

Successful Assistance in the Classroom:

**A Teacher's Guide to Working with
Paraeducators**



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Introduction

Education is about discovering the special skills and talents of children and guiding their learning according to high standards.

– Richard Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education
1993–2001

Each year of teaching brings rewards and challenges. These experiences are heightened when you are a newcomer to a school. Whether this is your first teaching assignment or you are changing to a new district or building, you no doubt are feeling stretched as you adjust to the culture and practices around you.

Learning about the diversity among your students is also part of the adjustment process, as students of all backgrounds and abilities make up every teacher's classroom. One of the tools that teachers have to help with this process is teaming with paraeducators in the classroom. Paraeducators play a vital role in meeting the needs of special education-eligible students. They provide hands-on assistance to help special education students access the general curriculum.

The purpose of this guide is to give teachers some new ideas and refreshers about how to work effectively with paraeducators in the classroom. It offers information about federal requirements for educating with special education-eligible students and insights about how teachers, administrators, and paraeducators can function as a team to ensure student success.

This guide also highlights the important role that administrators play in supervising paraeducators and supporting teachers' effective use of paraeducators in the classroom. Working together, administrators, teachers, and paraeducators all play a part in creating successful learning experiences for all students.

The guide is a collection of best practices and ideas for improving practice that can be easily implemented. Each chapter opens with a brief description of the topic and lessons from best practices. This description is followed by ideas to help personalize the information for the classroom. Each chapter closes with some guiding questions to help the reader reflect on progress or think about how to apply the information to a particular challenge.

There are 13 samples in the guide; please reproduce them for your own use or to share with your fellow teachers or paraeducators. The samples address issues ranging from paraeducator core competencies to individual and small group instruction.

Special Education Refresher

One of the best ways to start your professional collaboration with paraeducators is to refresh your knowledge about the context of their work. In the last few years, federal and state legislation has changed special education requirements and paraeducator training and competencies. This chapter provides a brief overview of these changes and current requirements.

Federal Law: IDEA

The cornerstone federal legislation for the education of students with disabilities is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA explains how students with disabilities will access a free appropriate public education (FAPE). On June 4, 1997, Public Law 105-17, the IDEA Amendments of 1997, was signed into law.

At the state level, chapter 392-172 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) has been amended to align state regulations with the 1997 changes in the federal law. In Washington a law was passed to reform the state educational system. The law provides the vision and structure that enables the state's public education system to embody strong academic standards and improved educational results for **all** students. The Washington State standards are called the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs).

Key Terms of Special Education

There are a number of terms related to special education that are helpful to understand.

Special Education Student. This term refers to any student who has been identified as having a disability (ies), whose disability (ies) adversely affects the student's educational performance, *and* who is in need of specially designed instruction.

Special Education. Special education is a general, overarching term used to refer to all services provided to a special education-eligible student. This term includes specially designed instruction; necessary related services; and any assistance, accommodations, and supports provided to an eligible student at no cost to parents. The services are written in the student's individualized educational program (IEP) and are designed to meet the unique needs of the student.

Specially Designed Instruction. This term means organized and planned instructional activities that adapt, as appropriate, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to the needs of the individual student so that the student can access and progress in the general curriculum and meet the educational standards that apply to all students. Specially designed instruction must be designed, monitored, and evaluated by special education certified staff. Specially designed instruction may be delivered by general education staff and/or paraeducators. A special education student is to participate as fully as possible with his or her nondisabled peers.

Individualized Education Program (IEP). The individualized education program (IEP) is the most important tool of special education services. The IEP identifies the student's present level of performance, how the student's disability(ies) adversely affects his or her involvement in the general curriculum, and includes measurable annual goals and short-term objectives/benchmarks that will enable the student to be involved and progress in the general curriculum. It also lists the specially designed instruction and necessary related services the student will receive to advance appropriately toward the annual goals. When needed, the IEP also lists strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, language needs of students with limited English proficiency, instruction in or use of Braille, assistive technology, accommodations, or other aids and services that enable the student to receive a free appropriate public education.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment allows a special education student to participate as fully as possible with peers who do not have disabilities. A special education student should attend the neighborhood school and be a member of the classroom that the student would normally attend, unless the IEP requires some other arrangement. The decision on the educational placement is made by a group of persons, including the parents and other persons knowledgeable about the student, the evaluation data, and the placement options. The appropriate placement is based upon the student's IEP, LRE requirements, a placement that provides a reasonably high probability of assisting the student to attain his or her annual goals, and consideration of any potential harmful effect on the student or on the quality of services which he or she needs.

All districts must have a continuum of educational placement options available to provide special education services for the special education student. Many students with disabilities can be educated in a general education classroom with appropriate support services. Special education teachers design the specially designed instruction that allows the student to succeed. Special education

services may be delivered in the classroom by the special education teacher, general education teacher, or the paraeducator.

Benefits of Using Paraeducators

Para means alongside, conveying the concept that the paraeducator works alongside of the educator. This working relationship is similar to paralegal and paramedical workers in other fields. The paraeducator assists the teacher in facilitating the academic, behavioral, and social growth of students. In addition, paraeducator services may be listed on an IEP as a related service (classified staff services). As a related service, the paraeducator provides for the special education student's safety, personal care, and instructional assistance as well as providing services to certificated staff in assisting the special education student to achieve placement in the least restrictive environment. Using paraeducators offers a number of benefits to teachers and to students with disabilities. For example, using paraeducators:

- Enables teachers to develop instructional programs for all students with greater consistency in planning and teaching.
- Increases the amount of instructional time available for special education students to receive individualized attention, instruction, and behavior management.
- Provides positive adult role models in the classroom to expand student learning opportunities and reinforce concepts promoted by the classroom teacher.
- Ensures that students receive instruction and are kept safe in all areas of the school environment.

Recommended Core Competencies for Paraeducators

To provide guidance to school districts, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has developed a list of recommended minimum core competencies for paraeducators. **Sample 1: Washington State Recommended Core Competencies for Paraeducators** lists these recommendations. Districts may have higher standards and/or more competencies beyond these recommended minimum requirements. These competencies enable districts to determine if the paraeducator has the appropriate knowledge to perform required tasks. These competencies also can be used as a planning tool to develop a training plan for the paraeducator. Check with your local administrators to learn about paraeducator competencies in your district.

Learning Together

Paraeducators play a valuable role assisting teachers in meeting students' individual learning needs. Having a paraeducator in the classroom is an asset; however, it does require work on the part of the teacher to effectively team with a paraeducator. As a teacher, you know how valuable your planning efforts are for student success. Your partnership with paraeducators also benefits tremendously from planning time to clarify how you will work together. Most teacher-paraeducator teams bring together individuals with different working styles, expertise, and experiences. Here are some ideas about how to get to know each other.

Establishing a Positive Working Relationship

Conveying welcome, respect, and desire to work with a paraeducator goes a long way in promoting a positive working relationship. The range of qualifications and experience among paraeducators is tremendous. Some paraeducators are longstanding members of the community. Others may have a child with a disability(ies) or other personal experience working with people with disabilities. Still others may be licensed teachers who are not currently working as certificated staff.

