**Teacher- Paraeducator Collaboration**

**Strategy Guide**

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### PARAEDUCATOR SUPPORT

A *paraeducator* is a school employee who works under the supervision of a licensed or certified educator to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to students (NEA). Most schools will have numerous adults who may serve in an instructional capacity at some point during the school day. Some individuals are credentialed in instructional practice while others have less formal training. For students to be successfully included, team members, including paraeducators, must work in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

The complexity of teaching students with very different abilities and needs will require a collaborative approach in which the supervising teacher will assume the lead role and responsibility of assuring that the paraeducator role is clearly defined and involves concise responsibilities during their time with the student.

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#### Effectively Utilizing the Paraeducator

**How do you plan for it?**

- **Define clearly the roles** of all adult staff within a class or environment.
- **Clearly review and post schedules** to reflect all activities that will occur and the role each adult will assume during a specific time.
- **Provide a clear understanding of the instructional methods** being used. Paraeducators may need professional development.
- Teachers should be aware of the paraeducator’s skill level and provide them with appropriate information of necessary skills and resources.
- **Provide knowledge of student characteristics and learning styles.** If the student has specific individual goals, the paraeducator will need adequate access to these goals and objectives.
- **Collaborative and ongoing information sharing** should occur regularly between the teacher and paraeducator, specifically noting observations and experiences that occur during the day with the student.

**How do you do it?**

| Float during class or individual work times providing individual support to students. |
| Prepare/set-up visual supports or adapted support materials prior to an upcoming activity. |
| Assume the role of a co-teaching partner with teacher for the purpose of providing a model for the class/student. |
| Support the student during partner work or unstructured times to interact and participate with typical peers. |
| Lead or monitor the class giving the teacher time to work with individual students. |
| Cue any student’s attention to the instruction taking place. |
| Support a small group of students with or without significant disabilities |
| Paraeducators can assume a range of responsibilities in an inclusive class setting. |
Tips for Effective Teacher-Paraeducator Collaboration

- Avoid the “Velcro effect”. Paraeducators should not be tied to just one student but support all students.
- Get to know the teaching style of other adults with whom you are working.
- Use different ways to communicate during a busy day (e.g., post it notes, journaling, text).
- Strategically plan for the paraeducator to be present with student during unstructured activities, such as lunch, recess, hallway transitions, arrival, and dismissal. These times offer natural opportunities for the student to practice communication and social skills.

Ann is a paraeducator at an elementary school site. A typical day for Ann begins with specific duties to support targeted students during arrival and breakfast. Ann then floats across three classes during the day and accompanies students to enrichment classes, supporting students in whole, small, and individual work times. During lunch and recess she floats among several students to support interaction with a peer buddy. Although Ann has a specific daily schedule and role within each environment, she is also fluid in her support role. The special educator serves as the supervising teacher; however, Ann works with several general educators as well as the related service providers. Ann may be found in a variety of places, but you rarely see her seated or at a computer without a student present. She has high expectations of the students she works with and encourages their independence. Ann keeps a daily data log to reflect student participation and related instructional notes which she submits to the teacher at the end of a period.

Resources

Websites

The National Resource Center for Paraeducators includes relevant information on paraeducator licensing for each state and a library of resources.

www.nrcpara.org

Working Effectively with Paraeducators

www.specialconnections.ku.edu/?q=collaboration/working_effectively_with_paraeducators

Books
