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A Collaborative Professional Development Handbook

For Teacher/Paraeducator Teams

In the Elementary Setting

by

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Abstract

Paraeducators are an essential component of special education programs as they serve to support students during classroom instruction, reteach and review concepts with students, provide accommodations, support behavior improvement, and assist in classroom management. Due to time and budgetary constraints, paraeducators rarely come to a school site fully trained and prepared to perform these important duties. The responsibility of training paraeducators frequently falls on the special education teacher/case manager, even though teacher preparation programs rarely address the process and procedures required to train paraeducators. Major themes that developed during the literature review process include: the changing role of paraeducators, challenges for teacher/paraeducator teams, and the role of collaboration in teacher/paraeducator teams. The purpose of this project is the development of a handbook designed to be used by paraeducators and their supervising teachers during weekly meetings as a tool to facilitate communication, define expectations, and allow for ongoing professional development. This handbook is divided into four sections: orientation, professional duties and responsibilities, communication and professional development.

Keywords: Collaboration; manual; handbook; paraeducator; special education; teamwork; training.

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Chapter One: Introduction

With the demands on paraeducators including instructional support, behavior

management, and social facilitation, one would expect that they come to their positions with a

background in education. Through my experience as an Education Specialist, however, it has

become apparent that training for paraeducators is at best inconsistent and at worst nonexistent.

To compound this issue, the evaluation process for paraeducators is not well defined.

As an Education Specialist, I am responsible for the supervision, training and scheduling

of the paraeducators with whom I work. I am not, however responsible for evaluating them.

This raises the question: How does one train and supervise colleagues when there is not a clear

training and evaluation process? The solution has come to me with the help and guidance of my

Principal: Training paraeducators through a combination of collaboration and self-assessment

using a collection of training modules.

Purpose of Project

Considering that an organized collection of training modules is not readily available to

education specialists and paraeducators in my district, I have decided to create a handbook

containing essential information, strategies and techniques that can be used by paraeducators and

education specialists in their collaborative training and self-assessment processes. Once

completed, this handbook will provide structure to weekly collaborative training sessions

between paraeducators and education specialists. As a result, educators will feel more prepared

to train paraeducators will gain confidence in their role supporting students.

Significance of Project

Education Specialists are tasked with providing training to the paraeducators with whom

they serve. Many education specialists, however, do not feel adequately prepared to supervise

and train the paraeducators to work effectively with teachers, staff and student (Douglas et al., 2016). A collaborative training handbook will improve education by providing a standard framework to use during weekly meetings and a resource for clarifying roles, procedures, and strategies. When put into use, paraeducator/teacher teams will benefit from utilizing standardized language and practice when working with students and staff. Adequately trained staff will follow instructional programs with greater fidelity and when programs are implemented as they are intended, student outcomes improve (Brock et al., 2017). Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) outline the benefit of supporting paraeducators through a collaborative plan. They, however, stop short of presenting a completed ready to use handbook. It is my intention, with the creation of this handbook, to provide a clear and systematic instructional tool that will result in an increase in evidence-based practices and strategies by paraeducators and therefore increased student achievement.

Definition of Terms

Collaboration: Collaboration takes place when members of an inclusive learning community work together as equals to assist students to succeed in the classroom. This may be in the form of lesson planning with the special needs child in mind, or co-teaching a group or class (Powell, 2009-2017).

Delegation of staff: Delegation of staff represents how the teacher incorporates the support of the paraeducator into the classroom routine. This may include division of roles, self-starting (paraeducator initiating tasks without prompting), and attending to the lesson content as well as student behaviors (Cipriano et al., 2017).

Every Child a Reader (ECaR): A national project in England which was sponsored by a combination of government, charitable trusts, and the business sector to improve early literacy in young children (Johnston, 2018).

Evidence Based Practices: Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are instructional techniques that meet prescribed criteria related to the research design, quality, quantity, and effect size of supporting research, which have the potential to improve student outcomes (Cook & Cook, 2011).

Fidelity: Implementing a program exactly according to protocols and directions as was originally intended (Brock et al., 2017).

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Free and Appropriate Public Education means that special education students are to be provided with appropriate instruction, related services, accommodations, and modifications in order to access the general education curriculum in the least restrictive setting (Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act, 2004).

Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA): The IDEA is a document from the U.S. Department of Education that mandates that all students have equitable access to the general education curriculum (Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act, 2004).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The Least Restrictive Environment is referring to the implementation of Free and Appropriate Public Education in an environment with typical peers to the greatest extent possible (Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act, 2004).

Training Modules: A training module is one structured section of a course. The content within a training module should be designed, and organized, to support the learner's processing and retention of the information it contains (McGarry, 2019).

Paradigm: A paradigm is a system of beliefs, ideas, values, and habits that is a way of thinking about the real world (Wiktionary, 2020).

Paraeducator: A term synonymous with paraprofessional, teacher aide, or teacher assistant. A paraeducator assists one or more lead teachers in an educational setting. (Jones, 2011).

Reading Recovery (RR): An intensive 1:1 early literacy intervention program. (Johnson, 2018).

Respect: "Respect refers to educators positively acknowledging each other's work in the classroom." Respect in this instance includes the use of an individual's name, making eye contact, tone of voice and the awareness of how time and responsibilities are divided (Cipriano et al., 2017, p. 15).

Solidarity: "Solidarity is the consistent presentation of teamwork among the educators in the classroom… defined by educators deferring to one another [and] …using "we" language when speaking with students" (Cipriano et al., 2017, p. 12-13).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Over the past several decades, the role of paraeducators (also referred to as paraprofessionals, paras, instructional assistants, or teacher aides) has evolved from traditional clerical roles in the 1950s to their present role working directly with students within the classroom and other educational settings (Nevin et al., 2009). When considering the current role of paraeducators, one must first look at the variety of tasks they perform; next, we must investigate the challenges for teacher-paraeducator teams; and finally, consider the role of collaboration in current teacher-paraeducator partnerships.