- Get to know what motivated the paraeducator to take the job and the interests that she brings to the classroom. Knowing what motivates her provides a deeper understanding about her as a person and a context for assessing knowledge and skills about the job. In some cases, the paraeducator will be new to the school. **Sample 2: Orientation to the School** provides a checklist for the paraeducator.
- Share similar information about yourself: what you like about teaching and what motivated you to come to this school. Most teachers and paraeducators find they share a deep love of working with students. Take time to talk about that common ground with the paraeducator.
- Devote some time to establishing credibility. It takes time for trust to emerge between you and the paraeducator. Be aware of how your tone of voice, body language, and other cues affect the paraeducator. Conveying that you value and appreciate the paraeducator and the assistance she offers often helps move the process along more quickly and smoothly.

- Learn about the paraeducator's past experiences on the job. What has worked well as she assisted students? What are her greatest concerns about the new schedule? When these conversations happen early in the school year, many problems can be avoided or minimized.
- How can you as a teacher support the paraeducator? Be particularly sensitive to the paraeducator's experience at the school, in the community, and in working with special education students. You may not know the community in which you teach as well as the paraeducator, and you can benefit tremendously from learning about it from him. Also, if the paraeducator has worked at the school in the past, he can offer some helpful insights about the school.
- Many new teachers find that they are much younger than the paraeducator with whom they work. This is not always the case, but it can be a factor in how comfortable you and the paraeducator feel in giving and receiving directions. Aim to be respectful while remaining clear about your role as teacher. Your tone of voice and body language contribute a great deal to perceptions of respect and the paraeducator's willingness to respond.

Working With Other School Staff

The paraeducator's work environment often involves many players, including the principal, special education administrator, a special education teacher, related services providers, and the grade-level team or department with which the paraeducator works. Keep this in mind as you plan with other teachers and administrators and make sure that expectations are reasonable.

- Involve the principal in getting to know the paraeducator. School principals play a critical role in supervising and supporting the work of paraeducators. **Sample 3: Checklist for Principals** offers the school principal a tool for supporting paraeducators in the building.
- Discuss use and assignment of paraeducators at planning meetings of your grade-level team or department. Ask about the process that the grade-level team or department will use to keep abreast of how things are going regarding paraeducators as the school year progresses. Clarify how supervision will be managed and how all teachers will contribute to ensure appropriate support.

- In many cases, teachers share a paraeducator or the paraeducator follows a student as he or she works with multiple teachers. Remember that it can be very difficult and stressful for the paraeducator to adapt to each teacher's approach and expectations about the paraeducator's role in the classroom. Think about how you can make these transitions easier for the paraeducator.
- If you teach at the secondary level, you may work with several paraeducators who follow specific students throughout the day. Be sure to acknowledge the paraeducators in your classroom, use them as adult role models, and check with them regularly about their perceptions of student progress and how the curriculum design is working for the student(s).

Getting to Know the Students and Families

Get to know the community in which your students and their families live. When the paraeducator is familiar with or is a member of the community, she can be an asset to you in this undertaking. When both of you are new to the community, learn together about its diversity.

- Tour the neighborhoods where students who attend the school live. Learn about the community's history and political and social conditions.
- Show consideration for the cultural diversity of students and families. Convey an open attitude toward cultural differences, including ethnicity, family structure, income status, disabilities, gender, and faith communities. Talk with your paraeducator about the influence of these cultural elements on your work together.
- Keep in mind that paraeducators will develop perceptions of students in the classroom beyond the individual(s) with whom they work. When appropriate, listen to their perceptions and talk about ways you can enhance the classroom dynamics together.

Checking In: Questions for Follow-Up and Continued Growth

1. Are the paraeducator and I meeting regularly to plan and discuss student progress?
2. How are we addressing our personal differences in style and approach to support each other's success?
3. How comfortable does the paraeducator feel with administrators, other teachers and staff, and parents with whom she interacts? Are there ways I can facilitate these relationships?
4. Does our grade-level team or department have a plan for how we will share use of paraeducators?
5. How do the paraeducator and I show consideration for the cultural diversity in our classroom?
6. How prepared does the paraeducator believe she is in communicating and working with the students' families?

Clarifying Roles

Roles as described on paper are tidy and delineated but, in action, they often are more fluid than we expect – or like. They emerge from the collection of people on the team and the work you collectively are responsible for doing. It often helps to step back from day-to-day practice and remember that there is a unique team working to support every special education-eligible student. The team includes special educators, related service providers, general education teachers who may teach the student, parents, and others, as appropriate. Given the many variations in teams and responsibilities that are expected, roles need ongoing monitoring and clarification to be effective.

- Consider using **Sample 4: Defining Roles and Responsibilities** to begin a discussion about the differences in roles between teachers and paraeducators. After establishing a common understanding of roles, clarify the specific classroom responsibilities of the paraeducator and yourself.
- Encourage the paraeducator to ask questions about what his work might look like day-to-day. Think through together how the day might look from the paraeducator's perspective. Share **Sample 5: Guiding Questions for Paraeducators** to help the paraeducator identify questions he or she might ask to learn more about job responsibilities.
- Do not be lulled into thinking that one conversation will complete this task. Flexibility is the key to success as you and the paraeducator adjust to the students' changing needs. Both of you will see ways that your roles need to shift in order to accomplish your individual responsibilities.
- Communication is a key factor for successfully addressing the challenges that inevitably arise in the classroom. **Sample 6: Positive Communication** can assist you and the paraeducator in establishing a strong rapport and respect for each other.
- State clearly the expectations for the paraeducator as he communicates and works with students' families.

Supervision

Typically, paraeducators work under the direction of classroom teachers and/or special education teachers. The principal generally manages formal supervision, including hiring, firing, and disciplining decisions. In all cases, you, as a teacher, have a management role with the paraeducator, which requires you to monitor how students are benefiting from the work of the paraeducator.

- As the leader in the classroom, it is necessary for you to set direction and oversee the work of the paraeducator in the classroom. Written information is an effective means of communicating what you want done but always requires personal contact on a regular basis to oversee its implementation.
- Make sure that your directions and expectations are clearly understood and that the paraeducator has the information, materials, and skills she needs to perform her assigned tasks. Encourage the paraeducator to ask questions or for help if directions are not clear or the assignments are not working as expected with the student.
- Check in with the paraeducator throughout the day to see if tasks need to be changed or adjusted given students' progress. Remember, the special education teacher is responsible for monitoring student progress. Aim to be seen as a problem solver who supports others, not a faultfinder who criticizes mistakes. Laugh together and have fun, too!

Helping the Paraeducator Grow Professionally

Sometimes you will find that the paraeducator is not knowledgeable about current practice and may be using techniques that are not always appropriate. Part of your role as manager includes helping the paraeducator grow professionally. Paraeducators, like other educators, learn best when formal training is supplemented by opportunities to reflect on concepts and techniques with a colleague whose understanding is more advanced.

- Be firm and respectful in telling the paraeducator what new skills she may need to learn and apply to support student learning. Take steps to ensure that the paraeducator views you as an ally in this effort. For example, identify training opportunities for paraeducators that support the practices that you want the paraeducator to use. Model appropriate practices and give the paraeducator time and opportunity to apply the new skill(s).

