each paraprofessional they support. If paraprofessionals are going to be a key player on the IEP team, they need to be treated as if their role is significant, and dedicated time needs to be put into the education specialists’ role of supporter. The education specialist who do plan for their paraprofessional, tend to give directions orally to the paraprofessional instead of written directions (French, 2001). French (2001) also discovered that less than half of the 321 education specialist she questioned gave their paraprofessional plans with regards to IEP goals and how to track progress on said goals.

Research shows that paraprofessionals are most effective when they are appropriately supervised (Blalick, 1991; Boomer, 1980), when they have clearly defined roles (Blalock, 1984;
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Lindsey, 1983), when they are trained for the job they are doing (Courson & Hewared, 1988; Frank, Keith, & Stein, 1988), and when they are part of regularly scheduled planning meetings (Miramontes, 1990; Pickett, Vasa, & Steckelber, 1993). Adams (1990) finds that the frequency of meetings between teachers and paraprofessionals is the most accurate measure of quality supervision. The trouble lies in finding time for paraprofessionals and teachers to meet on a regular basis. It is reported that formal education and in-service trainings are accurate predictors of supervision skills for teachers, but that the amount of teaching experience is not (Morgan, 1997).

According to teachers and paraprofessionals, clarity needs to be given in regards to job descriptions, school policies and procedures, line of command, times for meetings, and the process for planning and assessment (Morgan & Abbott, 2002). These topics need to be addressed at the school level or the district level. Jones, Ratcliff, Sheehand, and Hunt (2012) find that paraprofessionals need to be trained specifically in student management, content area knowledge, instructional strategies, effective communication strategies with students and adults, and observation and assessment techniques. The same study reports that teachers (education specialists and general education) require training in effective communication and working collaboratively with paraprofessionals and other teachers, as well as supervision of paraprofessionals. While ongoing training would be the most effective, regularly scheduled meetings between paraprofessionals and teachers would be the ideal place for this to occur.

Supporting and supervising paraprofessionals will not only improve the work they achieve on a daily basis, it can help increase the retention rate of paraprofessionals. It has been shown that high turnover for paraprofessionals is related to lack of respect, training, and administrative support; poorly defined job descriptions; low pay/benefits; and minimal opportunity for promotion (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002; Tillery, Werts, Roark, & Harris, 2003). Giangreco (2002)
reports that paraprofessionals who provide support to students one on one have a higher turnover rate than those who provide services primarily to classrooms. Paraprofessionals with the highest qualifications often leave in pursuit of positions with higher pay and status (Giangreco, et al., 2003).

**Effective use of Paraprofessionals in the General Education Classroom**

Students eligible for special education services are regularly part of the general education classroom (Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). Paraprofessionals can spend a large portion of their day in general education classrooms. For this reason, we need to consider the role of the general education teacher when discussing effective use of paraprofessionals. According to IDEIA 2004, students with disabilities must be educated in the least restrictive environment possible, given supplemental aides and services (which often include paraprofessional support). As mentioned before there is a lack of formal training for both education specialists and general education teachers on how to properly support and effectively use paraprofessionals in their classroom (Lindeman & Beegle, 1988; Marozas, 1984; Mary & Marozas, 1986; Morgan, 1997; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995). When general education teachers are not trained on how to properly support students with disabilities and are not well versed in the paraprofessionals’ roles and responsibilities, they can take a step back from the student with special needs and allow the paraprofessional to distribute the majority of the instruction. Giangreco (2003) openly questions this practice. It has been established that the paraprofessional is the individual with the least amount of education and training in content and instructional strategies working with the student directly. Giangreco (2003) asks if this practice of the “least qualified” individual providing the majority of instruction would be allowed with students without disabilities. General education teachers need to understand their position of being able to give direction to the paraprofessional while they are in their classroom. It is important for both parties to feel
comfortable enough to be able to work together to teach all students. General education teachers also need to understand the crucial role paraprofessionals play in facilitating friendships, social interactions, and backing off from support when the student with disabilities can succeed without them.

A second factor for paraprofessional support in the general education classroom comes in the form of dependence. Students quickly become overly dependent of support if it is given too readily or if students are not given the opportunity to try without or with limited support. Students who have one on one paraprofessional support can have more difficulties related to that support than students who receive support for the entire classroom. Students report feeling controlled by the paraprofessional that supports them (Broer et al., 2005; De Schauwer et al., 2009; Mortier et al., 2011; Tews & Lupart, 2008). Whitburn (2013) finds that too much support from paraprofessionals was seen as an overall negative to students, and they felt separated from the rest of the school’s population. Students receiving support in a class setting, versus one on one, had mixed feeling about the paraprofessional support. Some found it was useful and necessary and others found it pulled them away from peers and took away their independence (Whitburn, 2013). John Dewey (1944) discusses the primary responsibility of schools is to involve students, if paraprofessional support is countering this goal, something is wrong. Few studies even looked at students’ perceptions of paraprofessional support.

Paraprofessionals do not seem to be going anywhere for now. A couple of suggestions are made to maintain support while allowing students the autonomy to participate in school to the best of their ability. One research team offers a possible solution for students with one on one paraprofessional support. It is suggested to have students work with multiple paraprofessionals throughout the day so the student and the paraprofessional do not become overly dependent on one
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

another (McGrath, Johns, & Mathur (2010). A second recommendation is peer support, as an alternative to paraprofessional support (Cater, Cushing, Clark & Kennedy, 2005). In 1998 and 1999, Shukla and colleagues conducted two studies of the effects of peer support on students with intellectual disabilities. These studies compared peer support and one on one paraprofessional support. Both studies confirmed longer, more frequent peer interactions and engagement in class activities was similar or slightly increased with peer support.