Keeping in mind the current research on the working relationships of teacher-paraeducator teams, I have identified a need for collaborative training modules to improve the efficacy of these teams. The purpose of this project is to review current research regarding primary elementary school teachers' and paraeducators' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of paraeducator support within their classrooms and to develop collaborative training modules which when used regularly, will deliver a systematic, fiscally responsible, and time effective approach to continuing professional development for paraeducators.

Role of Paraeducators

As a result of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA) (2004), there is growing emphasis to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). To comply with the law, school districts have increasingly provided support to students with special needs within the general education setting. Paraeducators, under the supervision of education specialists, frequently provide this support. Carter et al. (2009) found the following:

The tasks paraprofessionals most frequently reported performing daily or

weekly were providing one-on-one instruction (97.0%), facilitating social

relationships among students (87.7%), providing instructional support in

small groups (85.3%), implementing behavior management programs

(79.4%), and clerical work like photocopying, typing, or filing (79.2%).

(pp. 351-352).

Conley et al. (2009) found that paraeducators arrive with a wide variety of backgrounds: individuals with a high school diploma and demonstrated competency in reading and math, a neighborhood parent or community member, or even a credentialed teacher who has not yet secured a position. Due to the variety of education levels and training among paraeducators, many times, the utilization of paraeducators has come under scrutiny. Some view paraeducators as a "less skilled replacement for the teacher rather than acting as an additional source of support." (Slater, & Gazeley, 2019, p. 547).

Research by Samson et al. (2015), however, concludes that "paraprofessionals with high school-level education, working with a diverse population of students, on a variety of programs could be successful" (p. 172). The elements closely correlated with student success when supported by paraeducators are (1) ongoing training, (2) supervision by a teacher or education specialist, and (3) the use of scripted lesson plans (Samson et al., 2015).

One positive model of paraeducator deployment comes from England where paraeducators implemented Reading Recovery (RR) interventions as a part of Every Child a Reader (ECaR) project. Johnson (2018) found that due to ongoing training alongside teachers and the structured nature of the RR program, paraeducators utilized in the ECaR project had provided effective, widespread, and sustainable reading intervention. As a result, paras have become increasingly valued as educational practitioners in the United Kingdom (Johnson, 2018).

The success of widespread literacy intervention implemented by paras in England has

implications that can be applied in the United States as well. Johnson (2018) also found that

effective delivery of literacy interventions (by paraeducators) relies heavily on high quality

initial training alongside the classroom teacher, a structure of ongoing support upon which to

draw, and active support from the senior leadership team.

Challenges for Teacher-Paraeducator Teams in an Inclusive Setting

Significant concerns exist regarding paraeducators ability to provide small group

instruction (Jones et al., 2011). Data analysis led Jones et al. (2011) to identify the following

four specific challenges: First, paraeducators rarely adhered precisely to the script. They

omitted directions, failed to use all required materials, and failed to provide feedback presented

within the scripted lesson. Second, paraeducators had trouble completing the lessons in the time

frame allotted within the script, frequently spending too much time on low level skills such as

recall and inadequate time on the higher-level skills being targeted. Third, paraeducators were

observed to have incomplete understanding of some of the skills taught such as specific

enunciation and blending of sounds, leading to erroneous feedback given to students. Finally,

the paraeducators had difficulty keeping students on task, reflecting a lack of behavior

management strategies. These challenges indicate a need for additional, ongoing training and

feedback for paraeducators if they are to successfully instruct small groups. There are, however,

several obstacles teachers encounter when providing training and feedback to the paraeducators

with whom they work.

In their research on supporting and supervising paraeducators, Douglas et al. (2016),

found that many teachers felt ill prepared to supervise and train the paraeducators on their teams.

Douglas, et al. (2016) report teachers not having received adequate, if any, pre-service or in-

service training in this area. Additionally, special education teachers report having very limited time to supervise paraeducators, especially those working within the general education setting (Douglas, et al., 2016).

Unfortunately, even when time is provided for training and supervision, teacher-paraeducator relationships do not always go as smoothly as one would hope. (Douglas et al., 2016) Teachers interviewed discussed personality clashes between paraeducators and teachers (Douglas et al., 2016). One teacher stated, "Often times it is more difficult to manage adults in my room than it is to manage students." (Douglas et al., 2016, p. 67). Other teachers interviewed by Douglas et al. (2016) reported that some paraeducators cried when given feedback, making it very difficult to assist them in refining and improving their practice.

From the point of view of the paraeducator, however, the perception is different. When interviewed by Fisher and Pleasants (2012), paraeducators reported all too frequently that they did not meet regularly with teachers. Paraeducators also reported that the lack of meeting and planning time was not because they did not want to, but because they were not included in planning meetings (Fisher & Pleasants, 2012). Additionally, there are times when the lack of communication results in paraeducators not having a clear understanding of what is expected of them or the students with whom they work (Wilson et al., 2013).

Another factor hindering paraeducators success, even when using evidence based scripted programs (e.g. Reading Recovery), is lack of fidelity, or not using a program the way it was initially intended (Brock et al., 2017). Lack of fidelity is often the result of a training deficit (Brock et al., 2017).

A needs assessment by Barrio and Hollingshead (2017) uncovered a strong desire for training on Evidence Based Practices (EBP) which:

directly related to characteristics of students with specific disabilities (e.g.

autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, intellectual disability etc..).