- After the paraeducator attends a training session, praise her as she attempts to use new information and skills in the classroom. Think of yourself as a coach offering tips to help the paraeducator adjust to using new techniques.
- Point out changes in practice you observe, even when they are minor, so that the paraeducator knows that progress is evident. Be sure to take a few minutes every week to ask if the paraeducator has questions about using the new skills.
- Sometimes when people work together, they have different ideas about how to get things done. **Sample 7: Problem Solving Model** provides a positive approach to resolving differences. Consider using it preventively to deescalate issues that are brewing to avoid problems down the road.
- Be consistent with your expectations of the paraeducator and responsive to the paraeducator's need for structure, feedback, and flexibility. Always consult with the paraeducator before making judgments and decisions that affect the paraeducator's work.

Confidentiality

A common concern among teachers and paraeducators is how to appropriately access information to help with a student's educational program while maintaining confidentiality. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) protects a family's right to privacy. Many times, parent consent is needed before personally identifiable information about a student is shared. However, school staff that have a legitimate educational interest are allowed access to a student's records without parental consent. The district annually publishes a statement notifying parents about who has a legitimate educational interest to access their children's records.

- Your district will have procedures that address confidentiality issues. Clarify with school district administrators as to the teachers' and the paraeducators' responsibilities under these procedures.
- Make sure that the paraeducator understands that meetings and educational information about students are confidential. Clarify that it is wrong to talk about students with other people who do not work with them. Model this behavior in your own conversations. Do not, however, suggest that confidentiality should limit appropriate communication about students between the teacher, paraeducator, and other team members as needed for the student's learning.

Checking In: Questions for Follow-Up and Continued Growth

1. Are the teacher and the paraeducator clear about their roles and responsibilities in the classroom?
2. How comfortable does the paraeducator feel in carrying out his classroom responsibilities? Could additional training increase his skills, which, in turn, could increase student learning opportunities?
3. How comfortable does the paraeducator feel with the current division of supervision responsibilities? Could adjustments make supervision more useful to the paraeducator?
4. Does the paraeducator have access to appropriate information about students so that he can work effectively with them? Does the paraeducator understand the need for confidentiality about this information?
5. What issues might I address preventively so that they can be resolved quickly and effectively?

Creating a Positive Learning Environment

Classrooms, like all places where people interact and form relationships for a period of time, develop their own unique culture. The characteristics of the students and their families, as well as the teacher and paraeducator, influence the classroom's traditions and routines. This section offers ideas about how to work with the paraeducator to promote a positive classroom learning environment that supports student learning through its organization, use of time and materials, and management of student behavior.

Classroom Organization

Classroom organization can be a support or a hindrance to student learning. Your teaching style has a major influence on the level of organization in the classroom. For some people, organization comes naturally while for others it is a struggle. The paraeducator can assist you in the organization of the classroom.

- Stand in the doorway of your classroom with the paraeducator and describe how you envision the flow of activity through the room. Do not assume that your organizational plan is evident to others. Point out areas where you want materials stored and areas you want to keep clear so transitions between activities are easier. The paraeducator can help prepare and maintain these areas when he understands how you envision their use.
- Storing materials can be a challenge if your classroom space is limited. Aim to set up a system that provides access to materials that you, the paraeducator, and students use regularly with little disruption. Keep in mind that the paraeducator might need easy access to materials that you use infrequently. Ask the paraeducator for suggestions about how access to such materials might be improved.
- Computers, media, and instructional equipment are often part of the classroom environment or may be used in the classroom from time to time. Talk with the paraeducator about her knowledge and interest in using equipment and technology. Encourage her to pursue training opportunities to expand her skills in areas where she does not feel confident.

Using Time Effectively

The teacher and paraeducator play critical roles in creating a learning environment in which students use time effectively. The amount of quality instructional time makes an enormous difference in student learning, especially among students with disabilities. When used strategically, paraeducators can be valuable assets in increasing the effectiveness of instructional time.

- With the paraeducator, analyze the daily schedule of each special education student. Identify where time is being used well and where it is not effective for the student. For example, is it possible that “pull-out” sessions for additional support services interfere with a subject in which the student is struggling? Does the paraeducator find the student is less responsive or less able to concentrate at certain times of the day than others? Tailoring the student’s schedule to his or her learning needs can greatly enhance academic progress.
- Develop a plan with the paraeducator that will help minimize transition time. Include a system for handling daily tasks, such as attendance, lunch counts, and so on to minimize their disruption. When both you and the paraeducator aim to start activities on time, students have the opportunity to use all available time. If one time of day seems particularly problematic, focus on it together and see if you can identify how to lessen its impact on student learning.
- The planning and organizing of teaching time both before and after school are two key elements of effective time management. Model consistency in preparing and delivering instruction for the paraeducator. Share simple planning tips with the paraeducator when he or she is weak in this area.
- Talk with the paraeducator about how to eliminate social interruptions from students. Some students enjoy telling stories that are not relevant to the learning activities at hand. Together develop strategies for redirecting students to keep them focused on the appropriate learning activities.

Managing Student Behavior

- Behavior is a critical element of the learning process that affects both the student personally and his or her classmates. The goal of behavior management is to teach and encourage students to use social and academic behaviors that are appropriate for the classroom situation. Every teacher develops rules and procedures for classroom management based on a number of factors, including personal philosophy, school discipline procedures, and student needs. The paraeducator can be instrumental in modeling, teaching, implementing, and reinforcing classroom rules and procedures. It is imperative that the teacher and paraeducator are consistent and act as a team. Differences between the teacher and paraeducator should be discussed away from students.
- Communication is the key. Draft a set of classroom rules and procedures and ask the paraeducator for input. Share and develop your ideas further with students. Discuss teacher, paraeducator, and student roles in classroom management together before implementing the system.
- Seek out the paraeducator's observations and perceptions of where classroom rules and procedures are working and where there are gaps. Remember, it takes time and consistency to change patterns of student behavior.
- A key component of positive behavior management is positive communication with students. **Sample 8: Communicating With Students** offers ideas about how to communicate effectively. Share this list with the paraeducator so that students experience consistent communication strategies in your classroom.
- Identify a number of quick and easy strategies that you and the paraeducator can use to redirect misbehavior to supplement and reinforce the classroom rules and procedures. **Sample 9: Behavior Management Strategies** can be a useful starting point.
- Some experts recommend developing a classroom behavior plan to address specific behaviors in the classroom that are not being addressed through the classroom rules and procedures. **Sample 10: Behavior Management Plan** is a sample plan that the teacher and paraeducator could use to change classroom or individual behavior.

- Some special education students have specific behavior management plans included in their IEP that must be implemented by the teacher and paraeducator. Be sure to review appropriate sections of the IEP with the paraeducator and discuss how you can help the student by implementing and reinforcing the plan. As the year progresses, share successes and challenges so that you can both benefit from each other's experiences.
- If the paraeducator is to be part of a team collecting data for a functional behavior assessment (FBA) in anticipation of developing a behavior intervention plan (BIP), be sure the paraeducator understands the purpose of the data collection, what data is to be collected, and how the data will be collected (observation, parent interview).