Conclusion

Paraprofessionals are an important piece of the IEP team, but all members of the team lack training in how to best utilize these individuals. Paraprofessionals need adequate training, education specialist need training in how to train, support, and supervise paraprofessionals, and general education teachers need training in how to most effectively use and support paraprofessionals. In two connected studies it is reported that changes implemented following a schoolwide planning program for paraprofessionals resulted in; paraprofessionals knowing their jobs better, improved morale for paraprofessionals, increased awareness of the value of paraprofessionals, paraprofessionals knowing students better, increased retention of paraprofessionals, improved instruction delivery, and improved home-school collaboration (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002; Giangreco, Edelman, & Broer, 2003). The goal of the proposed PD training will be to identify and train on the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals; identify and train the roles and responsibilities of the education specialist regarding the training, support, and supervision of paraprofessionals; and identify and train the roles and responsibilities of the general education teacher in regards to utilizing and supporting the paraprofessional. By getting all team member on the same page, student engagement, peer interactions, and student success can increase.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Paraprofessionals arguably spend as much, if not more, time with students with disabilities than any other adult on campus. Yet research has shown that paraprofessionals and the teachers they work with lacked the training to best utilize these key players in the education of students with disabilities. Research told us there were three questions left unanswered related to paraprofessionals work in the general education classroom; ‘What are the paraprofessionals’ roles and responsibilities?’ ‘What are the education specialists’ roles and responsibilities in regards to paraprofessionals and how to best train, support, supervise?’ and ‘What are the general educators’ roles and responsibilities in regards to paraprofessionals and how to best support and utilize them within the general education classroom?’.

Based on the questions above and the research in chapter two, a PD training was created for paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers. The PD training consisted of a PowerPoint presentation, small group activities, and a handbook for each attendee. The groups for the PD training implementation were heterogeneous and consisted of paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers that worked with the same group of students at the school site. Following you will find the design, setting, instruments used, procedures/evaluation, and the conclusion of the process used while creating the PD training.

Design

The design of this project was a PD training. The PD addressed the roles and responsibilities of each the paraprofessional, the education specialist, and the general education teacher. Best practices for each of the three roles were reviewed and additional resources given to all participants.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Participants/Setting

The PD training was designed to be utilized in the k-12 setting at the school and district level. The PD training was geared toward paraprofessionals, education specialists, general education teachers, and administrators. The target audience was a middle class district in southern California with minimal Spanish only speaking families. Paraprofessionals were prevalent in this district, yet there were no formal trainings that addressed the team of paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general educators, as a whole.

Instrument

The PD was implemented through the use of a PowerPoint presentation and a handbook of resources. The PowerPoint presentation addressed the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team, best practices for each member of the team, and strategies for each team member. The PowerPoint also reviewed the research, highlighting the need for such trainings. The handbook was a library of resources for all team members that summarized the roles and responsibilities of each member, as well as proven strategies to implement in the classroom and in planning sessions for each team member.

Procedures

Research was reviewed in the area of paraprofessionals and their training, the training of the education specialist as to the support and supervision of paraprofessionals, and the training of general education teachers and how they can best work with paraprofessionals to maximize benefit for students. From this research a PD training was created to address the educational needs for paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers in regards to paraprofessionals working with students in the classroom.
Roles and responsibilities were identified and handouts were created for each of the three participants; paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers. Best practices were identified and handouts were created for each of the three participants. Guided notes handouts were created for participants to use during small group activities with job-alike groups. These handouts included guiding questions for each participant to express their perceived role, their concerns, and their strengths. A PowerPoint was created to facilitate the PD training day. The above mentioned handouts will be compiled into a handbook, titled “Effective Use of Paraprofessionals”. This PowerPoint presentation, along with the handouts/handbook, will be made available to all participants following the PD training day.

**Project Evaluation**

The project was evaluated based on the discovered need of education for paraprofessionals, educational specialists, and general education teachers who work with paraprofessionals and how this PD training was able to meet said needs. The PowerPoint and handbook were created with the specific needs of each participant involved. Each participant received information and participated in the training of all three participants so as to have consistency, accountability, and cohesion amongst the team.

**Summary of Chapter**

This chapter covered an introduction, design, participants, setting, instruments, procedures, project evaluation, and summary. The chapter was utilized to describe the need of the projects, the methods used to create the project, and the use of the project. The following chapter contains the PowerPoint presentation and handbook used to implement the PD training.
Chapter 4:

Implementation of this project would be a full day professional development training at the district level. The training would be held at the district training center and would include education specialist, paraprofessionals, and general educations specialists at all three levels; elementary, middle school, and high school. Ideally professionals who work with the same students would attend the training the same day. Participants will sit with their team if possible. If this is not possible, they will sit with professionals who teach at the same level. All participants should participate in all portions of the training. It is key to understand each persons’ role in the team in order to have accountability, trust, and mutual respect.

Slides 1-18 of the presentation are accompanied by pages 1-18 in the handout. This information is applicable to all three participant types and outlines the basics of special education. Slides 18-25 of the presentation are accompanied by pages 19-29 in the handout. These pages outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional. Slides 25-37 are accompanied by pages 30-41 in the handout. These pages outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the education specialist in regards to the paraprofessional and general education teacher. Slides 38-44 are accompanied by pages 42-52 in the handbook. These pages outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the general education teacher in regards to the paraprofessional and the education specialist. The remaining slides, 45-50, are accompanied by pages 53-62 of the handbook. These pages are for all participants and discuss accommodations for the classroom based on different disabilities.