The clear majority of the participants in the needs assessment agreed that

opportunities for professional development to further their knowledge and

skills were needed and expressed high interest in the workshops… (p. 143)

Despite their desire for training, many paraprofessionals disclosed their unsuccessful requests to

administrators for professional development, "even though many were the main contact for the

students' learning." (Barrio et al., 2017, p. 143).

For over a decade, evidence has mounted that paraeducators benefit from ongoing

support (Barrio et al., 2017; Brock et al., 2017; Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012; Carnahan et al., 2009;

Carter et al., 2009; Cipriano et al., 2016; Conley et al., 2010; Cook & Cook, 2011; Douglas et al.,

2016; Fisher & Pleasants, 2012; Giangreco et al., 2003; Jones et al., 2012; Lytle et al., 2007;

Jones et al., 2011; Nevin et al., 2009; Samson et al., 2015; Slater & Gazeley, 2019; Stockhall,

2014; Wilson et al., 2013). When adequately supported, paraeducators report "feeling more

valued and gaining knowledge and skills about their jobs, students, and instruction" (Giangreco

et al., 2003, p. 74). This support for paraeducators result in a "Ripple Effect" wherein

paraeducator planning culminates in improved student outcomes including "increased inclusion

in general education settings, student achievement (e.g., IEP goals, general education

curriculum), student behavior and safety, and peer interactions" (Giangreco et al., 2003 p. 75).

School districts and administrators, however, do not always have the time or funding to provide

adequate, formal professional development opportunities to paraeducators (Giangreco et al.,

2003). Due to these constraints, ongoing training typically comes in the form of on the job

training with teachers modeling the use of instructional tools, techniques and programs (Giangreco et al., 2003).

Carnahan et al. (2009) recommend a systematic approach for supporting paraeducators. This approach necessitates regularly scheduled staff meetings, assessing staff knowledge and experience, and the introduction of new teaching strategies (Carnahan, et al., 2009). When teachers shoulder the responsibility for training, it is important for their instructional time to be protected rather than impeded by the addition of support staff and the time it necessitates to train them (Stockhall, 2014). Throughout a thorough literature review, however, few tools for on-the-job training were conveniently organized into modules and designed to be used by teacher-paraeducator teams.

From Training to Collaboration: A Paradigm Shift

In order to design training modules for use by teacher-paraeducator teams, we must first examine how these teams interact. In their study, "There's No "I" in Team: Building a Framework for Teacher-Paraeducator Interactions in Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms," Cipriano et al. (2016) utilized a mixed methods approach in order to identify interactions that were most conductive to quality learning. They found that three elements contribute to successful teacher-paraeducator interactions:

Element 1 - Solidarity. "Solidarity is the consistent presentation of teamwork among the educators in the classroom… defined by educators deferring to one another [and] …using "we" language when speaking with students" (Cipriano et al., 2017, p. 12-13).

Element 2 - Delegation of staff. Delegation of staff represents how the teacher incorporates the support of the paraeducator into the classroom routine. This may include division of roles, self-starting (para initiating tasks without prompting), and attending (para

supporting behavior/instruction while paying attention to what the teacher is communicating to the class) (Cipriano et al., 2017, pp. 13-14).

Element 3 - Respect. "Respect refers to educators positively acknowledging each other's work in the classroom" (Cipriano et al., 2017, p. 15). Respect in this instance includes the use of an individual's name, making eye contact, tone of voice and the awareness of how time and responsibilities are divided so that no one feels *taken advantage of* (Cipriano et al., 2017).

The three above elements of solidarity, delegation, and respect all hinge on good communication and making sure that all team members are on the same page in regard to the expectations regarding collaborating in the educational setting.

Barrio and Hollingshead (2017) found that collaboration does not happen automatically: In addition to working on effective communication between team members, professional development is an essential component of a collaborative teacher-paraeducator relationship (Barrio & Hollingshead, 2017). Barrio and Hollingshead (2017) found one unexpected byproduct of professional development provided to paraeducators was a sense of empowerment. Paraeducators felt "ready to advocate for themselves and their students," (Barrio & Hollingshead, 2017, p. 143) as a result of their ongoing professional development.

It stands to reason that collaborative training modules likewise would empower paraeducators. A collaborative training model benefits teams on several levels (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). The teacher is no longer viewed as directly supervising the paraeducator. Instead, the team is working together to facilitate mutual growth and improve the classroom climate. (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). Reflecting together on what is working and what is not has the

potential to be a mutually rewarding metacognitive process that promotes both teamwork and mutual respect (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012).

One such collaborative training model is the Collaborative Classroom Support Plan (CCSP) (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012). This model has four dimensions; each dimension including six to eight suggested topics. The dimensions and topics are presented in Table 1. The CCSP training model provides a framework for effective collaboration with paraeducators. In addition to offering the training framework, Capizzi and Da Fonte (2012) suggest that tip sheets be added to collaborative handbooks.

Summary

Paraeducators have an important role in the support of students with special needs. Paraeducators come to the academic setting with varying degrees of education and experience. Frequently, the support and training of paraeducators falls under the purview of special educators. To design and deliver this paraeducator training can be quite challenging due to special educators' time constraints. Research supports collaborative planning for teacher-paraeducator teams as an effective path to professional development, as well as creating a climate where the classroom staff feels valued and confident in their ability to support students appropriately.

Using the Collaborative Classroom Support Plan collaborative training model (Capizzi & Da Fonte, 2012) as a framework, this project will result in the development of handbook that includes evidenced-base tip sheets for K-5 paraeducators supporting students with mild and moderate learning disabilities. This handbook will serve to assist teacher-paraeducator teams with orientation to the workplace, definition of responsibilities, communication, and professional learning as well as fill the current gap in training prepared for and provided to paraeducators.