Checking In: Questions for Follow-Up and Continued Growth

1. How well does the classroom organization support students' movement and transition between learning activities? Are there ways to improve the flow?
2. Do the paraeducator and I have and consistently use a system to organize assignments and student work in the classroom? Are there ways to streamline this system?
3. How well is our classroom management plan working? In what ways could the paraeducator and I improve our consistency? What specific behaviors do we need to address to improve the overall classroom climate?

Developing a Classroom Instructional Plan

IDEA '97 greatly expanded the role of the general education teacher in serving special education-eligible students. Education of special education-eligible students was reframed and now requires the involvement and progress of each special education student in the general curriculum. Special education students are to be, to the maximum extent possible, educated with their nondisabled peers with appropriate supplementary aids and services.

General education teachers play a critical role, together with special education teachers and related services providers, in implementing the individualized education program (IEP) for special education students. IDEA requires an IEP for each special education student. The IEP describes the educational program that has been specially designed to meet the unique needs of each special education student. A team develops the IEP. The IEP team must include a general education teacher if the student is (or may be) participating in the general education environment. Other members of the IEP team include parents, a school representative, a special education teacher, a person who can interpret evaluation results, and others who have knowledge or special expertise about the student.

The IEP includes information about the student's current performance and measurable annual goals that the student can reasonably accomplish in one school year. Each annual goal must include either short-term objectives or benchmarks to enable the student's teacher(s), parents, and other members of the IEP team to gauge the student's progress. The IEP also lists the specially designed instruction and necessary related services that the student will receive, from whom, how often, and in what setting.

- The IEP team will look to the general education teacher to offer input about the supports for school staff that are needed so that the student can be involved in and progress toward the general curriculum. The IEP team will also want the general education teacher's input about how the student can be educated with other students, both with and without disabilities.
- The special education teacher is responsible for designing the specially designed instruction (SDI). In many cases, the special education teacher and general education teacher work together to modify the general curriculum to help the student learn. **Sample 11: Accommodations and Adaptive**

Strategies can be a starting point to help you and the paraeducator identify appropriate adaptations to meet the student's needs. These strategies include environmental, organizational, methodology, and curriculum strategies. Consider using this list to generate ideas about specific strategies that can assist the student with his learning needs.

- The OSPI's publication *Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)* provides specific information about the use of accommodations for students participating in the WASL.
- The paraeducator needs to understand how her work fits into the overall plan for the special education student's education. The paraeducator is instrumental in carrying out appropriate parts of the instructional plan for the student. Be sure that the paraeducator has access to relevant parts of the student's IEP.
- Consider sharing **Sample 12: Adaptive Strategies to Facilitate Learning** with the paraeducator to summarize the range of approaches he could use when working with the special education student. Point out how any specific strategies you have selected for the student fit into this schema. Discuss the two or three approaches you both feel would be helpful focal points for specific students.
- Give the paraeducator time to orient herself to your teaching style and classroom. Allow her time to observe you teaching and share your observations of where a lesson or strategy went well. Similarly, point out things you would do differently in the future or where you adjusted the lesson because of the students' responses and needs. Sharing this information will help the paraeducator see how to maintain flexibility when unplanned events or challenges arise.
- Most paraeducators assist teachers with individual and small group instruction. **Sample 13: Guidelines for Individual and Small Group Instruction** can be a helpful set of strategies to share with the paraeducator. Keep in mind the paraeducator is not responsible for designing the SDI but, rather, delivering the instruction.
- Early on, be sure to discuss your expectations about how you want the paraeducator to help students when they struggle with assigned work. Give concrete examples of how you would help the student in that particular situation or the prompts you want the paraeducator to use – and which ones

not to use. The paraeducator also may need training to strengthen a particular skill.

- Sometimes the personalities of the student and the paraeducator may clash. Do not ignore the situation. It is important to talk with the paraeducator directly about the situation and brainstorm ways to rectify it.
- Recordkeeping is an important part of the paraeducator's work. Start by making sure she has the supplies, organizational tools, and storage space needed to keep accurate and meaningful records. Be sure that the paraeducator understands how her records dovetail with your records to help determine the student's progress.
- When the paraeducator is using techniques that are not appropriate for your classroom, think through a range of ways to remedy the situation. For example, ask the paraeducator to observe you and model the kinds of interaction you would like used with students. Another option is to suggest that the paraeducator facilitate an activity with students that will give the paraeducator an opportunity to practice the strategies that you would like him to use. You might also talk to the paraeducator's supervisor and work together so the supervisor can develop a plan for strengthening the paraeducator's competence in area(s) of weakness.

Being Ready for the Exception

Exceptions arise in spite of good planning and preparation. Some situations are unavoidable. Two examples are personal illness or a new student arriving mid-year. Here are some ideas about how to prepare for them so that they do not derail the working relationships that you and the paraeducator have established.

- Early on in the school year, set aside a folder in your desk specifically for substitute teachers. Similarly, in the event that you have limited time to orient him, prepare a folder for a substitute paraeducator who may come to help out in your class.
- Most teachers gain new students throughout the year, some of whom may have IEPs. When you are assigned a new special education student, take time to study the student's IEP immediately. Take the initiative to meet with the parent and other team members as soon as possible so that the student experiences continuity from one setting to the next.

Checking In: Questions for Follow-Up and Continued Growth

1. Does the paraeducator have opportunities to participate in IEP meetings?
2. How well are the strategies selected by the IEP team working to meet the student's IEP annual goal(s)? What changes are needed as the student progresses through the year?
3. How well is the student working with the paraeducator? Are there ways to improve the student/paraeducator relationship?
4. Am I prepared for a substitute teacher or paraeducator?

Communicating Effectively With Parents

Communication with the parents of a special education student is a critical element of the student's IEP. Parents can share information about the home environment that may be influencing learning at school. In turn, teachers and paraeducators can share information about the student's experiences at school so that parents can understand and reinforce school learning.

- The paraeducator can be an asset to you in promoting effective communication with parents. The paraeducator may have natural opportunities throughout the day to interact with parents. For example, the parent may drop off or pick up the student at the classroom or call in to report a student's illness or ask about an assignment. When you are proactive in discussing your expectations about parent communication with the paraeducator, things tend to flow more smoothly.
- Use or create opportunities early on in the school year for you and the paraeducator to interact with parents and build rapport. Phone calls to share a student's success or a brief note about what went well that day contribute to a positive relationship with parents.
- Parents, teachers, and paraeducators all benefit from learning about how the student's behavior and learning varies at school and at home. Listen openly to parents and share information about the student's daily habits and routines as well as situations that tend to confuse or upset the student.
- Paraeducators and teachers can share responsibility for ongoing communication between home and school. Create a recordkeeping system for all correspondence. For example, bind all teacher/paraeducator/parent correspondence in a binder. This simple communication tool can keep parents and school staff updated on things that happen at home and school that may be influencing the student's learning.
- Learn as much as you can about the student's home situation so that you better understand the student's life. An increasing number of students live in single parent, foster, and stepfamilies. Ask the parent questions about the home situation discreetly and be sensitive to the parent's level of comfort when gathering personal information. Be aware of your tone of voice, body language, and reactions when asking questions about marital and family

relationships. Sometimes people feel judged or are not willing to share information when questions are asked without tact.

