



# Strategies for Paraprofessional Support in the Classroom

LASARD Workgroup #4  
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- Paras as caregivers

- Personal care
- Keeping students occupied
- Activities may have been: placing pegs in pegboards; table manners; practice dressing.



- Paras as educators

- Support students:
  - ✦ Socially
  - ✦ Academically
  - ✦ Physically
  - ✦ Behaviorally



Causton-Theoharis, 2009

- **Social Support**

- Supporting students to make & maintain friends by:
  - ✦ communicate with peers
  - ✦ Selecting a partner for group work
  - ✦ Finding a friend to play with at recess



- **Academic Support**

- Supporting students to attend to academic content & learn new material by:
  - ✦ Prepare for tests
  - ✦ Outline a chapter
  - ✦ Create a insect collection
    - Any academic task a student may do in school may require paraprofessional support.

- **Physical Support**

- Supporting students to be in the position to participate and learn by:

- ✦ Providing personal care
- ✦ Providing mobility support

- **Behavioral Support**

- Supporting students to engage appropriately by:

- ✦ Providing positive reinforcement
- ✦ Embedding strategies to help them stay on task
- ✦ Responding to students needs for curriculum adaptations, breaks, etc.



- Instructional tasks
- Behavioral support tasks
- Clerical tasks
- Supervision tasks
- Planning or preparation
- Personal care tasks



(Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002)

# Providing Physical Supports

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- Through Physical Management Routines (PMR)
  - PMR's should reflect the environments where they will be used and the physical needs of the individual
  - PMR's should not be related to isolated activities. They should be linked with activities that occur before and after them.



Snell & Brown (2006)

- PMR protocol
  - Make contact with the individual
  - Communicate what is going to happen in a way that the individual can understand
  - Prepare the individual physically for the routine
  - Perform the steps of the routine in ways that require the individual to participate as much as possible
  - Incorporate the principle of partial participation



Snell & Brown (2006)



# Providing Social Supports

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- The Velcro Phenomenon
- Natural Supports
- Your Role as Bridge
- Supporting Unstructured Time
- Teaching the Rules of Social Interactions





# Social Supports: Just say no to Velcro!

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- Paraprofessional proximity can
  - Interfere with ownership (gen ed teacher sees student as “yours”, NOT theirs)
  - Separate students from classmates
  - Create dependence on adults
  - Limit competent instruction
  - Cause a student to feel as though they have no personal control
  - Interfere with the instruction of other students
  - Limit the amount of peer interactions

(Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, and MacFarland, 1997; Malmgren & Causton-Theoharis, 2006)

# Social Supports: Rules to follow to keep it natural

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- Do not sit or place a chair meant for adult support next to a student.
- Do not remove the student.
- Encourage peer support.
- Encourage independence and interdependence.
- Fade your cues



p. 64-66, Causton-Theoharis (2009)

- Highlight similarities among students.
- Help students invite each other to socialize.
- Provide behavioral supports that are social in nature.
- Provide your student responsibilities that are interactive and collaborative.
- Help other students understand.
- Get out of the way!



Causton-Theoharis & Malmgren (2005)



# Social Supports: Unstructured Time

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- Before & After School
- In the Hallway
- During Lunch
- During Free or Choice Time



# Social Supports: Teach the rules

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- Social Stories
- Explicit Instruction
- Incidental Teaching
- Video Modeling



# Providing Academic Supports

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- Adaptations
  - Accommodations
  - Modifications
- General Strategies
- Content-Specific Strategies
- Assistive Technology

- Accommodations are changes in how a student accesses information and demonstrates learning.
  - Test taken orally
  - Additional time to complete work/tests
  - Use of computer for writing
- Modifications are changes in what a student is expected to learn.
  - Alternative books or materials on the same theme or topic.
  - An outline in place of an essay for a major project.
  - Completing partial unit requirements instead of all requirements.