Table 1

The four dimensions and topics included in the CCSP collaborative training model

Dimension	Topics Included
Orientation to the setting	Introductions to key school personnel
	Tour of school focusing on expected work setting
	Dress code
	Arrival and departure times
	Policies for reporting absences
	Emergency procedures
Professional duties/responsibilities	Classroom setting and description
	Maintaining a positive work environment
	Professional and ethical standards
	Awareness of student strengths and needs
	Assist in providing support to students as needed
	Engaging students in learning experiences
	Data collection
	Modifications to provide access to the curriculum
Communication	Providing and accepting constructive feedback
	Acknowledge work style preferences
	Set a consistent meeting day and time
	Share goals and expectations
	Confidentiality
	People-first language
Professional development	Awareness of disabilities
	Instructional strategies
	Behavior management
	Health management
	Data collection
	Materials adaptations

Chapter Three: Methodology

Paraeducators today play an essential role supporting teachers and students within the school environment. Education specialists are most often tasked with the responsibility of making sure paraeducators are prepared to fulfill their role. Considering that an organized collection of training modules is not readily available to education specialist/paraeducator teams in my district, I have decided to create a handbook containing essential information, strategies, and techniques that can be used in the training process. Once completed, this handbook will provide structure to weekly collaborative training sessions.

This chapter identifies the audiences for whom this handbook is intended and the settings in which the use of this handbook would be useful. Finally, this chapter includes a detailed description of how the handbook was created.

Audience and Setting

This project was designed to be used by paraeducator-education specialist teams within the elementary school setting. The handbook is organized in a straightforward manner and it will lend itself to use in the team-teaching general education classroom, resource room, as well as other separate and integrated settings within a school. It was constructed with ease of use in mind as well as practicality for regular use during short (15-30 minute) weekly training sessions. The handbook will serve both tenured and inexperienced team members as they collaboratively work towards finding common language, strategies, and procedures for working with students using evidence-based practices.

Procedures for Developing the Project

When embarking upon the journey to create a handbook for education specialist-paraeducator teams, I first needed to review current and foundational literature on the subject. I sought to gain insight into training practices that have led to improved student outcomes as well

as positive relationships between faculty members. In the research process, I happened upon an article outlining the Collaborative Classroom Support Plan (CCSP) (Capizzi & DaFonte, 2012). This was not a handbook in and of itself but instead a step by step guide for developing such a handbook. The CCSP has four distinct sections: orientation to the setting; professional duties and responsibilities; communication; and professional development.

In compiling materials for the orientation section of the handbook, I looked to existing school and district maps, policies, and procedures to make sure that all information presented matched current policies. I blended these local resources with the formatting and guidance of the CCSP. Next, for the professional duties and responsibilities section of the handbook, I looked to detailed job descriptions on my local district website and used them as a guide to adapt the Professional Duties and Responsibilities worksheet found in the CCSP. Much of this section will be left blank as the teams will be filling them out together as part of their collaborative process.

Communication is the key to collaboration and as such, resources were compiled to assist with communication between team members. These resources include but are not limited to: exchange of contact information, scheduled meeting times and days, issues surrounding confidentiality, a discussion of people-first language, and work style preferences. Finally, professional development resource links were compiled. These included but were not limited to: reading instruction, writer's workshop, setting expectations, progress monitoring, individual education plans, goals, behavior modification, classroom management, and adapting instructional resources.

Chapter Four: Results

Please see Appendix A for the completed Collaborative Training Handbook for Teacher/Paraeducator Teams. This handbook has been designed to be used by paraeducators and

their supervising teachers during weekly meetings as a tool to facilitate communication, define

expectations, and allow for ongoing professional development. It is divided into four sections

(Orientation, Professional Duties & Responsibilities, Communication, and Professional

Development). The Orientation section is designed to be used the first week of school or when

new paraeducators join the team and includes items such as start and end times, campus maps,

and staff extensions. The Professional Duties and Responsibilities section includes job

descriptions, resources for progress monitoring and tracking behaviors as well as a discussion on

professional ethics. The communication section covers confidentiality, people first language and

work style preferences. Finally, I have included links for professional development as a starting

point, this section is intended to be differentiated according to the specific needs of a team and

will continue to evolve over time as training needs are identified.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Paraeducators are an essential component of special education programs as they serve to support students during classroom instruction, reteach and review concepts with students, provide accommodations, support behavior improvement, and assist in classroom management. Due to time and budgetary constraints, paraeducators rarely come to a school site fully trained and prepared to perform these important duties. The responsibility of training paraeducators frequently falls on the special education teacher/case manager, even though teacher preparation programs rarely address the process and procedures required to train paraeducators. Major themes that developed during the literature review process include: the changing role of paraeducators, challenges for teacher/paraeducator teams, and the role of collaboration in teacher/paraeducator teams. The purpose of this project is the development of a handbook designed to be used by paraeducators and their supervising teachers during weekly meetings as a tool to facilitate communication, define expectations, and allow for ongoing professional development. This handbook is divided into four sections: orientation, professional duties and responsibilities, communication, and professional development. I see this handbook as a living document that will change and grow over time. There are natural limitations to this project; next steps that need to be addressed; lessons learned; and educational implications to be discussed.

Limitations of Project

The educational environment changed drastically during the window of time between when this project was being researched and when it was developed. Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 I had personal interactions with paraeducators daily and there was a regular exchange of information. While developing the actual handbook however, I was at home, teaching remotely through Zoom and learning a new skill set surrounding scheduling and providing

support for students through a distance-learning and then hybrid-learning model. This changing work environment created new time demands and made it more difficult to arrange time to meet with paraeducators and get their input in the development of the handbook. Given more time and collaboration with the team, I would have expanded some sections and added best practice tip sheets to the professional development section of the handbook.