- Creative approaches may be required when the parents of special education students have limited English proficiency. Whenever possible, use paid or volunteer interpreters to promote communication. When you do not speak their language, make special efforts to welcome these parents who visit the school through your gestures and tone of voice.
- The OSPI has developed a publication, the *Family/Educator Guide to Washington's Special Education Services*, to share strategies for families and educators to work as partners in meeting students' learning needs. This guide can be a great resource for paraeducators, parents, and teachers as they work together with special education students.
- When the student is having difficulty at school, parents and school staff must work together to identify and resolve the situation. The IEP team is a central resource at such times. Parents may be able to offer insights or help school staff explore how best to address the issue. Specialists, educators, and paraeducators can share their observations and suggestions as well.
- Parents often have strong emotional reactions when issues arise concerning their child. These feelings are normal and understandable. Unfortunately, expressing concerns in emotional ways may fuel misunderstandings. When faced with a parent who is upset, aim to identify the reasons behind the emotional reactions. Listen carefully to the parent and demonstrate that you have heard his/her concerns. Gather as much information as you can from the parent about the situation. Agree to get back to the parent as soon as possible about the situation and follow through with this promise.
- IDEA requires regular progress reports for special education students at least as often as other students receive progress reports. Such reports address the student's progress toward the annual IEP goals. When the student's progress varies from what was expected – either faster or slower – the team must address the student's needs.
- The IEP must be updated at least annually to ensure that the student is meeting his or her goals. The IEP team can, and should, meet more frequently when the student is not progressing. Anyone may request to hold an IEP meeting to review and revise, if necessary, the student's IEP.

Checking In: Questions for Follow-Up and Continued Growth

1. How well do I understand the student in the context of his family? What information would be helpful to gather from the parent to better understand the student?
2. Have I established and followed through with ongoing communication with the parents of special education students? How could the paraeducator assist me with such efforts?
3. What supports for recordkeeping are available to the paraeducator? Are there simple things I could do differently that would make recordkeeping easier for the paraeducator?

Resources

Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Print and Website (www.k12.wa.us/specialed):

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Handbook

Evaluation and Assessment in Early Childhood Special Education: Children Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Family/Educator Guide to Washington's Special Education Services (also available in Cambodian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

Guidelines for Participation and Testing Accommodations for Special Populations on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

Identification of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities – State of Washington Severe Discrepancy Tables

Information about Dispute Resolution Mechanisms for Special Education Students: Mediation, Citizen Complaints and Due Process

Mediation in Special Education (Brochure or Booklet)

Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Special Education Students and Their Families (also available in Cambodian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

Productive Learning in a Safe Environment for Each Child

*Chapter 392-172 WAC
Special Education Regulations*

Special Education and the Law: A Legal Guide for Families and Educators – What Parents and Educators Should Know About the Laws and Court Decisions That Affect the Education of Students With Disabilities in Washington State

State Forms for Services to Students in Special Education (also available in Cambodian, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

Technical Assistance Paper No. 1: *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: A Review of the Basics*

Technical Assistance Paper No. 2: *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Discipline Procedures Under IDEA Regulations*

Technical Assistance Paper No. 3: *Questions Regarding Special Education Regulation Changes for Birth to Three Services*

Available on Special Education Website Only (www.k12.wa.us/specialed):

Directory of Secondary Transition Services Model Sites in Washington State (link to Center for Change in Transition Services)

Transition Guide (link to Center for Change in Transition Services)

Informational CD:

Washington State's Special Education CD: Connecting Ideas

Acronyms

Following is a list of acronyms that may be used in this document or that you may find in reading other materials.

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
619	Section 619 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (3 through 5 year olds)
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD/ADHD	attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
CD	communication disordered
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CSPD	Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
DD	developmentally delayed
DDC	Developmental Disabilities Council
DSHS	Department of Social and Health Services
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
EBD	emotionally/behaviorally disabled
EDGAR	Education Department General Administrative Regulations
EHA	Education for All Handicapped Children Act
ESD	educational service district
FAPE	free appropriate public education

FAS/FAE	fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect
FEPP	Family/Educator Partnership Project
FTE	full-time equivalent
GEPA	General Education Provisions Act
ICC	Interagency Coordinating Council
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEE	independent educational evaluation
IEP	individualized education program
IFSP	individualized family services plan
ITEIP	Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program
JRA	Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration
LD/SLD	learning disability/specific learning disability
LEA	local educational agency
LEP	limited English proficient
LRE	least restrictive environment
MAA	Medical Assistance Administration
MR	mental retardation
NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
NECTAS	National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System
OCR	Office for Civil Rights
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs

OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
OT	occupational therapist
PAVE	Parents Are Vital in Education
PT	physical therapist
RFP	request for proposals
RRC	regional resource center
SEA	state educational agency
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Council
SETC	Special Education Technology Center
SLP	speech-language pathologist
SOP	state-operated program
TBI	traumatic brain injury
WAEYC/ NAEYC	Washington/National Association for the Education of Young Children
WASA	Washington Association of School Administrators
WEEdNet	Washington Education Network
WSD	Washington State School for the Deaf
WSSB	Washington State School for the Blind
WWW	World Wide Web

Samples

The following section includes copies of the samples mentioned throughout this publication.

1. Washington State Core Recommended Competencies for Paraeducators
2. Orientation to the School
3. Checklist for Principals
4. Defining Roles and Responsibilities
5. Guiding Questions for Paraeducators
6. Positive Communication
7. Problem Solving Model
8. Communicating With Students
9. Behavior Management Strategies
10. Behavior Management Plan
11. Accommodations and Adaptive Strategies
12. Adaptive Strategies to Facilitate Learning
13. Guidelines for Individual and Small Group Instruction

Sample 1: Washington State Recommended Core Competencies for Paraeducators

1. Understanding the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all students with disabilities.
2. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators.
3. Knowledge of (a) patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages and (b) risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development.
4. Ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality.
5. Ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem solving and other skills that will enable the paraeducator to work as an effective member of the instructional team.
6. Ability to provide positive behavioral support and management.
7. Knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families.
8. Awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families, and colleagues with whom they work.
9. Knowledge and application of the elements of effective instruction to assist teaching and learning as developed by the certified/licensed staff in a variety of settings.
10. Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff.
11. Ability to motivate and assist children and youth.
12. Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed.
13. Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning.
14. Awareness of personal care and/or health-related support.

Sample 2: Orientation to the School

The paraeducator should know the following information about the school:

1. Phone numbers of supervisor, teacher(s) and/or colleagues.
2. Fire evacuation routes and other emergency procedures.
3. Building layout.
4. Names of building personnel and location of pertinent offices
5. Chain of command.
6. Daily/weekly schedule.
7. Transportation system and personnel involved with student's class or program.
8. Location of fire/safety equipment and first aid supplies.
9. Location and operation of equipment.
10. Location of and procedures for obtaining supplies.
11. Playground rules and procedures.
12. Lunchroom procedures and special event procedures.
13. Procedure for notifying appropriate persons in case of illness.
14. Policies regarding confidentiality and school records.
15. Current statement of the paraeducator's specific responsibilities.

