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Research Highlights

Paraeducator employment in the United States has been common since the 1950's when paraeducators were hired to assist teachers in clerical and administrative tasks in a post-war teacher shortage (Drecktrah, 2000; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). Over the years, the hiring of paraeducators has flourished as a cost-effective means to provide teachers with valuable support and assistance, to extend educational programs such as Title I, bilingual and multi-cultural programs, and to support individualized educational programs (IEPs) for children with disabilities.

As inclusive education becomes increasingly prevalent, school districts are relying more heavily on the assistance of paraeducators in the field of special education. There are approximately 250,000 to 280,000 paraeducators working in special education and nearly 50 percent of all paraeducators employed by school districts are providing instruction and related services to children and youth with disabilities (French and Pickett, 1999). Paraeducators (also commonly referred to as paraprofessionals, instructional aides, and classroom aides) are local, hardworking people who regularly go “the extra mile” in their efforts to support student education. Yet, their status in the school hierarchy is typically low and their opportunities to improve job-related knowledge and skills can be limited. Still, paraeducators labor to perform many difficult tasks required to provide support for children whose educational, emotional, and physical needs demand high levels of skills and knowledge. The prevalence of paraeducators working in inclusive settings has become so great that some consider paraeducators to be “vital to the inclusion process” (French & Pickett, 1997) and “the key support mechanism to operationalize inclusive education efforts” (Giangreco, 2001). However, despite a growing

reliance on paraeducators, there remains a lack of clarity and consistency in their job description, few training opportunities, and minimal supervision.

The purpose of this section of the product is to provide an overview of the research literature on paraeducators. The section is divided into three main topics: 1) Roles & Responsibilities of Paraeducators, 2) Training Programs for Paraeducators, and 3) Supervision and Evaluation of Paraeducators. Key points related to each topic will be discussed.

Roles And Responsibilities Of Paraeducators

Over the years, the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators have become more complex and have expanded to include numerous aspects of the educational process for students with disabilities (Drecktrah, 2000; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett, 1999). In practice, the duties of a paraeducator may include, but are not limited to:

- providing direct and small group instruction
- adapting and modifying curriculum
- monitoring student behavior
- communicating with parents and families (many believe this should not reflect the role of paraeducators)
- performing clerical duties, and
- providing personal care (Drecktrah, 2000; French, 1998; French, 2001; Gerlach, 2001; Hilton and Gerlach, 1997; Jones and Bender, 1993).

Ideally, these duties will be conducted by the paraeducator under the guidance of the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher is responsible for providing both assistance and support to the paraeducator in all tasks completed. These responsibilities require knowledge about effective practice and instructional skills. Due to local autonomy, there remain many definitions of

paraeducator roles and responsibilities; however, there is some consistency amongst states, as well as within the literature, regarding what duties are considered inappropriate for paraeducators to perform. For instance, it has been argued that modification of curriculum and communicating with parents and families is the responsibility of the classroom teacher. Yet, despite these changes in the duties and responsibilities of paraeducators, few states and school districts have redefined the formal job descriptions for paraeducators within the past twenty years (Pickett, 1995). Many school districts continue to hire paraeducators based on inadequate and irrelevant job descriptions that do not reflect the current responsibilities, skills, and content knowledge needed by paraeducators to perform effectively. As a result, paraeducators enter the classroom unaware of the specific, expected skills and tasks associated with their job, which leads to confusion and inconsistency in distinguishing between the roles of the teacher and the paraeducators, and ineffective support for classroom teachers and students. According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, newly hired paraeducators are required to “have knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics...[Sec. 1119.c.1.C.(i)]” and existing paraeducators have up to four years to reach this proficiency. Additionally, paraeducators should refrain from providing instruction to students when the teacher cannot supervise. Similarly, IDEA '97 requires paraeducators to be “appropriately trained and supervised” [34 CFR Section 300.136(f)].