PowerPoint Presentation for Training
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

The Unsung Heroes of Special Education

I'm a Paraprofessional. What's your Superpower?

What We Know We Need

1. Paraprofessionals (paras) are lacking sufficient training
2. Education specialists are lacking training of how to supervise paras
3. General education teachers lack training of how to use and support paras in their class

I'm not a paraprofessional, so can I leave at lunch?

• We are a team
• It is essential for all team members to understand the roles of each person on the team
• With understanding comes accountability, dependability, and trust

District Special Education Department

Executive Director, Zoianna Preston, Ed.D.

Senior Program Specialist
Senior Program Specialist
Senior Program Specialist
Autism Coordinator

Carla Sellon
Denise Brunnen
Linda Lucas
Grace Potter
Eliza Landers, Ph.D.
Marianne Branca

Adapted from LPIpis/ICDFF
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Meet your IEP team

- Student
- Parent
- General Education Teacher
- Education Specialist
- Paraprofessional
- Administrator
- School Psychologist
- Program Specialist
- Supplemental services
  - Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Counselors, Adaptive Physical Education, ...

What is an IEP and Who Gets One?

ELIGIBILITY

13 Categories

Impacts Ability

What Do I Need to Know About IEPs?

LRE

IEP@ A GLANCE!

IEP @ a Glance
Find your job alike partners

• Discuss following questions (handout provided to each group).

Education Specialists

1. What do you perceive are your roles and responsibilities with regards to the paraprofessionals you work with?
2. What are you concerned about in terms of supervising and supporting paras?
3. What are you concerned about in terms of working closely with a team of educators to support students?
4. What are some of your strengths and skills that will be of use to you, the students, and the team of educators?
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Paraprofessionals

1. What do you perceive your roles and responsibilities to be on a daily basis?
2. What are you concerned you are not ready (properly trained) to do?
3. What are you concerned about in terms of working with students?
4. What are you concerned about in terms of working with teachers?
5. What are some of your strengths and skills that will be of use to you, the students, and the teachers you work with?

General Education Teacher

1. What do you perceive are your roles and responsibilities with regards to the paraprofessional in your room?
2. What do you perceive are your roles and responsibilities with regards to students with special education services in your classroom when they are and are not supported by another adult in your room?
3. What are you concerned about in terms of working closely with a team of educators to support students?
4. What are some of you strengths and skills that will be of use to you, the student, and the team of educators?

Banking Education vs. Critical Education

• Banking Education:
  • Idea that teachers deposit information into the passive student

• Critical Education:
  • Idea that teachers and students learn together in the classroom

Banking Education Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Specialist</th>
<th>General Education Teacher</th>
<th>Paraprofessional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills in the special education room</td>
<td>Goes knowledge to students</td>
<td>&quot;our students&quot; and &quot;your students&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works independently from the general education teacher</td>
<td>Group critical thinking as a group</td>
<td>Work with teachers students at the back table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur to the paraprofessional's focus</td>
<td>Large group discussion</td>
<td>Work with students with special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student</td>
<td>Homogeneous ability grouped</td>
<td>Too &quot;helpful&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify curriculum</td>
<td>Lecture oriented</td>
<td>Figures out how to help students on their own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from [Kizz, "Critical Pedagogy"]
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Critical Education Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Specialist</th>
<th>General Education Teacher</th>
<th>Paraprofessional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“our students”</td>
<td>Heterogeneous ability-grouped</td>
<td>Work with all students in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Cooperative approach</td>
<td>Facilitates friendships and independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>Models reading and thinking skills</td>
<td>Takes steps back when appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>Emphasizes higher-level questions</td>
<td>Implements education specialists' plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal design for learning</td>
<td>Integrates critical thinking and content</td>
<td>Confident in knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train paraprofessionals</td>
<td>Inquires with students</td>
<td>Allows students to blend in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of Paraprofessional

Talk with your table for 1 minute and name as many Paraprofessional responsibilities as possible.

Implement modifications and accommodations set and created by the education specialist.

Observe and chart data on behavior and academics as presented by education specialist.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Maintain composure and emotional control when working with students

More Than Just Math

Foster independence & confidence
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Behavioral Strategies for Paraprofessionals

- Kagan describes seven positions that most often drive disruptions and the basic human need they address.
- Attention Seeking: to feel cared about by others.
- Avoiding Failure: to feel successful.
- Angry: to feel able to influence people and events.
- Control-Seeking: to feel able to influence people/events.
- Energetic: to move, touch, and be expressive.
- Bored: to be motivated, to have interesting stimuli.
- Uninformed: to know to interact responsibly.

Role of Education Specialist

Share the IEP
Meet regularly!
Train your para
Modify curriculum
Create goal tracking forms
Create paras schedule

Data, Data, Data

- Train your paraprofessional on how you would like data collected.
  - Educate them on each student’s goals.
  - Show them how to track the data and how often it should be done.
  - Don’t make them guess as to how you want it done.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Challenges with Being the Supervisor

How to Jump the Initial Hurdle

- Trust each other
- Believe the paraprofessionals’ involvement will matter
- Understand the resistance to change
- Ensure the paraprofessional is aware of their power and knowledge and how that can impact students
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

What to do When Issues Arise...and They Will

- It is important to address issues that come up
- Go to the paraprofessional with an open mind and a solution-based attitude
- It is essential to understand both the paraprofessional's perspective and that they understand yours

If You Don’t Have Something Nice to Say...

Having Hard Conversations

How to Plan “The Talk”

Resources needed
Define the problem
Desired outcome
What does the para need to know?
Strategies

When, Where, and How to do it.