Source: Adapted from Montana Office of Public Instruction. (1998). *A Resource Guide to Promote a New Era for Paras*. Author.

Sample 3: Checklist for Principals

School principals play a critical role in supervising and supporting the work of paraeducators. The school principal may use this checklist as a tool for strengthening support for paraeducators in the building.

Yes **No**

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does our building have guidelines for effective paraeducator services and a code of ethics? Are team members informed about these guidelines and their ethical responsibilities? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does each paraeducator in the building have a clearly defined role? Has this role been communicated to each team member? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does each paraeducator in the building have a current and accurate job description? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do teachers understand their responsibilities for directing the paraeducator(s), giving feedback to the paraeducator, scheduling, providing input to personnel evaluations, etc.? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do paraeducators know who can provide help and support? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the responsibilities for supervising the paraeducators(s) clearly defined? Do team members know who is supposed to supervise them? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do paraeducators and teachers understand the district evaluation process? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a process for keeping parents informed about the roles assigned to paraeducators? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are school newsletters and other correspondence delivered to each paraeducator? Is information about the work of paraeducators included in newsletters? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does each paraeducator have the skills needed to meet assignments? |

- Does our building have a written staff development plan for paraeducators?
- Are the staff development needs of paraeducators assessed?
- Do paraeducators have access to staff development opportunities to ensure that they meet the Washington State recommended core competencies?
- Do paraeducators have access to staff development opportunities in areas that support their specific assignments?
- Do teachers have the skills they need to direct and support paraeducators? If not, are staff development efforts planned to meet this need?
- Is there time built into the schedules for paraeducators to meet with teachers to plan, maintain effective communication, and receive feedback?
- Are there written procedures for emergencies? Have staff members been trained in how to respond to emergencies?
- Do the paraeducators in our building receive recognition for the work they do?
- What could our faculty do to assist paraeducators who have a goal to become a teacher or to pursue some other career?
- Are paraeducators provided with opportunities to get involved with building and district activities where their input would be valued?

Source: Adapted from *Guide for Effective Paraeducator Practices in Iowa*. Iowa Department of Education. January 1998.

Sample 4: Defining Roles and Responsibilities

The paraeducator and teacher benefit from discussing the following issues related to their roles and responsibilities:

1. Goals for the class.
2. Responsibilities of the paraeducator as well as the teacher.
3. Each other's areas of expertise.
4. Schedule for planning time.
5. Methods for evaluating students.
6. Instructional methods to be used in the classroom.
7. School and class rules.
8. Discipline procedures.
9. Routines and organization of the classroom.

In addition, the paraeducator and teacher benefit from identifying how they will be sensitive to the issues listed below:

1. Attitudes and feelings of both paraeducator and teacher.
2. The similarities and differences among team members.
3. The development of a common vocabulary.
4. The need for clear directions and feedback from the teacher.
5. Willingness of the paraeducator to ask questions.
6. How the team will actively work to create a climate of cooperation.

Source: Adapted from *Project PARA Training Resources for Paraeducators*.
University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Sample 5: Guiding Questions for Paraeducators

To learn about roles and responsibilities on the new job, the paraeducator may want to ask the following questions of the teachers or administrators.

1. What are my special and regular duties?
2. What records am I responsible for keeping?
3. What special services are available to the classroom and the school?
4. What schedules am I responsible for following?
5. What emergency provisions apply to my situation?
6. When do students come? When do they leave?
7. Where and when will the students play?
8. What are the most significant playground regulations?
9. What lunchtime activities will I be responsible for?
10. Where are the supplies kept and how are they obtained?
11. What equipment is available and how is it obtained?
12. What is the line of communication and authority I am to follow?
13. (If you are responsible for working with more than one teacher, ask) How is my time divided between teachers?
14. What student records are available to me?
15. To whom should I direct questions concerning school policy?
16. What should my response be when parents raise questions concerning their student's functioning in the classroom?
17. What is expected of me in terms of behavior management?
18. What course should I follow if I feel I do not have enough to do?
19. Who is responsible for providing the specially designed instruction?

Source: Adapted from *Oklahoma Paraeducator Manual*.

Sample 6: Positive Communication

School staff is made up of individuals with many different working styles and styles of managing paraeducators. The following suggestions can help the paraeducator and teacher develop positive communication.

1. Ask questions and offer feedback about assignments.
2. Attend meetings together.
3. Compliment each other about work that is well done.
4. Do not take each other for granted.
5. Show a sincere interest in one another's work.
6. Reinforce the standards of classroom behavior that you have agreed upon.
7. Be loyal to teachers, students, administrators, and paraeducators.
8. Discuss problems with the appropriate personnel.
9. Know and observe the school rules.
10. Avoid criticizing other paraeducators or teachers.
11. Offer your services to each other when the workload is heavy.
12. Maintain a friendly and helpful attitude.

Source: *Project PARA Training Resources for Paraeducators*. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Sample 7: Problem Solving Model

When problems arise, it is best to try to solve them through communication. The following process is designed to allow the teacher and paraeducator to address problems in a nonconfrontational manner. The model uses six steps to allow participants to communicate ideas, alternatives, and solutions to one another.

Step One: Identify and describe the problem.

Put the problem into your own words. Try to use an “I message” to communicate your feelings. Allow the paraeducator the opportunity to communicate his perceptions as well.

Step Two: Define and determine the causes of the problem.

Get to the heart of the problem. Determine what the underlying causes of the problem are. What behaviors or circumstances lead to the problem? Both you and the paraeducator must agree on the problem and at least some of its causes before moving to the next step.

Step Three: Identify potential solutions.

Brainstorm as many solutions as you and the paraeducator can. Try not to think of pros and cons of the solutions generated. Do not analyze the solutions, just list them.

Step Four: Analyze potential solutions.

Evaluate each solution. Will it work and what will it entail? Narrow down the solutions and try to find a few that you both can agree on.

Step Five: Select a solution.

Decide on a solution that both parties can agree on. Make sure that both parties have an equal part in the solution. Decide who is going to do what and when. Set a date to meet again to discuss progress.

Step Six: Agree to monitor the results.

Acknowledge that it will take time to see if the solution works. Agree to monitor how well the solution is working. Over time, ask: Has anything changed? Is another solution needed? If you and the paraeducator find that the problem still exists, ask for help from a supervisor using the problem solving model.

Source: Adapted from *Project PARA Training Resources for Paraeducators*.
University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Sample 8: Communicating With Students

Thomas Gordon, author of *Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T)*, states that there are thousands of messages that paraeducators and teachers send to students by how they communicate with them. These can be grouped into 12 categories, each of which tends to slow or completely stop existing communication that students need to solve problems and continue in their learning.

Some responses that communicate unacceptance are:

1. Ordering, commanding, directing. Example: "Stop whining and get back to work."
2. Warning, threatening. Example: "You had better get your act together if you expect to pass my class."
3. Moralizing, preaching, using "should" and "ought." Example: "You should leave your personal problems out of the classroom."
4. Advising, offering solutions or suggestions. Example: "I think you need to get a daily planner so you can organize your time better to get your homework finished."
5. Teaching, lecturing, giving logical arguments. Example: "You better remember you only have four days to complete that project."