To address the need for developing a formal definition, IDEA Partnerships organized a work group. This group developed the following definition:

Paraprofessionals and assistants are appropriately utilized to deliver early intervention and special education and related services under IDEA, which fosters the provision of high quality services and maximization of child/learner outcomes. Minimal gaps exist between administrative policies and actual practices, and decisions to assign paraprofessionals and assistants are primarily

based on child/learner need and not exclusively on costs (ASPIIRE Paraprofessional Work Group, 2001).

The paraprofessional is an employee who, following appropriate training, performs tasks as prescribed and supervised by the licensed/certified professional/practitioner. Paraprofessionals perform specific duties as directed by the licensed/certified professional/practitioner. The licensed/certified professional/practitioner maintains responsibility for assessing the learner and family needs, and for planning, evaluating, and modifying programs (ASPIIRE Paraprofessional Work Group, 2001).

Today, there is no universally accepted definition for the term paraeducator. Rather, it varies from state to state, school district to school district, and even teacher to teacher (Pickett, 1995; Pickett, Vasa, Steckelber, 1993). A description of each of these duties and the appropriateness of the task follows.

Providing Direct and Small Group Instruction.

Education researchers agree that paraeducators have assumed part of the role and responsibility for the academic instruction of students with disabilities. In fact, providing academic instruction is, most often, the primary responsibility of the paraeducator. Over half of the paraeducators working in special education programs are providing daily academic instruction as their primary area of support (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2000; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Paraeducators today are not only providing direct one-on-one instruction for the student with a disability but also, are conducting small group instruction with both non-disabled and disabled students. Paraeducators have often reported providing small group instruction to both students with and without disabilities (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Freschi, 1999; Wadsworth & Knight, 1996). Whether the paraeducator is providing direct instruction or conducting small group instruction, it is essential that all academic instruction provided by the paraeducator is conducted under the direction and supervision of the classroom teacher. Both educators and paraeducators

in the study by Minondo, Meyer, and Xin (2001) indicated that the most appropriate role for the paraeducator was to provide one-on-one instructional support to the student with a disability.

Adapting and Modifying Curriculum.

Modifying and adapting the curricula has also become a part of the academic instructional role of the paraeducator. Paraeducators, classroom teachers and parents interviewed in the studies by Marks et al. (1999), Downing et al. (2000), French and Chopra (1999), and Giangreco et al. (1997) indicated paraeducators are often making modifications and adaptations to curricular materials and classroom activities. The data collected by Giangreco et al. consistently indicated that paraeducators were responsible for modifying and adapting the curriculum in addition to implementing the day-to-day instructional decisions. Not only are paraeducators required to modify and adapt curriculum and activities, those interviewed in the studies by Marks et al. (1999), Giangreco et al. (1997), and French and Chopra (1999) indicated that the majority of their modifications and adaptations occurs “on-the-spot”. Very few paraeducators have the opportunity to preview materials before they are presented to the class and collaborate with the classroom teacher to modify and adapt the activities. However, paraeducators, teachers and parents all agree that the teacher and the paraeducator should be working together on modifying and adapting curricula.

Monitoring Student Behavior.

Often, paraeducators monitor student behavior and provide behavioral support within the classroom. The task of monitoring student behavior includes both students with and without disabilities. Paraeducators in the Downing et al. (2000) study described this duty as ensuring that all students in the classroom were on task by walking throughout the room to assist students when necessary. Freschi (1999) is supportive of the paraeducator working with all students in the classroom to encourage positive class-wide behavior, stating that it is important for the

paraeducator to spend time with all students in the classroom in order to foster the development of natural supports for the student with a disability. Monitoring students' behavior is a continual task of both the classroom teacher and the paraeducator and is primarily accomplished through assuring that students are on task. Paraeducators have reported using the following strategies to keep students on task:

- 1) switching between preferred and non-preferred activities,
- 2) providing prompts, encouraging students without disabilities to work with the student with a disability (peer teaming), and
- 3) using positive behavioral support strategies such as using positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, demonstrating appropriate behaviors, and/or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Communicating with Parents and Families.