# General Strategies

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- Focus on strengths
- Ask the student
- Keep expectations high
- Break tasks into smaller steps
- Extend time on tasks
- Present limited amount of information on a page
- Offer support, do not just give it
- Use a soft voice (age appropriate)
- Make things concrete
- Teach organizational skills to everyone
- Change the materials
- Use a timer
- Preteach
- Use peer support
- Use movement

Causton-Theoharis (2009)





# Content Specific Strategies

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## Reading/Language Arts

- Listen to books on tape/cd
- Read with a peer
- Follow along with a word window
- Read from a computer with headphones
- Work with a peer and have him/her summarize
- Rewrite stories in more simple language
- Use books with repetitive texts.
- Use choice/high interest

## Mathematics

- Use calculators
- Number lines
- Flash cards
- Count stickers
- Manipulatives
- Pictures or visuals
- Chart paper to keep track of columns
- Numbered dice instead of dotted dice
- Real-world problems—problems with student's names in them.



# Content Specific Strategies

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## Science/Social Studies

- Hands on experiences
- Teacher demonstration
- Role play
- Posted steps indicating the process
- Highlighters or highlighting tape
- A way to connect the content to self
- Visuals
- Maps
- Written task card (with step by step process on it)

## P.E./Art

- Choice stations
- Choice of materials
- Clearly identified courts/fields, etc.
- Different sized equipment that all can use
- Silent activities (if noise is an issue)
- Precut materials
- Choice of materials (including bigger/smaller)
- Stencils
- Posted steps about the process



# Assistive Technology

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- Paraprofessionals should be trained on assistive technology used by a student
- Once identified as needed, assistive technology device should always be available to the student
- Para should support the student's use of the equipment in natural settings.



# Providing Behavioral Supports

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- Positive Behavioral Support
- Weathering the Storm



# Tenants of Positive Behavioral Supports

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- Behavior is learned and can change
- Intervention is based on studying the behavior
- The intervention emphasizes prevention and teaching new behavior
- Outcomes are personally & socially valid
- Intervention requires comprehensive, integrated supports.

(Carr et al., 2002; Janney & Snell, 2008)



# Providing Positive Behavioral Supports

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- Build a relationship
- Match instructional practices with student strengths
- Set up the environment in a way that promotes positive behavior
- Meet the student's needs
- Ask yourself "What does this person need?"



# Weathering the Storm

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- Know the student's crisis intervention plan
- All behavior is communicative
- Remember, its not personal
- Manage the situation to reduce injury to self and others
- Note how other students are behaving
- When managed, record data on all factors happening before and after the actual behavior. Share with the team.

Causton-Theoharis (2009)



- The paraprofessional provides supplementary instruction (not primary instruction)
- Instruction is designed in a way that does not require significant instructional decision making by the para
- Proven instructional methods are used
- Paraprofessionals are trained in the instructional approach they are required to implement
- Paraprofessionals are supervised and monitored to ensure consistency of instruction.

Causton-Theoharis, Giangreco, Doyle, and Vadasy (2007)



- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services <http://www.nrcpara.org>
- National Clearinghouse of Paraeducator Resources: Paraeducator Pathways into Teaching <http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html>
- Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium <http://ici.umn.edu/para/>
- Northwest Regional Educational Library: Paraeducator Resources <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/curriculum/cali/ParaResources.pdf>
- Paraeducator and Supervisor Training Designed to Meet the Needs of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/paraprep/>

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- Dr. K. Alisa Lowrey, LASARD Project Director
  - [klowre@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:klowre@lsuhsc.edu)
- Lisa Altman, LASARD Project Coordinator
  - [laltma@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:laltma@lsuhsc.edu)
- Donna Hammons, LASARD Project Facilitator
  - [dhammo@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:dhammo@lsuhsc.edu)
- Bambi Polotzola, LASARD Project Facilitator
  - [bpolot@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:bpolot@lsuhsc.edu)
- Julie Riley, LASARD Project Facilitator
  - [jrile1@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:jrile1@lsuhsc.edu)

**Thank you!!!!**