- Find a location
- Think about timing
- Body language: voice, hands, and eyes
- Choose your words wisely
- Prepare emotionally
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

“The Talk”

- Set the tone and purpose of the conversation
- Get to the point and name the issue professionally
- Give specific examples without blaming
- Describe the effect of the issue on the students, class, and school
- State your wish to open the discussion and solve the issue

Role of General Education Teacher

Your Student?  My Student?  Our Student!

What does it look like to have 2 adults in the classroom?

Dare we say...co-teaching??!?!?

Expert in Content + Expert in Access = Co-Teaching

- Two or more educators or staff
- Working with single group of students
- Shared responsibility, accountability, and resources
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Why Co-Teach?
Two are better than one!
- To provide opportunities for all students
- To help avoid labels and stigma
- To increase acceptance of diversity
- To build relationships
- To improve instruction
- To improve assessment results
- To increase collaboration
- To support students' self-advocacy

Co-Teaching is NOT...
- Pulling students to a back table to work
- Pulling students out to separate room on a regular basis
- General education teacher doing all the planning
- Education specialist walking around the room while the general education teacher teaches
- You grade "your kids," I'll grade "my kids"
- Teachers taking turns teaching while the other one "supervises"

4 Co-Teaching Models
- Team Teaching
- One Teach, One Support
- Parallel
- Station Teaching

What Does Co-Teaching Look Like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If partner A is...</th>
<th>Then partner B is...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Modeling/observing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing materials</td>
<td>Reviewing directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving directions orally</td>
<td>Writing directions on the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing half of class for a discussion</td>
<td>Preparing the other half of the class for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-teaching or pre-teaching with small group</td>
<td>Monitoring a large group as they work on practice material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating stations or groups</td>
<td>Facilitating stations or groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering modification needs</td>
<td>Considering enrichment opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Universal Design?

- Access for everyone!
- Ramps
- Electric Doors
- Captions on Televisions
- Cross Walks with Sound

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

How can we use Universal Design in the classroom?

**UDL is NOT:**

- Easy
- Quick
- A special education service
- One size fits all
- Cut and dry
- Limited

**UDL IS:**

- UDL is a flexible approach to teaching and learning.
- A general education strategy
- For all students
- Includes academic, as well as, emotional success.
- Challenges all learners (advanced to challenged)
- Includes flexible teaching and learning
- Providing access

Simple Ideas for the Classroom

Can be made available, but not mandatory for every student

- Guided notes (fill in the blank instead of a blank page)
- Word bank
- Graph paper for math problems
- Manipulatives
- Flexible work spaces
  - Group, individual, quiet, with headphones
- Access to computers
- Visual and written directions
- Choice!

Classroom Accommodations

- Break projects into smaller chunks with clear expectations and check points or deadlines
- Provide accommodations for in-class and homework assignments
- Reduced numbers, fill in the blanks, etc.
- Extended time
- Provide written and verbal directions
- Shorten reading assignments or lower level of same content
- No penalty for incorrect spelling
- Allow for test to be read to the student
- Supply copy of teacher's notes
- Provide class notes
- Shorten writing assignments
- Offer a scribe for classroom writing assignments
- Provide computer for writing assignments
- Read word problems and assist in breakdown of problem in math
- Separate setting for testing
- Simply or read questions on tests
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Ongoing support

- De-track PLCs
  - Instead of always having separate PLCs for general education teachers, education specialists, paraprofessionals, service providers, etc...
  - Have all of those who work with a particular group of students meet together and collaborate to learn from each other

- Schedule time to work together regularly

"ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH."

— Helen Keller

Resources


Handbook for Training

The Unsung Heroes of Special Education

What We Know We Need

3 Big issues surface over and over in research

1. Paraprofessionals (paras) are lacking sufficient training
2. Education specialists are lacking training of how to supervise paras
3. General education teachers lack training of how to use and support paras in their class
I’m not a paraprofessional, so can I leave at lunch?

- We are a team
- It is essential for all team members to understand the roles of each person on the team
- With understanding comes accountability, dependability, and trust

Meet your IEP team

- Student
- Parent
- General Education Teacher
- Education Specialist
- Paraprofessional
- Administrator
- School Psychologist
- Program Specialist
- Supplemental services
  - Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Counselors, Adaptive Physical Education, ...

What is an IEP and Who Gets One?

- Individual Education Program provided to students who qualify for special education services.
- Students qualify for special education services when they BOTH:
  - Are found to have one of the 13 disabilities recognized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA 2004)
  - That disability negatively impacts their ability to make progress in school
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

What Do I Need to Know About IEPs?

IEP @ a Glance is provided or made accessible to all staff members who work directly with the child. This is a work breakdown version of the full IEP. This will give you the basic info needed to work effectively with the child and to help the child be successful in the classroom.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):

ODA says two things about LRE that are important to understand when working with the IEP team:
1. Your child should be with kids in general education to the "maximum extent that is appropriate.
2. Special classes, separate schools or removal from the general education class should only happen when your child's learning or attention issues — not "disability" — makes ODA — be aware that supplementary aids and services can't provide him with an appropriate education.

IEP @ a Glance

Supplementary aids and services. Accommodations and strategies can be provided in classrooms, at home, or for the student or not at the expense of the student. The parent or the teacher can help to the student.

Secondary education and related services. Each student in the general education that the child is identified as a student with a disability and will be provided with an education program for the student.

