Strategies for Paraprofessional Support in the Classroom

LASARD Workgroup #4
January 11, 2011
Historically...

- **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
Support Roles

- **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 an 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.
Expectations of Paras

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

(Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002)
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.

**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

Providing Social Supports

- 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!

- **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

- 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

- Before & After School
- In the Hallway
- During Lunch
- During Free or Choice Time
Social Supports: Teach the rules

- Social Stories
- Explicit Instruction
- Incidental Teaching
- Video Modeling
Providing Academic Supports

- 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

- 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading/Language Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to books on tape/cd</td>
<td>Use calculators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read with a peer</td>
<td>Number lines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow along with a word window</td>
<td>Flash cards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read from a computer with headphones</td>
<td>Count stickers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with a peer and have him/her summarize</td>
<td>Manipulatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rewrite stories in more simple language</td>
<td>Pictures or visuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use books with repetitive texts.</td>
<td>Chart paper to keep track of columns</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use choice/high interest</td>
<td>Numbered dice instead of dotted dice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real-world problems—problems with student’s names in them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Content Specific Strategies

#### 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
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

- Positive Behavioral Support
- Weathering the Storm
Tenants of Positive Behavioral Supports

- 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

- 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?”
- Know the student’s crisis intervention plan
- All behavior is communicative
- Remember, it’s 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)
Conclusion:

5 Elements associated with successful use of paraprofessionals

- 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)
Resources

- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services [http://www.nrcpara.org](http://www.nrcpara.org)
- National Clearinghouse of Paraeducator Resources: Paraeducator Pathways into Teaching [http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html)
- Paraeducator and Supervisor Training Designed to Meet the Needs of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms [http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/paraprep/](http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/paraprep/)
References


Giangreco, M.F., Broer, S.M., & Edelman, S.W. (2002). “That was then, this is now!” Paraprofessional supports for students with disabilities in general education classrooms. *Exceptionality, 10*(1), 47-64.


Questions?

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Thank you!!!!