Next Steps

Now that K-5 classrooms in my district have moved to in person/hybrid instruction I will have the opportunity to meet weekly with the paraeducators on my team. I have shared a draft of the Collaborative Training Handbook for Teacher/Paraeducator teams with them (as well as my direct administrative supervisors) and am awaiting feedback. Once the feedback has been used to revise the handbook, I will print off copies for the team of paraeducators I work with as well as a copy for each of the education specialists at my site. I will then pilot the handbook by going over the contents in short 15-25-minute meetings with my team making sure to allow plenty of time for discussion. The goal of the meetings is not just to relay information, the meetings are to be collaborative and facilitated in a way that builds trust and teamwork. After piloting the handbook this year, I plan to revise it based on feedback and observations and then share a PDF of it with the coordinators/program specialists at district level so that they can give feedback and utilize it as they see fit.

Lessons Learned and Educational Implications

Throughout the process of researching and developing the Collaborative Handbook, it became apparent that the value of collaborating with one's team is not as much about the content of the training sessions as it is about teambuilding. Without a positive rapport and strong professional relationships all the training in the world will have a minimal effect on the

classroom environment and student performance because the practices will not be processed and integrated with efficacy unless the team is ready to learn and grow together. With that in mind there are several important lessons I have learned.

First, Paraeducators often have as much or more to teach the team during the collaboration time as the teacher/case manager does. The paraeducators I am working with presently each have their own set of talents and areas of expertise that when shared makes us stronger as individuals and more importantly as a team.

Second, I learned a couple of valuable strategies for giving constructive feedback. The policy of praising publicly and correcting privately, is one such strategy that can go a long way in building rapport and creating an environment of mutual respect and trust. Another such strategy is the use of the 5:1 ratio of positive, reinforcing comments to one suggestion for improvement. These strategies have been part of my teaching and instructional repertoire for years, so the learning came into play with the realization that relationships with colleagues and other adults in our lives benefit from this approach when the positive comments are genuine, and heart felt.

Finally, I learned that rapport is the most important piece of the collaboration process. So important, in fact, that I have been keeping team meetings shorter and spending at least half of the time on sharing our experiences during the past week with each other and team building.

Conclusion

Babe Ruth, the most celebrated athlete of his time said, "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." This rings especially true with me after completing this project. Taking the time to orient new team members, go over professional

duties and responsibilities, work together on communication and engaging in meaningful professional development are all important. But the most important part of all is building those relationships so that we can work as a team towards the common goals of maintaining a safe and trusting classroom environment and increasing student achievement.

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Appendix A

Collaborative Training Handbook For Teacher/Paraeducator Teams

This handbook has been designed to be used by paraeducators and their supervising teachers during weekly meetings as a tool to facilitate communication, define expectations, and allow for ongoing professional development. It is divided into four sections (Orientation, Professional Duties & Responsibilities, Communication, and Professional Development). I hope you find it helpful. Feel free to expand/adapt this manual for personal use as you see fit.

I. **Orientation to the Setting: Supervising teacher will go over the following during the first week of school or first week on site for a new hire.**

- Introduction to Key Personnel
- Tour of the School (Insert map of school here and take walking tour with paraeducator(s).
- Attire- Discuss Professional/Casual Attire and Special Dress Days
- Start and End Times
- Policies for Reporting Absences
- Emergency Procedures
- Staff Contact List (Insert your school info here)
- Staff Calendar (Insert your district calendar here)

II. **Professional Duties and Responsibilities: Paraeducator(s) will fill out duties and check if they are "Teacher", "Paraeducator," or "Shared" duties, and then team will discuss. The following topics are covered within this handbook and can be topics of discussion during weekly meetings.**

- Daily Schedule (to be filled out collaboratively)
- Maintaining a Positive Work Environment (Self-Check for Paraeducators and Teachers)
- Professional and Ethical Standards https://horsecrazy22.wordpress.com/2016/02/27/paraeducators-and-ethical-considerations/ (Read Article Round Robin Style With Team and Discuss)
- Awareness of Student Strengths and Needs (Paraeducator Fills in One Page "Cheat Sheet" to Stay on Top of Goals and Individual Needs and Supports)
- Data Collection (Insert Individual Student Progress Monitoring Forms Here-Discuss how to complete form)
- Behavior Incident Sheet (Discuss how to complete and when/why)
- District Job Descriptions (Samples from Oceanside USD included for reference- insert DOS descriptions here)

III. **Communication: The following topics are covered within this handbook and can be topics of discussion during weekly meetings.**
- Exchange of Contact Info. Between Team Members
- Set a Consistent Meeting Day and Time
- Confidentiality
- People-First Language
- Providing Constructive Feedback
- Acknowledge Work Style Preferences

IV. **Professional Development: The following resources/links will provide a starting point for professional development, feel free to add to this list of resources and topics to cover.**
- Awareness of Disabilities
- Instructional Strategies
- Behavior Management

Orientation to the Setting

School: _____   School Year:_____

Classroom(s): _____

Supervising Teacher: _____

Paraeducator(s): _____

Principal: _____

Assistant Principal: _____

Other School Personnel and Their Roles:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

School Policies:

- Attire:_____

- Arrival/Departure:_____

- Absences:_____

_____

_____

Emergency Procedures:

- Fire: _____

- Rainy Day Schedule: _____

- Safety/Emergency Plan: _____

*Adapted from Capizzi & Da Fonte (2012)

Insert map of school with evacuation route, list of school phone extensions, and district calendar here.