SST Process

Student has never had an SST

Grade Level SST Teacher with resource Teacher with special
Follow-up Teacher with special

Student with a previous SST

Check Grade Level SST sheet in SST sheet for services needed.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Education Specialists

1. What do you perceive are your roles and responsibilities with regards to the paraprofessionals you work with?
2. What are you concerned about in terms of supervising and supporting paraprofessionals?
3. What are you concerned about in terms of working closely with a team of educators to support students?
4. What are some of your strengths and skills that will be of use to you, the students, and the team of educators?

Paraprofessionals

1. What do you perceive your roles and responsibilities to be on a daily basis?
2. What are you concerned you are not ready (properly trained) to do?
3. What are you concerned about in terms of working with students?
4. What are you concerned about in terms of working with teachers?
5. What are some of your strengths and skills that will be of use to you, the students, and the teachers you work with?

General Education Teacher

1. What do you perceive are your roles and responsibilities with regards to the paraprofessional in your room?
2. What do you perceive are your roles and responsibilities with regards to students with special education services in your classroom when they are and are not supported by another adult in your room?
3. What are you concerned about in terms of working closely with a team of educators to support students?
4. What are some of your strengths and skills that will be of use to you, the student, and the team of educators?

Banking Education vs. Critical Education

- Banking Education:
  - Idea that teachers deposit information into the passive student

- Critical Education:
  - Idea that teaches and students learn together in the classroom
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Banking Education Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Specialist</th>
<th>General Education Teacher</th>
<th>Paraprofessional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay in the special education room.</td>
<td>Give knowledge to students.</td>
<td>&quot;our students&quot; and &quot;your students&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulls students out of class and work on &quot;my students&quot;</td>
<td>Keeps critical thinking a top priority.</td>
<td>Works with specific students in the back table.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works independently from the general education teacher.</td>
<td>Competitive individual focus.</td>
<td>Works with students with special needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes the paraprofessional's functions.</td>
<td>Large group dominant.</td>
<td>Works with pure academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify curriculum.</td>
<td>Lecture oriented.</td>
<td>Figures out how to help students on their own.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Critical Education Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Specialist</th>
<th>General Education Teacher</th>
<th>Paraprofessional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;our students&quot;</td>
<td>Heterogeneous ability grouped.</td>
<td>Work with all students in the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Cooperative group focus.</td>
<td>Facilitate friendships and independence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-teaching</td>
<td>Models reading and thinking skills.</td>
<td>Taking steps back when appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>Emphasizes higher-level questions.</td>
<td>Implements education specialist's plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal design for learning</td>
<td>Integrates critical thinking and content.</td>
<td>Confident in knowledge and skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach paraprofessors</td>
<td>Improves with students.</td>
<td>Allows students to listen in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role of Paraprofessional

- Implement modifications and accommodations set and created by the education specialist.
- Observe and chart data on behavior and academics as presented by education specialist.
- Maintain close-up and emotional control when working with students.
- Any concerns or questions should be first addressed to the education specialist.
- Support all students.
- Facilitate social interactions and friendships.
- Take a step back whenever you can.
- Question what you don’t understand.
- Participate in student planning meetings.
- Be the students’ support, not their friend or their parent.
- Learn all programs the students you support will use regularly.
- Make the teacher’s policies and procedures, your policies and procedures.
- Be a key TEAM player.

More Than Just Math

- Role of a paraprofessional includes the critical role of FACILITATING friendships, social interactions, and being part of the class and school community.
- This could be one of the most important tools you use to foster independence and confidence in a student.
  - If students are working in groups and the student does not need academic support...:
    - This is not the time to do some prep work for the teacher or take a break.
    - It is the perfect opportunity to help the student be a contributing factor in the class/group.
    - It’s a time to model and encourage social interactions between students.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Behavioral Strategies for Paraprofessionals

- Kagan describes seven positions that most often drive disruptions and the basic human need they address
- Attention Seeking: to feel cared about by others
- Avoiding Failure: to feel successful
- Angry: to feel able to influence people and events
- Control-Seeking: to feel able to influence people/events
- Energetic: to move, touch, and be expressive
- Bored: to be motivated, to have interesting stimuli
- Uninformed: to know to interact responsibly

Preventing Attention Seeking as a Paraprofessional

- Greet each student by name
- Smile
- Show appreciation: “I appreciate the way you...”
- Affirmation: point out the students’ positive characteristics
- Acknowledge feelings: “I see that you are upset,” “It can be frustrating to...”
- Class jobs
- PRAISE!
- Hang time with the paraprofessional (one-on-one time with student doing preferred activity)

Preventing Avoiding Failure as a Paraprofessional

- Avoid putting them on the spot in groups
- Give grades privately
- Provide a ‘safe’ environment to take risks
- Discussions surrounding topics to enrich understanding
- Focus on students’ strengths, instead of their deficits
- Model how to check for understanding and ask for help from the teacher
- Be an encourager
- Model and teach Growth Mindset

Preventing Anger as a Paraprofessional

- Know your students and monitor frustration levels
  - You may know when your student is frustrated before they do.
  - Look for (tightened fists, tense body, etc.)
- Break up learning into shorter segments with breaks in between
- Disagree agreeably
  - “I have a different opinion.” “I see what you are saying, I think...”
- Avoid escalation - “right now you are upset, let’s talk about it later.”
- Journal reflections - have the student write what they feel
- Model anger control techniques – see handbook
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Anger Control Techniques

• Breathing exercises
• Concentrate on puzzle or game
• Count to 10
• Exercise
• Tense and relax muscle group
• Write about the problem
• Drink a glass of water
• Focus on desired outcome

Preventing Control-Seeking as a Paraprofessional

• Provide choice whenever possible
• Give the student responsibilities
• Make the student a helper