The majority of paraeducators hired by local school districts is from the students' community and often act as a liaison between the family, community, and school. The duties associated with the role of liaison include paraeducator interaction and communication with the parent, family, community, special education teacher, and related service providers. As part of this role the paraeducator participates on the team of individuals that provides services to the student with a disability. According to Wadsworth and Knight (1996), paraeducator participation in team meetings is an essential component to the success of inclusive education. The authors suggest weekly meetings for paraeducators, related service providers, and educators to share expertise and to communicate about academic and behavioral planning for students with disabilities. However, it is important to acknowledge that it is inappropriate for paraeducators to be the only person communicating with parents. This role is primarily the responsibility of the classroom teacher.

Personal care.

The literature reviewed only briefly mention the personal care role of the paraeducator however, the majority of the paraeducators studies did report that they provide some support in personal care throughout the school day (Downing et al. 2000). According to Palladino et al. (1999), Downing et al. (2000) and Giangreco et al. (1997), personal care duties include accompanying and assisting students who do not have the ability to move independently around the classroom and to activities outside the classroom, assisting in the use of the restroom, and assisting in eating.

Performing Clerical Duties.

Although paraeducators were initially hired by school systems to conduct clerical and administrative tasks for teachers (Drecktrah, 2000; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997), this is the least discussed role in the literature reviewed. These duties primarily consist of copying materials for teachers but, on occasion, paraeducators are also asked to assist in filing, grading, cleaning, checking homework folders or mentoring new paraeducators.

The increasing diversity of classrooms has lead to a more demanding role for paraeducators. These roles require paraeducators to possess appropriate skills and training to be effective. While it is clear that paraeducators are to be supervised in their classroom endeavors, their role and responsibilities are not clearly and consistently defined across states and school districts. However, groups such as the ASPIIRE Paraprofessional Work Group, are making effort to standardize the definition of roles and responsibilities, which will improve the education and training of paraeducators and ultimately, the services provided to all students.

Training Programs for Paraeducators

There is a scarcity of appropriate pre-service and in-service training programs for paraeducators. The role of the paraeducator is complex and potentially has a direct impact on

student learning. However staff development has often not been required, nor provided, for paraeducators when they begin employment. According to a survey of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 70 to 90 percent of newly hired paraeducators nationwide have not received any training that relates to providing instruction and direct services to diverse students (Pickett, 1995). Not only are most paraeducators being hired without pre-service training, but studies also indicate that the majority of paraeducators receive little or no formal, in-service training when they begin working in their school district (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French & Chopra, 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). The scarcity of appropriate training opportunities is a concern among key stakeholders in education. Ultimately, the school district should be responsible for continuous training to ensure the paraeducator is familiar with each student's individual needs to support inclusive education (French & Chopra, 1999).

Organizations supporting the use of paraeducators, educators, administrators, and parents agree that both pre- and in-service training programs for paraeducators must be provided in order for paraeducators to effectively support teachers in meeting the needs of diverse students in the classroom.

The Law.

In the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the requirements set forth by IDEA assert the importance of properly trained paraprofessionals. Again, these standards were addressed in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. According to IDEA 1997, "a state may allow paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with state law, regulations, or written policy, in meeting the requirements of this part to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities under Part B of the Act." (IDEA, § 612(a)(15)(B)(iii), 1997). States have begun to respond to this statute by developing specific certification

guidelines and training modules for paraeducators. Thirty-one states have established minimal standards for paraeducators' education and experience and thirteen states have established certification or credentialing systems ("Roles for Education the Paraprofessional in Effective Schools", n.d.). The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services has also identified core competencies to be addressed in pre- and in-service training programs. These core competencies were developed through expert consultation and analysis and observation of paraeducators who work in inclusive classrooms, early childhood home- and center-based programs, and vocational and transition services (Safarik, 1997). Recently, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, sought to further increase the standards for paraprofessionals.

This act requires paraprofessionals to have:

- (A) completed a minimum of two years at an institution of higher education; (B) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or (C) met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment—
- (i) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics; or (ii) knowledge or, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

It explicitly defined the standards expected in the field, including job descriptions. According to this law, paraprofessionals may engage in activities such as one-on-one tutoring, classroom management, and assistance in the school computer lab and media center. Additionally, the law also incorporates goals to improve training opportunities for all school-related personnel.

Training Materials.