Professional Duties and Responsibilities

Job Description:_____

Supervising Teacher: _____

Classroom Setting/Description:_____

Duties/Responsibilities:
(Your responsibilities will include the following, but you will likely be called on to complete additional tasks as needed)

Duty	Teacher's Responsibility	Paraeducator Responsibility	Shared Responsibility

*Adapted from Capizzi & Da Fonte (2012)

Daily Schedule

(Your schedule is subject to change as student, school and program needs change.

Thanks for being flexible 😊)

Time	Placement/Tasks
	Lunch/Breaks

*Adapted from Capizzi & Da Fonte (2012)

Maintaining a Positive Classroom Environment Self-Check

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Priority
Make time to interact with students individually				
Listen to student's comments and concerns while modeling empathy				
Show interest in their stories and experiences				
Support all students to feel successful by differentiating instruction and leveraging individual strengths				
Involve students in understanding and practicing behavioral expectations				
Acknowledge and praise positive behaviors (catch them being good more often than correcting behavior)				
Acknowledge efforts (not just results)				
Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities				
Deal with issues in a calm and positive way				
Use humor (positive upbeat humor NOT sarcasm)				
Provide accommodations/supports				

What were your highest/lowest scores? Which area(s) would you like to improve?

*Adapted from https://www.ldatschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Handout_ClassroomEnvironment-1.pdf
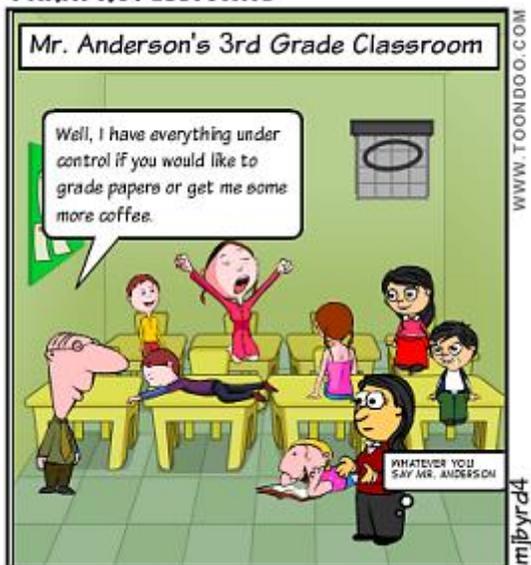
PARAEDUCATORS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics and Paraeducators:

Paraeducators function as a member of a team and have a special relationship with teachers, other school personal, students, parents, and the community. The quality of these relationships depends not only on the work performed, but also on the ethical behavior demonstrated on the job. Para educators are faced with ethical issues daily, including confidentiality, record management, and the demands placed on them by teachers and staff. There may come a time when the para may face a situation where their own interest, the students' interest or even the school's interest may become a conflict. These ethical standards will help them to become aware of the correct course of action and even help with a variety of perspectives often then their your own.

Remember as a paraeducator we are obligated to be fully prepared as possible to function ethically as well as legally in the school we are working. To help out there are some responsibilities that can be followed and they are:

1. Engage only in non-instructional and instructional activities for which the paraeducator has been qualified or trained to do.
2. Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents.
3. Should the paraeducator have a concern or a concern expressed by a parent, student, or others, they need to refer it to the teacher or their supervisor.
4. Remember the supervisor has the ultimate responsibility for the instruction and behavior management of the children, also the para must remember to follow the directions/instructions prescribed by them unless it conflicts with number 1.

GOING IN THROUGH THE
PARAPROFESSIONAL DOOR

Now there are some ethical standards that a para must know about with students and their parents and they are:

1. Discuss progress and limitations of a student only with the supervising teacher(s) and it must be in an appropriate setting.
2. Refrain from engaging in unfair practices as result of the student's handicap, race or cultural background.
3. Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel and remember only when students are not present.
4. Present yourself as a positive adult role model.
5. Respect the dignity, privacy and individuality of all students, parents, and staff members of the school.
6. Use behavior management strategies that are established by the school where you are working and the classroom teacher.

Relationship with the Teachers:

1. Recognize the teacher as your supervisor.
2. Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
3. When problems cannot be resolved, utilize the school district's complaint/grievance procedures.
4. Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher. Do not undermine the teacher(s), or their program(s) through gossip or side talking.
5. Express differences of opinion only when students are not present.
6. If issues are not resolved, then discuss concerns only with the teacher's supervisor.
7. Do not discuss teacher problems with students, other teachers, paraprofessionals or parents.
8. Follow the behavior management approach as established by the teacher.

Relationships with the school:

1. Accept responsibility for improving skills
2. Become familiar with school policies and procedures
3. Represent the school and its programs in a positive manner

4. When procedures cannot be resolved utilize the grievance procedures attired by the school district for which you are working.

Now let's discuss Confidentiality

One of the most important aspects of ethical behavior for a para educator is the handling and disclosure of confidential information about students and their families. School personnel including you the para are required by law to keep this information confidential.

Information about students is confidential and should only be shared with teachers and staff who directly work with the student. If you are a para who types, collects and stores educational records you need to be aware that the written data is confidential and should not be shared with persons outside of the educational team. Now there will be times when you are out and about, and someone will come up to you and ask you a question like "I hear you're working with Brittany… Is that family as demanding as everyone says?" Here are some possible answers that a para educator can give so they are protecting the confidential agreement:

1. I'm a paraprofessional with the school; I can't talk about children and families that way
2. "Paraprofessionals aren't allowed to discuss children and their families with others. Sorry"

So, remember that keeping confidential information is a rule/law that every paraprofessional must follow.

