

Employing Dedicated Paraprofessionals to Serve Students 1 to 1: Issues and Solutions



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Book for Administrators

Managing Paraeducators: How to Hire, Train, & Supervise Non-certified Staff Members

By

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(2003) Corwin Press

(stop by their booth in the exhibits and tell them I sent you)



Issues / Concerns

Paraeducators:

- Are untrained to use appropriate prompts, cues, reinforcers
- May be asked (inappropriately) to determine curricular adaptations
- Have little preparation to make decisions
- Ethically should not determine instructional adaptations
- May separate students from general education curriculum and teachers
- Sometimes intervene inappropriately
- May pose social barriers between students
- May provide intensive artificial supports that cannot be replicated in post-school environments



Parental Perspectives

- Parents recognize the safety and health needs of their children at school.
- Parents are concerned that busy classroom teachers have too little time to provide individualized academic, communication, social or behavioral assistance to their children
- Parents are concerned that using other students is an inadequate response to a very real, and often intense, need.



Classroom Teacher Perspectives

- Some classroom teachers don't want responsibility for special education students
 - But agree to have them
 - if they believe it will be little more work
 - If a paraeducator is assigned to take care of everything
- Some classroom teachers don't want another adult in the room
 - And agree to have them
 - But send the paraeducator out of the room with the student for every small reason
 - Or find ways to engage the paraeducator in clerical tasks



Classroom Teachers (continued)

- Some classroom teachers relish having students with disabilities in class
 - And recognize that having a paraeducator to assist makes it possible to manage a full class and a student with significantly different needs
 - Are willing to assume curricular and instructional responsibility for the student (with assistance)
 - And enjoy the consultation and collaboration with special educators



District Dilemmas

- How to provide the right amount and types of services to students
- How to assure that services are affordable
- How to satisfy both parents and classroom teachers
- How to be systematic in assignment of resources (with a rationale in case the decision is contested)



Solutions

- Use a systematic way of determining whether a 1:1 paraeducator is warranted
- Identify logistics of support needs (where, when, how much, how long)
- Explore other support possibilities
- Assure that paraeducators are trained appropriately for their assigned duties
- Assure appropriate supervision



Special Education Paraeducator Support Checklist

- Should be used to minimize the potential problems
- Should be consistently available at IEP meetings (paper version / electronic version)
- Special Education teachers and related services providers should be trained in the use of the form



Reason 1

- **Documents the need for paraeducator support**
 - causes the planners to consider other alternatives
 - indicates the nature of the need
 - context, location, situation where need is most evident
 - the time period(s) during which the need exists
 - the alternatives considered
 - amount and duration of assistance required



Reason 2

- **Assigns responsibility for paraeducator training**
 - Assures that the student will receive the best possible instructional support.
 - Protects the school from the liability associated with providing services through untrained staff.



Reason 3

- **Specifies supervisory responsibilities**
 - assures that the paraeducator provides appropriate assistance
 - Documents the supervision plan
 - Limits liability associated with providing services through unsupervised staff



Looking at Sections of the Form

■ **Column 1 – Student Needs**

- Safety issues
- Physical needs
- Communication needs
- Behavior needs
- Social needs
- Academic needs



Safety Issues

- Wanders off / runs away
- Gets lost
- Hurts self
- Falls
- Puts inedible items in mouth
- Hurts others

Place:

Time(s):

Level:

Low

Medium

High

Duration:

Permanent

Temporary



Physical needs

- Restroom / diapers
- Orientation / Mobility
- Eating /feeding
- Dressing
- Breathing / respiration
- Medication
- Equipment
- Posture, positioning,
- Medicaid-billable procedures
- Individualized Health Plan in place
- Other _____

Place:

Time(s):

Level:

Low

Medium

High

Duration:

Permanent

Temporary



Communication Needs

- Instruction in use of technology (including Braille, sign language)
- Cues / prompts to use technology
- Programming of device(s)
- Cues/prompts to communicate with peers / adults
- Interpretation
- Cues/prompts to use articulation skills
- Voice, breathing
- Other_____

Place:

Time(s):

Level:

Low

Medium

High

Duration:

Permanent

Temporary



Behavioral Needs

- Reinforcements for desired behaviors
- Help with activity change
- Assistance following directions
- Monitoring during unstructured times
- Encouragement to engage
- Guidance in choice making
- Individual Behavior Plan monitoring, support
- Other _____

Place:

Time(s):

Level:

Low

Medium

High

Duration:

Permanent

Temporary



Social Needs

- Prompts /cues to interact with peers
- Social instruction
- Protection from peers
- Peer instruction how to interact with student
- Adult instruction how to interact with student
- Other _____

Place:

Time(s):

Level:

Low

Medium

High

Duration:

Permanent

Temporary



Academic Needs

- Cues to attend to teachers
- Cues to begin tasks
- Cues to remain on task
- Physical use of instructional materials
- Modification / repetition of instructions / directions
- Modification-materials/ tasks
- Adaptive equipment
- Community-based activities
- Job shadow, exploration
- Work / job skill development
- Other _____

Place:

Time(s):

Level:

Low

Medium

High

Duration:

Permanent

Temporary



Looking at Sections of the Form

■ Column 2 - Logistics

- Location
- Time
- Place
- Intensity
- Duration



Looking at Sections of the Form

- **Column 3 – Other Possible Supports**
 - Age-peer
 - Older students
 - General education teachers
 - Special education teacher
 - Class/program paraprofessional
 - Parent volunteer



Looking at Sections of the Form

■ Column 4 – Training Plan

- Training needs should show a direct link to the specific job duties of the 1:1 paraeducator
- Someone should be named who is responsible to see that the training occurs



Looking at Sections of the Form

■ Column 5 – Supervision

- **Check all who share responsibility for supervision**
 - **Supervisory responsibilities include:**
 - Orienting paraeducators to the program, school, child, other staff, safety precautions, etc.
 - Planning
 - Scheduling
 - Delegating
 - On-the-job training and coaching
 - Performance monitoring, feedback, coaching
 - Managing the workplace

- **Name lead person**