Training materials have been developed by paraeducator professional organizations, states, researchers, and educational developers and range from pre-service programs and in-service workshops to lists of "best practice" strategies and worksheets to be completed either by the paraeducator or the classroom teacher (e.g. Salzberg, Morgan, Gassman, Merrill, and Pickett, n.d.; Kaff and Dyck, n.d.; Lasater, Johnson, Fitzgerald, 2000). However, training programs and

materials still tend to provide only basic skills and rarely recognize the distinctions in the training needs of paraeducators working in different settings (Pickett, 1995). For example, the duties and expectations of paraeducators in urban schools versus rural schools or those working with a self-contained special education class versus an inclusive classroom can greatly differ; therefore, training needs vary. While there is a growing recognition among all key stakeholders that paraeducators require more staff development and there are more training opportunities available to paraeducators today than ever before, most current training programs remain locally originated and implemented. This can result in wide variation among training programs in content and skills taught from school district to school district and state to state, resulting in uneven training programs and outcomes.

There is a growing consensus in the field that appropriate training opportunities must be developed and provided to paraeducators. A call has been made for comprehensive training programs that address the wide range of skills and content knowledge needed by paraeducators today. Topics to include in training programs could include;

- roles, responsibilities and ethical issues,
- knowledge of legislative mandates,
- an overview of an inclusive school environment and its goals,
- strategies to increase communication and teamwork,
- behavioral management skills,
- instructional strategies,
- positioning and medical management, and
- knowledge of the individual needs of students they will be serving.

In addition to a formal, initial training, the authors recommend follow-up training through both in-service workshops and on-the-job training.

Challenge to Developing Training Programs.

A key challenge to developing appropriate training programs for paraeducators is defining the specific skills that must be included considering the problems of poorly defined roles and responsibilities and antiquated job descriptions (CEC, 1998; French, 2001; French and Pickett, 1997; Safarik, 1997). States and school districts need to continue working on updating and clarifying the job descriptions of paraeducators. This will then facilitate improved development of training programs. Paraeducators indicated that the two primary areas in which most training is needed is in managing challenging behaviors of students and adapting and modifying curricular materials (Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Participants in the Downing et al. (2000) study echoed these needs, while expressing an additional interest in learning more about disability categories, the individual needs of their students, and strategies for effective teaching.

Supervision and Evaluation of Paraeducators

Introducing a paraeducator into the classroom leads to a shift in the role of the educator from instructor to supervisor (French, 1999). Practitioners and the research community have expressed concern that educators have not been trained to supervise and therefore are not providing the appropriate direction and supervision for the paraeducator. The educator's role while working with a paraeducator could include evaluating the effectiveness of the paraeducator's teaching methods and planning, scheduling, and directing the role of the paraeducator (Pickett, 1995). The role of supervising the paraeducator often is assumed by 1) the classroom teacher, 2) a special education teacher and/or 3) an administrator, such as the principal or special education director. Thus, there is a growing awareness of the need to provide training to teachers who are responsible for supervising paraeducators (Salzberg & Morgan,

1995). Because there is no consistency in who is responsible for providing supervision and evaluations, paraeducators are often confused and unclear about the chain of command.

Role of the Educator.

“What should the classroom teacher’s role be?” was a question raised by one of the participants in the Giangreco et al. (1997) study, a feeling shared by many educators who are currently educating a student with a disability in their classroom. Both general education and special education teachers working in inclusive settings today have expressed concern over their changing role (French, 1999; French and Pickett, 1997) and are struggling to delineate the responsibilities of the paraeducator, the special education teacher, the general education teacher, and related service providers.

One role that educators are fulfilling is supervisor and on-the-job trainer of paraeducators in their classrooms. Due to the limited formal pre-service training opportunities provided to paraeducators and the complexity of their role, general and special educators must often provide continual on-the-job training. Educators train paraeducators in various teaching strategies and techniques, classroom and student behavioral management strategies, and using assistive technology (Wadsworth and Knight, 1996). According to Freschi (1999), educators and paraeducators should work in tandem to support the student with a disability. Educators need to be trained in how to work with the student with a disability and the paraeducator should be viewed only as temporary support. The teacher should maintain primary responsibility for working with the student with a disability and should develop the skills to address behavior in addition to instruction (Freschi, 1999).