Preventing Energetic from Interfering with Work as a Paraprofessional

• Brain breaks
• Give active jobs (run papers to a teacher or office, clear the white board, pass out papers...)
• Reduce stimulus (smaller groups, quiet setting)
• Stress balls or fidget toys to keep hands busy

Preventing Bored as a Paraprofessional

• Find students’ interests and incorporate that whenever possible
• Use the student’s name when discussing (*What I mean by that, Joe...*)
• Use multiple sources of information (textbook, websites, videos, articles...)
• Change up the schedule
• Projects over worksheets
• Give choice whenever possible
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Preventing Uninformed as a Paraprofessional

- Heterogeneous learning groups
- Offer tutoring
- Visual schedule
- Keep a set of notes (incase student’s notes are incomplete)
- Teach student how to use resources
- Peer buddy
- Verbal and non-verbal cues

Role of Education Specialist

- Be the point of contact for all team members
- Share the IEP with the team
- Explain goals, modifications, and accommodations
  - What it looks like in the general classroom, what it looks like in separate cases.
- Ensure accommodations are in place for students
- Modify curriculum as needed
- Ensure paraprofessional is aware of all needed accommodations and modifications
- Create plans and schedule for paraprofessional to follow
- Train paraprofessional on what to do when teacher is lecturing, students are doing independent work, students are working in cooperative groups...
- Train paraprofessional on how to take classroom notes and keep them for reference
- Meet with paraprofessional weekly to discuss students and para’s needs
- Ensure service minutes are being met for all students
- Great goal tracking forms and train paraprofessional how to use them
- Teach!

Data, Data, Data

- Train your paraprofessional on how you would like data collected
  - Educate them on each student’s goals
  - Show them how to track the data and how often it should be done
  - Don’t make them guess as to how you want it done
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Challenges with Being the Supervisor

- They may be older and wiser than you
- They may have been at this school or district for years...decades
- They may be set in their ways
- You do things differently than the last teacher did
- They have different training and education than you do
- They may intimidate you
- You may intimidate them

How to Jump the Initial Hurdle

- Trust each other
- Believe the paraprostessial's involvement will matter
- Understand the resistance to change
- Ensure the paraprostessial is aware of their power and knowledge and how that can impact students
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

What to do When Issues Arise...and They Will

- It is important to address issues that come up
- Go to the paraprofessional with an open mind and a solution-based attitude
- It is essential to understand both the paraprofessional's perspective and that they understand yours

If You Don’t Have Something Nice to Say...

- As an education specialist, there will be times when it will be your responsibility to have hard conversations with your paraprofessional
- You won't like this part of your job and may want to avoid it because...
  - You want to please everyone
  - You want to avoid any emotional pain (on either side)
  - It will be hard
  - Fear of the unknown
  - No sense of urgency: you continue to give her chances and time
  - Culture of the school does not support conflict of any kind
  - You're waiting for the perfect moment
  - Don't trust your own judgement

How to Plan “The Talk”

- Define the problem
- Determine what you want the tentative outcome to be
- What behaviors you would like to see from the paraprofessional
- What knowledge, training, skills, attitude, does the paraprofessional need to achieve the desired outcome
- What strategies can you use or offer to promote growth for the paraprofessional
- What resources do you need from administration or district to carry out these strategies

When, Where, and How to do it.

- Find a location
  - Classroom is likely the most comfortable, least intimidating place for your paraprofessional
- Think about timing
  - Allow enough time, ensure they do not have to work with kids directly following, allow time to process what is discussed
- Body language: voice, hands, and eyes
  - Have a strong conviction tone of voice, use eye contact without being too intense, sitting or standing with your hands facing down means you are serious, sitting or standing with your palms up means you are open to discussion and ideas
- Choose your words wisely
  - Keep your language confident, but not harsh
- Prepare emotionally
  - Your paraprofessional may become emotional, defensive, or even angry
  - Stay professional and calm
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

“The Talk”

- Set the tone and purpose of the conversation
- Get to the point and name the issue professionally
- Give specific examples without blaming
- Describe the effect of the issue on the students, class, and school
- State your wish to open the discussion and solve the issue

Role of General Education Teacher

- Take ownership of the student with an IEP. They are YOURS!!!!
- Support paraprofessional in supporting students
- Students remain general education students first! Do not relinquish responsibility for that student when the paraprofessional walks in
- Know the IEP
- Implement the parts of the IEP that apply to your classroom
- Ask questions
- Work with education specialist to determine what the work is and what needs to be modified
  - Don’t expect education specialist or paraprofessional to come in and modify on the fly. This happens daily, but should not be the expectation for meeting IEP needs.

What does it look like to have 2 adults in the classroom?

Dare we say...co-teaching??!?!?

Expert in Content + Expert in Access = Co-Teaching

- Two or more educators or staff
- Working with single group of students
- Shared responsibility, accountability, and resources
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Why Co-Teach?

- To provide opportunities for all students
- To help avoid labels and stigma
- To increase acceptance of diversity
- To build relationships
- To improve instruction
- To improve assessment results
- To increase collaboration
- To support students’ self advocacy

Co-Teaching is NOT...