*Taken from https://horsecrazy22.wordpress.com/2016/02/27/paraeducators-and-ethical-considerations/

Awareness of Student Strengths and Needs

Student Name/Grade/Class Strengths/Interests:	Goal Areas/Needs	Accommodations
Student Name/Grade/Class Strengths/Interests:	Goal Areas/Needs	Accommodations
Student Name/Grade/Class Strengths/Interests:	Goal Areas/Needs	Accommodations
Student Name/Grade/Class Strengths/Interests:	Goal Areas/Needs	Accommodations
Student Name/Grade/Class Strengths/Interests:	Goal Areas/Needs	Accommodations
Student Name/Grade/Class Strengths/Interests:	Goal Areas/Needs	Accommodations

Progress Monitoring

Student: DOB: IEP Due:

Goals	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

Name: _____

Behavior Incident Log

Environment (Date//Time/Duration/ Location/Activity)	Antecedent (What happened right before the behavior?)	Describe the Behavior	Consequence (What happened as a result of this behavior?)

OCEANSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CLASS SPECIFICATION
INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT - SPECIAL EDUCATION
DEFINITION
Under general supervision, to perform a variety of supportive tasks for the instructional staff in special education; to provide intensive training to individuals and smaller groups in learning personal responsibilities and elementary academic subjects; to tutor, train, and assist students in classroom, group study, or similar situations; and to do related work as required.
DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS
Positions in this class are assigned para-professional work in assisting the instructional staff in Special Education. Incumbents are expected to have a sensitivity to and understanding of students in these areas.
EXAMPLES OF DUTIES
1. Assists instructional staff with the development and presentation of learning materials and instructional exercises.
2. Performs a variety of clerical duties, such as filing, typing, keeping records, and duplicating materials for instructional staff.
3. Observes and records information about children's behavior and assists in developing constructive attitudes and general guidance.
4. Monitors and assists students in activities such as arts and crafts, preparing and serving foods, dishwashing, cleaning, sorting items, repairing furniture, and other manual and self-developmental tasks.
5. Oversees and supervises students during classroom activities, in a learning lab, while on the playground, and on field trips .
6. Assists in the development of a variety of instructional materials.
7. Administers standardized tests.
8. Corrects papers, records grades, takes roll, collects money, and keeps records.
9. Assists in maintaining a neat, orderly, and attractive learning environment.
10. May be required to lift and/or assist student, whose weight exceeds 50 pounds, during feeding, toileting, bus loading/unloading, and other functions.
QUALIFICATIONS GUIDE
Knowledge of
Student behavior and characteristics.
Techniques used in controlling and motivating students.
Correct English usage.
Routine record keeping.
General purposes and goals of public education.
Ability to
Assume responsibility for supervising students.
Demonstrate patience, warmth, and a liking for children.
Learn and utilize standard teaching aides and office machines.
Learn and utilize basic methods and procedures to be followed in an instructional setting. Perform routine clerical work.
Understand and carry out oral and written instructions.
Maintain cooperative and effective working relationships with children and adults.
Training and Experience
Equivalent to the completion of the twelfth grade; extensive and demonstrated (paid or volunteer)

experience in working with children; or any combination of training and/or experience that could likely provide the desired knowledge and abilities.

SUPERVISOR

Principal

Approved: July 1, 1986

*Taken from: https://www.oside.k12.ca.us/resource/resources?d=x&id=1258812777100&group_id=1244185156039

OCEANSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT CLASS SPECIFICATION

DEFINITION

Under general supervision of the Director of Special Education and the school principal, to perform a variety of supportive tasks for the instructional staff in behavior intervention; to assist the instructional
staff in developing and carrying out behavioral programs for special education students who are autistic, or have behavior that is physically or verbally aggressive or non-compliant.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

1. Delivers direct behavioral intervention using both verbal and hands-on methods to identified students.
2. Observes students, counts occurrences of specified behaviors for identified periods of time, compiles baseline data, and charts the results of intervention.
3. Maintains ongoing data collection and charts behavior interventions.
4. Provides feedback to instructional team regarding data collected.
5. Models instructional strategies to other staff as directed by the instructional staff.
6. Participates in training by instructional staff to learn skills and techniques used in behavior intervention.
7. Performs a variety of clerical duties, such as typing/keyboarding, keeping records, duplicating and developing materials for instructional staff.
8. Attends to and assists students with physical needs (i.e., toileting, feeding, dressing, etc.) and development of self-help skills.

OTHER JOB FUNCTIONS

9. Performs other duties related to the position.

Definition, Essential Job Functions, and Other Job Functions revised by Board of Education: August 10, 1999

QUALIFICATIONS GUIDE

Training and Experience

The knowledge, skills, and abilities required for this classification would typically be acquired through graduation from high school or possession of a high school equivalency certificate; extensive and demonstrated (paid or volunteer) experience in working with children with behavior disorders preferred; and experience in applied behavioral analysis (discrete trial) preferred; or any combination of training, education, and experience that would provide the required knowledges and abilities.

Knowledge of

Learning activities appropriate for students with behavior disorders/autism.

Techniques used in controlling, motivating and reinforcing students.

English usage, punctuation, spelling and grammar.

Basic math.

Basic computer and keyboarding skills.

Record keeping techniques.

Ability to

Demonstrate an understanding, patient, warm and receptive attitude towards special education students.

Communicate effectively, orally, and in writing, with all soci-economic levels, understanding cultural differences and language barriers.

Understand, interpret, and apply rules, regulations, standards, and procedures.

Perform clerical duties such as filing, duplicating, keyboarding/typing, and maintaining simple records.

