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Effectively Utilizing Paraeducators

LASARD Workgroup
September 20, 2012
Julie Riley

What is a paraeducator?

IDEA 2004

- Paraprofessionals...who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulations, or written policy...are used to assist in the provision of special education and related services...to children with disabilities.

(20 U.S.C.§ 1412)
What is a paraeducator?

NCLB 2001
Paraprofessionals…someone who “is employed in a preschool, elementary school, or secondary school under the supervision of a certified or licensed teacher, including individuals employed in language instruction, educational programs, special education, or migrant education” (20 U.S.C. §119).
Qualifications

- Completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education
- Obtained an associate (or higher) degree
- Met a rigorous standards of quality and can demonstrate through formal academic assessment
  - Knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instruction, reading writing, and mathematics; or
  - Knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

(20 U.S.C. §6319[c])
Paraeducator Roles Re-Defined

Once Caregivers.....

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

Now Educators

Support students:

- Socially
- Academically
- Physically
- Behaviorally

Causton-Theoharis, 2009
The foundation for a productive classroom environment begins with effective communication between teachers and paraeducators.

Carnahan, Williamson, Clarke, Sorenson, 2009
Communicates with paraeducators in a clear, receptive and responsive manner.

Provides clear daily direction in coordinating plans, schedules and tasks.

Informs and updates paraeducators regarding student information,
- assessment results, behavioral changes, medications and other factors that may influence the work of the paraprofessional.

Provides regular opportunities for staff communication, group discussion, and collaboration

Assists paraeducators in clarifying their roles and responsibilities to other staff, parents, or volunteers.

Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl (2001)
What should teachers and paraeducators be talking about?

- Desired outcomes, end results
- Strategies for verbal interactions and physical assistance with students
- Ways to reinforce appropriate behaviors
- Plan for challenging or disruptive behavior

Carnahan, Williamson, Clarke, Sorenson, 2009
Respond to the 5 “Wh” questions regarding communication:

- **Who** needs to communicate?
- **What** needs to be communicated?
  - How can this be done?
- **When** can this occur?
- **Where** can this take place?
- **Why** is communication important?
Expectations of Paras

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

Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman (2002)
• Social Support
  o Supporting students to make & maintain friends by:
    ▶ Communicating with peers
    ▶ Selecting a partner for group work
    ▶ Finding a friend to play with at recess

• Academic Support
  o Supporting students to attend to academic content & learn new material by:
    ▶ Prepare for tests
    ▶ Outline a chapter
    ▶ Create a insect collection
  o Any academic task a student may do in school may require paraeducator support.
Support Roles

- **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.
Providing Physical Supports

- 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.

Physical Management Routines (PMR)

- **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

Causton-Theoharis (2009) p. 64-66
Social Supports: Become a bridge

- 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
- Video Modeling
- Explicit Instruction
- Incidental Teaching
After lunch we go to recess. Sometimes recess is on the playground. A lot of the children play on the playground equipment. It is fun to play on the playground equipment. Everyone should play safely. When the whistle blows that means it is time to line up and go inside. I will try to line up as soon as the whistle blows. This will make my teachers happy. After I line up I will try to stay in line. Everyone will be proud of me!

How could a paraeducator support a social interaction:

- During an unstructured time?
- During class time?
Providing Academic Supports

- Adaptations
  - Accommodations
  - Modifications
- General 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)
Paraeducators 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?”
Weathering the Storm

- 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

Utilizing paraeducators:

- Ensure collaborative communication among team members
- Plan for supporting students with ASD and related disabilities:
  - Physical
  - Social
  - Academic
  - Behavior
Next steps:

- What areas (physical, social, academic, behavior) do you see the need for more support/ information/ collaboration from your team?
- What is your next step to address this need?
Web 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/)

Book


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.


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Thank you!