- Pulling students to a back table to work
- Pulling students out to separate room on a regular basis
- General education teacher doing all the planning
- Education specialist walking around the room while the general education teacher teaches
- You grade "your kids", I'll grade "my kids"
- Teachers taking turns teaching while the other one ‘catches up’

4 Co-Teaching Models

- Team Teaching
- One Teach, One Support
- Parallel
- Station Teaching

Team Teaching

- Both teachers deliver core instruction at the same time
- One partner leads the discussion while the other adds to the lesson by:
  - Modeling note taking
  - Asking students questions
  - Stating important information
  - Asking partner for clarification
  - Adds another perspective
  - Adding new information
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

One Teach, One Support

• Roles should be changed to ensure equality
• One partner assumes primary role of instruction
• One partner assists students in work, monitors behavior, corrects work.
  • or partner collects data through observation

Parallel Teaching

• Break class into two heterogeneous groups
• Groups should be determined by learning style
• Each partner teaches the same content simultaneously
• Allows for small group instruction
  • Accommodates for different learning styles
  • Allows for more supervision of student learning
  • More accountability for students

Station Teaching

• Curriculum is divided into two parts
• Students are broken into two heterogeneous groups
• Each partner teaches their content to one group, halfway through the allotted time, the groups switch.

What Does Co-Teaching Look Like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher A (instructor)</th>
<th>Teacher B (paraprofessional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturing</td>
<td>Modeling, demonstrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing materials</td>
<td>Reviewing, directing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving directions orally</td>
<td>Writing directions on the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing half the class for discussion</td>
<td>Preparing the other half of the class for discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-teaching or pre-teaching with a small group</td>
<td>Monitoring a large group as they work on practice material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating stations or groups</td>
<td>Facilitating stations or groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering modification needs</td>
<td>Considering enrichment opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Universal Design?

- Access for everyone!
- Ramps
- Electric Doors
- Captions on Televisions
- Cross Walks with Sound

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

**UDL is NOT:**
- Easy
- Quick
- A special education service
- One size fits all
- Cut and dry
- Limited

**UDL IS:**
- UDL is a flexible approach to teaching and learning.
- A general education strategy
- For all students
- Includes academic, as well as, emotional success.
- Challenges all learners (advanced to challenged)
- Includes flexible teaching and learning
- Providing access

Simple Ideas for the Classroom

Can be made available, but not mandatory for every student

- Guided notes (fill in the blank instead of a blank page)
- Word bank
- Graph paper for math problems
- Manipulatives
- Flexible work spaces
  - Group, individual, quiet, with headphones
- Access to computers
- Visual and written directions
- Choice!

Classroom Accommodations

- Break projects into smaller chunks with clear expectations and check points or deadlines.
- Provide accommodations for in-class and homework assignments.
- **Provide written and verbal directions.**
- Shorten reading assignments or lower text level of same content.
- No penalty for incorrect spelling.
- Allow for test to be read to the student.
- Supply a copy of teacher's notes.
- **Provide class notes.**
- Shorten writing assignments.
- **Offer a scope for classroom writing assignments.**
- Provide computer for writing assignments.
- Read word problems and assist in breakdown of problem in math.
- Separate setting for testing.
- Simply or remodel questions on tests.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Accommodations for Common Concerns

**AUDITORY PROCESSING**
- Have your book presented, show slides. What you do with the info you have.
  - Take notes.
  - Provide word-by-word note-taking.
  - Have the student read and mark text.
  - Use graphic organizers.
  - Use visuals to show key concepts.
  - Use repetition.
  - Use mnemonics.

**VISUAL PROCESSING**
- Have your brain-process orally. What you do with the info you hear.
  - Use visual aids.
  - Use visual schedules.
  - Use visual-o-gram organizers.
  - Use visual representations.
  - Use visual examples.
  - Use visual models.
  - Use visual demonstrations.
  - Use visual checklists.
  - Use visual timelines.
  - Use visual tables.
  - Use visual graphs.
  - Use visual maps.

**EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING**
- Use visual representations.
  - Use visual schedules.
  - Use visual checklists.
  - Use visual examples.
  - Use visual models.
  - Use visual graphs.
  - Use visual maps.

**EXECUTIVE PROCESSING**
- Use visual representations.
  - Use visual schedules.
  - Use visual checklists.
  - Use visual examples.
  - Use visual models.
  - Use visual graphs.
  - Use visual maps.

**PHYSICAL PROCESSING**
- Use visual representations.
  - Use visual schedules.
  - Use visual checklists.
  - Use visual examples.
  - Use visual models.
  - Use visual graphs.
  - Use visual maps.

**APPROPRIATEITY**
- Use visual representations.
  - Use visual schedules.
  - Use visual checklists.
  - Use visual examples.
  - Use visual models.
  - Use visual graphs.
  - Use visual maps.

**PHYSICAL PROCESSING**
- Use visual representations.
  - Use visual schedules.
  - Use visual checklists.
  - Use visual examples.
  - Use visual models.
  - Use visual graphs.
  - Use visual maps.

**Ongoing support**
- De-track PLCs.
  - Instead of always having separate PiCs for general education teachers, education specialists, paraprofessionals, service providers, etc...
  - Have all of those who work with a particular group of students or issues work together and collaborate to learn from each other.
  - Schedule time to work together regularly.

---

"ALONE WE CAN DO SO LITTLE; TOGETHER WE CAN DO SO MUCH."

—Helen Keller
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

Resources


Chapter Five: Project Recommendations

This project was prompted by my own observations and conversations with colleagues during my education specialist internship. I observed that there is little guidance as to how a paraprofessional should be trained on their roles and responsibilities. More than that, there are gaps in the education of what the roles and responsibilities are for the education specialist and the general education teacher who support the paraprofessional. This project will serve as professional development training for paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers who work with students with disabilities. I will address the lessons learned through this process, the educational implications, how the professional development could be utilized, the limitations of the project, and the suggestions for future work in this area.