Other responses tend to communicate inadequacies and faults:

6. Judging, criticizing, disagreeing, blaming. Example: "You are such a lazy kid. You never do what you say you will."
7. Name calling, stereotyping, labeling. Example: "Act your age. You are not a kindergartner."
8. Interpreting, analyzing, diagnosing. Example: "You are avoiding facing this assignment because you missed the directions due to talking."

Still other messages try to make the student feel better or deny there is a problem:

9. Praising, agreeing, giving positive evaluations. Example: "You are a smart kid. You can figure out a way to finish this assignment."

10. Reassuring, sympathizing, consoling, supporting. Example: "I know exactly how are feeling. If you just begin, it won't seem so bad."
11. Questioning, probing, interrogating, cross-examining. Example: "Why did you wait so long to ask for assistance? What was so hard about this worksheet?"

These messages tend to divert the student or avoid the student altogether:

12. Withdrawing, distracting, being sarcastic, humoring, diverting. Example: "Seems like you got up on the wrong side of the bed today."

Many teachers and paraeducators are unaware that they respond to students in one of these 12 ways. It is important that we learn alternative ways of responding. Many of the above responses have hidden messages when the student hears them. She may hear you saying that she is to blame or that she cannot do anything right, when your intention for the message may have been quite different.

Effective Feedback: Active Listening

As an alternative to the roadblocks discussed above, Thomas Gordon uses the technique of active listening to promote communication. When we use our own words to repeat back what we think the student has just said, we are clarifying their message. This "feedback" is called active listening. For example:

Student: "I don't like this school as much as my old one. People are not very nice."

Paraeducator: "You are unhappy at this school?"

Student: "Yeah. I haven't made any good friends. No one includes me."

Paraeducator: "You feel left out here?"

Student: "Yeah. I wish I knew more people."

The paraeducator is verbalizing what she thinks the student is saying. This offers the student the opportunity to confirm what the paraeducator said or explain the meaning in a different way.

Source: Adapted from *Project PARA Training Resources for Paraeducators*. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Sample 9: Behavior Management Strategies

The following strategies are most effective at the beginning stages of misbehavior and with minor problems. These strategies are most effective when used in conjunction with established classroom rules and procedures.

Planned Ignoring

Sometimes the most effective way to deal with student misbehavior is to ignore it.

Pointers for when to ignore behavior:

1. When the inappropriate behavior is unintentional or not likely to reoccur.
2. When the goal of misbehavior is to gain the teacher or paraeducator's attention.
3. When you want a behavior to decrease.

Pointers for when to intervene:

1. When there is physical danger or harm to you, others, or the student.
2. When a student disrupts the classroom.
3. When there are violations of classroom rules or school policy.
4. When there is interference with learning.
5. When the inappropriate behavior will spread to other students.

Providing Cues to Students

An important aspect of behavior management is developing ways to communicate with students that provide reminders that support your expectations. Cues assist the student in identifying inappropriate behavior and the need to change the behavior. Cues can also be used to reinforce positive behavior.

Some techniques to get the student's attention are to:

- Use eye contact.
- Use physical gestures like clapping or snapping.
- Use facial expressions or body postures like tilting your head or smiling.
- Avoid doing something that may embarrass students.

Appeal to Students' Values

You often can appeal to students' values when intervening in problem situations. Examples include their desire to be liked by peers, to do the right thing, to be treated with respect, etc.

Tips for appealing to student values:

- Appeal to the logical consequences of a specific behavior. (For example, "I know you're frustrated, but if you break your pencil, then you'll have to replace it with your own money.")
- Appeal to a student's need to be liked. (For example, "Your friends may be unhappy with you if you continue to boss them around and interrupt them when they're speaking.")
- Appeal to the student's self-respect. (For example, "I know you'll be very upset with yourself at the end of school if you rip up your daily behavior rating card.")

Removal of Nuisance Items

It is difficult for both teachers and paraeducators to compete with certain objects found at school or brought from home (e.g., rubber bands, combs, etc.). In order to maintain student' attention, you may be required to deal with these types of competing items. Removal of such belongings sometimes leads to further conflict. One way to avoid such conflict is to simply state the choices:

1. You can either put it away immediately **or**
2. I will put it away until the end of the day.

Once the object is in your possession, you have the option of returning it, with a firm request that it disappear for the rest of the school day, week or year, or to keep it, with a promise to return it at the end of the day and/or week. This technique is most often effective when you have established classroom guidelines about bringing things from home.

Source: Adapted from *Project PARA Training Resources for Paraeducators*.
University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Sample 10: Behavior Management Plan

This sample behavior management plan uses an example of the need to change students' habit of talking out in class without raising their hands. Statements are included in each section to give the reader a sense of how each section of the plan might be worded to improve hand-raising behavior.

Objective

Students in the class will increase the number of times they raise their hands to indicate that they need assistance during independent seat work to at least 20 times per 50-minute class period.

Target Behavior

Raising hand before requesting assistance.

Activities

1. At the beginning of class, the teacher will remind students that the teacher and paraeducator will no longer provide assistance during seatwork unless students have first raised their hand to signal they need help.
2. Watch all students for the target behavior (who raises their hand before requesting assistance and how often).
3. Record the behavior on the tally sheet.
4. Acknowledge that you've seen their hand raised.
5. When a student raises his hand, call on him as soon as possible.
6. Thank him for raising his hand and provide praise.
7. Provide assistance.
8. Ignore those students who call out without raising their hands.

Reinforcement Procedures

1. The teacher will use verbal praise immediately following hand raising.
2. When students ask questions without raising their hand, ignore them.

Recording Procedures

1. Using a tally sheet, record the number of times that students raise their hands to request assistance during class.
2. Continue recording until target behavior is achieved.

Source: Adapted from *Project PARA Training Resources for Paraeducators*.
University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Sample 11: Accommodations and Adaptive Strategies

The following list of accommodations and adaptive strategies can be used to generate ideas for potential ways to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Note that all accommodations must be discussed with the IEP team and noted in the student's IEP.

Environmental Strategies

- Provide a structured learning environment.
- Adjust class schedules and assignments.
- Provide classroom paraeducators and note takers.
- Modify nonacademic times such as lunchroom and recess.
- Modify physical education.
- Change student seating.
- Provide use of a study carrel.
- Alter location of personnel or classroom supplies for easier access or to minimize distraction.
- Provide visual cues (posters, blackboard directions, work area arrangements).
- Block out extraneous stimuli on written material.
- Use room dividers.
- Provide head sets to muffle noise.
- Provide timeout areas.
- Put desk close to the blackboard.
- Provide computer areas for writing tasks.

Organizational Strategies

- Use a study guide.
- Rearrange student groups (according to instructional needs, role models, etc.).
- Provide anticipation cues and teach key direction words.
- Provide pencil grips.
- Tape paper to the desk.
- Number and order assignments.
- Modify test delivery.
- Use tape recorders, computer-aided instruction, and other audiovisual equipment for both directions and student responses.
- Select modified textbooks or workbooks.
- Tailor homework assignments.
- Use of one-to-one tutorials.