Establish and maintain cooperative working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

Understand and follow oral and written instructions.

Make objective observations without reacting personally to deviant behavior.

Work Environment

School Site; driving to other district locations or student's homes; possible exposure to childhood communicable diseases, biting, kicking, spitting, pinching, and other deviant behavior.

Physical Abilities

Sitting, standing, walking; including reaching/handling/fingering; talking/hearing conversations; near visual

acuity/visual accommodation.

Bending, crouching, kneeling, and twisting.

Reaching in all directions.

Lifting up to 50 pounds unassisted.

May be required to physically restrain students with body weight exceeding 75 pounds.

License

Possession of a current, valid California Driver's License Class I, II, or III.

Supervisor

Site Principal/Director of Special Education

Qualifications Guide Revised by Personnel Commission: August 12, 1999

*Taken from: https://www.oside.k12.ca.us/resource/resources?d=x&id=1258812777100&group_id=1244185156039

Communication

Evening/weekend emergency contact information:

Supervising Teacher: Paraeducator:

Phone:_____   Phone:_____

Email:_____   Phone:_____

Your primary contact regarding your position is _____. This is whom you should contact if you have questions or concerns about any aspect of your duties or responsibilities.

Each Week, we will have a team meeting on _____(day of the week) at _____(time).

At this meeting, please be prepared to discuss job responsibilities for the week, schedule changes, student needs and concerns, and new strategies.

Confidentiality:

- We work very hard to respect the privacy of our students and their families. Please remember that we do not discuss our students in areas where others can hear us. For this reason, do not discuss students in public areas such as the lounge, the office, the hallways, the library, or the lunchroom.

- If a teacher or other staff member asks you questions about a student regarding his/her family, home or disability that is beyond the scope of what is needed to teach the child in the classroom. Please do not discuss the student, instead, please refer that person to your Supervising Teacher.

- If a parent or guardian of another student asks you about a particular student who is not his/her own, please tell them that you are not at liberty to discuss that student and refer the parent or guardian to the Supervising Teacher.

People First Language

- When speaking or describing a student, always be sure to think about the person first.
- Avoid using labels.

Nonexamples	Examples
Handicapped student/individuals	Students/individuals with disabilities
She is learning disabled	She has learning disabilities
She is autistic	She has autism

Providing Constructive Feedback

- Do not forget the positive. Constructive feedback is accepted most readily when given at a 5:1 ratio with praise or acknowledgement of positives. Education and Behavior (https://educationandbehavior.com/how-to-help-students-with-behavior-problems/)

- Make it sincere.
- Be concrete and specific about what the praise is based on.
- Give praise as immediately as possible following the action you are complimenting.
- Give positives publicly and correction privately.
- Build a relationship. Students (and adults) receive feedback more readily when there is a trusting relationship established.
- Individualize. Some students are more sensitive to feedback and may need more than the 5:1 ratio.
- Watch tone and nonverbals. If the feedback is delivered in a relaxed and non-threatening manner, it may be taken more readily.
- Ask how you can help.
- End on a positive. Autism Classroom resources (https://autismclassroomresources.com/giving-feedback-effectively/)

Work Style Preference Evaluation

**Write an x on the line closer to the statement that best describes you.

I like challenges	++++++++++++++++++++	I prefer working on things I know how to do
I like working independently	++++++++++++++++++++	I like to know exactly what I need to do
I like a flexible schedule	++++++++++++++++++++	I prefer a clear schedule
I am comfortable in other teacher's spaces	++++++++++++++++++++	I like to have my own personal space in the classroom
I like discussing situations when things don't go well	++++++++++++++++++++	I like to work things out on my own when things don't go well
I am a "big picture" person	++++++++++++++++++++	I like taking care of details
I like doing many things at once	++++++++++++++++++++	I like doing one thing at a time
I am an energetic person	++++++++++++++++++++	I am a calm person

*Adapted from Capizzi & Da Fonte (2012)

Professional Development Resources

Disability Awareness Training

Strategies to Support Students with Dyslexia

Strategies to Support Students with ADHD

Elementary Reading Strategies

Strategies to Support Students with Autism

How to Scaffold Paragraph Writing

Progress Monitoring

Token Boards

Visual Schedules

Providing Constructive Feedback

References

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Oceanside (https://www.oside.k12.ca.us/resource/resources?d=x&id=1258812777100&group_id=1244185156039)

WordPress (https://horsecrazy22.wordpress.com/2016/02/27/paraeducators-and-ethical-considerations/)

Bobbydodd (https://bobbydodd.org/empowers/disability-awareness-training/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA7qP9BRCLARIsABDaZziZIss-hap32E6QI5meNgUnIjlkw3wXrcXBDnCFw_bVganjytVD1oYaArf4EALw_wcB)

Ed Utopia (https://www.edutopia.org/article/6-elementary-reading-strategies-really-work)

Dyslexia Resources (https://dyslexiaresource.org/top-teaching-strategies-for-students-with-dyslexia/)

Reading Rocks (https://www.readingrockets.org/article/supporting-students-autism-10-ideas-inclusive-classrooms)

Very Well Mind (https://www.verywellmind.com/help-for-students-with-adhd-20538)

Know How (http://youaut-aknow.com/how-to-scaffold-paragraph-writing-for/)

Stanfield (https://stanfield.com/the-five-ws-and-one-h-of-progress-monitoring/)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qudttqXX9H0

Applied Behavior Analysis (https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com/faq/what-is-visual-scheduling/)

Education and Behavior (https://educationandbehavior.com/how-to-help-students-with-behavior-problems/)

Autism Classroom Resources (https://autismclassroomresources.com/giving-feedback-effectively/)