Lessons Learned

In creating this professional development I found that there are many aspects of the roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals, education specialists and general educations teachers that would vary greatly depending on the setting of the child. A paraprofessional’s day would look quite different if they were primarily in a separate special education classroom the majority of the day, than if they were supporting students in a general education classroom. When a paraprofessional is in a general education classroom they need to balance the academic accommodations and the social aspects of the student’s needs. When a paraprofessional is in the separate setting, they curriculum has typically already modified or has accommodations, so the focus would more be on data collection and social-emotional intelligence.

Another lesson learned was to pare down the information I am presenting so that it is applicable to the small audience I am addressing and the specific needs addressed in the training.
is so tempting to go off on tangents and provide more and more information. I had to continually remind myself to give just the information needed for each person to accomplish their job in this section. I have found, both as a participant of professional development and a creator of this professional development, that less can be more. If too much information is given, participants are less likely to be able to see the immediate application for the practices presented.

**Educational Implications**

This project was designed to be used district wide for teachers and paraprofessionals working with students with special needs. The target audience is for professionals working with students with mild to moderate disabilities. However, these practices can easily be adapted to include those working with the moderate to severe population. Best practices would be for the paraprofessional, education specialist, and paraprofessional who are working together to attend the training together. This would lead to better understanding of each person’s roles and responsibilities while working with students. Best practices would include administrators building in planning time for this group of professionals to work together on a regular basis to continue to build the team.

**Project Implementation Plans**

I plan to start small and build with the implementation of this professional development training. I will submit the training to my principal for review and request to be able to implement the training with my paraprofessional and the general education teachers we support. The next step would be to take the training schoolwide. Finally, I would like to present the training at the district level for review and help to develop a training district wide that encourages the knowledge needed
to make the team of the paraprofessional, education specialist, and general education teacher a success.

Implementation of this project would be a half day professional development training at the district level. The training would be held at the district training center and would include education specialist, paraprofessionals, and general education specialists at all three levels; elementary, middle school, and high school. Ideally professionals who work with the same students would attend the training the same day. Participants will sit with their team if possible. If this is not possible, they will sit with professionals who teach at the same level. All participants should participate in all portions of the training. It is key to understand each persons’ role in the team in order to have accountability, trust, and mutual respect.

Slides 1-18 of the presentation are accompanied by pages 1-18 in the handout. This information is applicable to all three participant types and outlines the basics of special education. Slides 18-25 of the presentation are accompanied by pages 19-29 in the handout. These pages outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional. Slides 25-37 are accompanied by pages 30-41 in the handout. These pages outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the education specialist in regards to the paraprofessional and general education teacher. Slides 38-44 are accompanied by pages 42-52 in the handbook. These pages outline the specific roles and responsibilities of the general education teacher in regards to the paraprofessional and the education specialist. The remaining slides, 45-50, are accompanied by pages 53-62 of the handbook. These pages are for all participants and discuss accommodations for the classroom based on different disabilities.

**Limitation of Project**
The limitations of this project are mostly in the area of time and resources. If I had unlimited of both, I would have polled paraprofessionals, education specialists, and general education teachers to determine what they felt they were lacking in terms of training and clarity. This would allow me to better focus the training on meeting these needs. I would also follow up the training with an additional survey to determine how useful the information presented was and what participants would like to see changed for the future. The research was very clear regarding the need for training of paraprofessionals, the need for training of educational specialists on how to supervise paraprofessionals, and the of for training of general education teachers on how to support the paraprofessional in their room. There was very little clarity as to what that training should include.

Another limitation is the audience this training will meet. I wrote the training specifically for a middle class district in the inland valley of southern California. If this project were to be taken to another region, there would likely be additional needs that would need to be addressed.

**Project Suggestions**

Upon completing this project, I have realized how important it would be to get data from individuals working in the roles of paraprofessional, education specialist, and general education teacher working with students with disabilities. This additional research piece could lead to realizations of other areas of training that are needed. I would also suggest adding in an administrator training to the professional development. Administration is key to keeping this group of individuals connected and working successfully together. By addressed the administrator and presenting them with data of why it is crucial this team to have time together, the reality of this happening increases dramatically.
Conclusion

Spending the last year as a new teacher in special education, I feel like I have been thrown into the deep end. Luckily for me, I was well equipped with tools to survive. Research shows that paraprofessionals do not feel well equipped to do the job they are asked to do. The same research shows that many education specialist do not feel they are qualified to supervise a paraprofessional. In the same way some general education teacher do not feel they are properly trained on how to work with and support paraprofessionals working in their classroom.

I have created a professional development training for all three of these key players in the education of children with special needs. This professional development training addresses the needs of all three professionals. The training starts with a general understanding of the individual education plan (IEP) and the district structure of special education, including least restrictive environment.

The roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional are laid out clearly. The paraprofessional is also trained specifically on common behaviors and how to prevent those in class. The education specialist’s roles and responsibilities is laid out. This is also a guide for the paraprofessional to ensure they are receiving the training they should be from the education specialist. The education specialist is trained specifically in how to handle issues that arise with a paraprofessional and how have professional conversations. The roles and responsibilities of the general educations teacher that pertain to working with paraprofessionals is explained. The general education teacher is taught specifically about the different types of co-teaching models available and how to implement each one. Accommodations are provided to the general education teacher that address the most common disabilities seen in the classroom today.
EFFECTIVE USE OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

This professional development training the first step to professionals working together to not only ensure that students are being provided the services they need, but that those services are provided in a way that is most beneficial to the student. With professionals working together as a team from day one, students with special needs will no longer have to feel isolated in their own class. They will have access to exactly what every other student in the class has access to, they will truly be part of the class community.
References


Stockall, N. S., (2014). When an aide really becomes an aid. *TEACHING Exceptional Children,*