- Seat near a model student.
- Provide peer tutoring with frequent review.
- Set time expectations for assignments.
- Teach self-monitoring.
- Provide cues (such as clock faces) indicating beginning and ending times.
- Use timers to show allocated and used time.
- Provide tests in segments so that student finishes one segment before receiving the next part.
- Highlight main ideas, supporting details, or relevant words featured in the book.
- Have the student summarize at the end of each lesson.
- Use behavioral management techniques.
- Implement behavioral/academic contracts.
- Utilize positive reinforcements (consequences).
- Use tangible reinforcers.
- Confer with the student's parents (and the student as appropriate).
- Confer with the student's other teachers.
- Establish a home/school communication system for behavioral monitoring.
- Post rules and consequences for classroom behavior and review frequently.
- Write a contract for student behavior.
- Offer social reinforcement (e.g., praise) for appropriate behavior.
- Establish daily/weekly schedules and progress reports for the student.
- Establish routines for handing in work.
- Provide critical vocabulary list for content material.
- Collect notebooks frequently.
- Use raised-line paper.
- Provide calculators.
- Circle the math computation signs.
- Use the honor system.
- Use varied verbal cues, loudness, and pauses when presenting them.
- Provide organizers for desk material.
- Teach at varied rates.
- Provide content/lecture summaries.
- Implement self-recording of behaviors.
- Give fewer and simpler directions.

Methodology Strategies

- Repeat and simplify instructions about in-class and homework assignments (such as one task at a time).
- Supplement oral instructions with visual instructions.
- Change instructional pace.

- Change instructional methods.
- Provide functional tasks familiar to the student.
- Reduce items required on a task.
- Use advance organizers.
- Help students develop their own strategies.
- Tape lessons so the student can listen to them again.
- Provide photocopied material for extra practice (e.g., outlines, study guides).
- Require fewer drill and practice activities.
- Give both oral and visual instructions for assignments.
- Ask student to repeat directions/ assignments to ensure understanding.
- Arrange for a mentor to work with student in his or her interest area of greatest strength.
- Ask frequent questions.
- Change the wait time for answers.
- Vary the method and place of lesson presentation:
 1. Lecture
 2. Small groups
 3. Large groups
 4. Use audio visuals (e.g., filmstrips, study prints)
 5. Peer tutors or cross-age tutors (e.g., take notes, monitor assignments, read aloud, listen)
 6. Demonstrations
 7. Experiments
 8. Simulations
 9. Games
 10. One-on-one instruction with another adult
 11. Presentation sequence

Curriculum Strategies

- Provide parallel materials at a lower level.
- Alter content for major concepts, as necessary.
- Utilize supplementary materials.
- Assess whether student has the necessary prerequisite skills. Determine whether materials are appropriate to the student's current interest and functioning levels.
- Implement study skill strategies (survey, read, recite, review). Introduce definition of new terms/vocabulary and review to check for understanding.
- Limit amount of material presented on a single page.
- Provide a sample or practice test.
- Be aware of student's preferred learning style and provide appropriate instruction/materials.

- Use a primary typewriter.
- Use peer checkers to review completed work.
- Provide essential fact list.
- Use manipulatives.
- Change criteria mastery level.
- Use picture directions.
- Provide guided practice.
- Provide more practice trials.
- Increase allocated time.
- Use a strategy approach (such as using memory aids).
- Provide error drill.
- Use firm-up activities.
- Use hand signals to cue behavior.
- Use self-correcting material.
- Use dotted lines to line up math problems or show margins.
- Provide transition directions.
- Provide daily and weekly assignment sheets.
- Use graph paper to aid in number alignment.
- Incorporate popular characters/themes in assignments.
- Develop tests from simple to complex.
- Use color-coding.
- Vary length of tasks.

Source: Adapted from Montana Office of Public Instruction. (1998). *A Resource Guide to Promote a New Era for Paras*. Author.

Sample 12: Adaptive Strategies to Facilitate Learning

Changing Format	Entails modifying the physical arrangement of the print material. Use when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment is too long. • Spacing or organization interferes with student's visual perceptions.
Changing Input/Output Modes	Entails determining the student's preferred mode (auditory, visual, kinesthetic/tactile) of acquiring information. For example, if a student experiences difficulty reading (visual mode), material-like tapes (auditory mode) could be used to present information.
Multimedia	Uses a variety of games, teaching machines, and concrete manipulative objects to facilitate learning.
Grouping	Students may be grouped according to academic level, learning style, interest, and/or pattern of social interaction
Schedules	Tasks may need to be kept short. Consider the time of day when students learn best.
Tutors	Aides, volunteers, or peer tutors help individualize instruction and provide reinforcement of newly learned skills.
Reinforces	Reinforces or praises students immediately for correct responses when initial learning is taking place. Reinforcement should also be individualized.
Real-Life Situations	Uses materials that are relevant to the students.
Repetition	Provides opportunities to review material that is newly learned.

Source: Adapted from Montana Office of Public Instruction. (1998). *A Resource Guide to Promote a New Era for Paras*. Author.

Sample 13: Guidelines for Individual and Small Group Instruction

Paraeducators can be used to reinforce a previously learned skill by offering students opportunities for practice, repetition, and drill. The following are suggestions for providing individual instruction and addresses small group strategies.

Individual Instruction

Preparation for Instruction

- Learn the proper pronunciation of the students' names.
- Learn about the students' interests, goals, and academic and emotional needs.
- Be familiar with the lesson in advance of the session.
- Request that the teacher/supervisor explain the activity.
- Organize necessary instructional materials.
- Prepare the location for the session.

Appropriate Attitude

- Set an example by being courteous and respectful.
- Be supportive and provide encouragement.
- Communicate that learning is an important and worthwhile task.

Delivery Skills

- Follow the schedule of activities established by the teacher.
- Follow the instructions outlined by the teacher. When you are not sure what to do, ask the teacher.
- Set realistic expectations for the student so he will experience success.
- Use questioning techniques that require more than "yes" or "no" answers.
- Learn to listen to the student and what he is saying. Give him your full attention.
- Pay attention to nonverbal cues you observe.
- Give feedback to the student about his performance.
- Use reinforcement procedures that are motivating.
- Follow the plan for dealing with the behavior of the student.
- Be consistent, follow rules, and provide structure.

Small Group Strategies

There are a variety of strategies that paraeducators can use when working with small groups of students. Some examples are described below.

- Involve all students in the group.
- Acknowledge that students have preferences.
- Encourage students to make their own choices.
- Provide some time to work independently.
- Reinforce or compliment often.
- Adapt materials and methods to the needs of the group.
- Do not plan separate activities for group members.
- Identify students' individual needs and adapt materials and methods to meet those needs.
- Encourage cooperation among group members.
- Encourage communication among group members.
- Provide real-life situations.
- Establish a routine.
- Use natural consequences.
- Use good positioning to promote normal muscle tone, stability, balance, and a sense of security about one's own body.
- Use appropriate verbal prompts, gestures, modeling, and demonstration techniques.
- Eliminate distractions (other students, windows, ceiling fans, etc.).

Source: Adapted from Montana Office of Public Instruction. (1998). *A Resource Guide to Promote a New Era for Paras*. Author.