Wadsworth and Knight (1996) highlight the unique role of the special education teacher who has the primary role and responsibility for the implementation of all IEPs for the students in their school. Here, it is essential for the special education teacher to build a relationship with the

paraeducator and to provide supervision to ensure the student is progressing and meeting IEP goals and objectives (Giangreco et al., 1999). However, due to large caseloads, special education teachers have limited time to provide on-the-job training (Giangreco et al., 2001) and on-going supervision.

Another key role of educators working with paraeducators in inclusive classrooms is the role of developing and maintaining a collaborative relationship among stakeholders.

Collaboration is a key component to successfully meeting the needs of the students with disabilities in an inclusive setting (Downing et al, 2000; Giangreco et al., 1999; Marks et al, 1999). Wadsworth (1996) indicates that in order for inclusion to succeed, all team members must support the concept of team communication and planning. During meetings, paraeducators, special education and general education teachers have an opportunity to discuss the various roles and responsibilities of each team member and to explicitly clarify expectations. The authors stress the importance of paraeducator input and the role of the educator in continuously encouraging and fostering their participation. Paraeducators today often serve as the primary person providing instruction and modifying and adapting the curriculum for the student with a disability and, therefore, are likely have the most information about a specific student and how to meet his or her individual needs (Giangreco et al., 1999). Simultaneously, educators have expertise in curricular and educational design, modifications and adaptations, and should communicate with the paraeducator about how to be most effective in working with the students in the classroom.

Paraeducators interviewed in the Downing et al. study reported positive and effective collaboration among themselves, the general education and special education teacher. They reported working together to make decisions about modifications and adaptations to materials,

behavioral issues and teaching strategies that would address the needs of the student with a disability.

Conclusion

The importance of clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings is an important issue that still needs to be addressed. Most of the articles that discussed and analyzed the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators focused primarily on the instructional role, which apparently consumes the majority of paraeducators' time during the school day. This role includes teaching in one-on-one and small group settings and adapting and modifying curriculum to meet the needs of the students. Within the discussion on instruction, there is a discrepancy between actual responsibilities and what paraeducators and educators perceive as an appropriate role for the paraeducator. Although participants across the studies believed that adaptations and modifications of curriculum should be the responsibility of the teacher, the majority of the paraeducators, interviewed and observed, assumed this role.

Although in many cases the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators remain unclear and undefined, training programs, both pre-service certification programs and in-service workshops, are being developed across the country. Until the job descriptions and responsibilities for paraeducators are explicitly defined, however, we cannot expect to develop training programs that appropriately target the specific skill areas and enhance the effectiveness of paraeducators. Further, in service workshops for educators to learn about their new roles of supervision are needed.

Best Practices

Welcoming and Creating Space

Whether you are a general or special educator, chances are that if you are not already working with a paraeducator, within the next few years, you will be. As mentioned in the *Research Highlights* section of this product, employment of paraeducators continues to grow. Many teachers who had become accustomed to working alone in their classrooms are now being asked to welcome a variety of teaching staff with varying degrees of training and experience into their classrooms. For some teachers, this practice of working with paraeducators may be an easy transition, but for others it might cause feelings of anxiety and confusion. In this product, we outline practices and exercises that we hope are useful in developing team relationships and minimizing roadblocks along the way.

In order to get started, a teacher (general education or special education) will need to welcome the paraeducator into the classroom. This can be done by preparing a workspace for her within the classroom and showing her where to locate the essentials (e.g., restrooms, teachers' lounge, soda and snack machines, mailboxes, photocopier, fax machine, etc.). In addition to welcoming the paraeducator into the classroom, the teacher should also help to introduce her to the school. You may want to start by introducing her to other paraeducators, teachers, grade-level team personnel and other members of the school community. After the paraeducator is familiar with the physical aspects of the classroom and school, introduce her to the students. It is important for the students to recognize that the teacher and paraeducator are a team and that they will routinely and consistently interact with both adults in the classroom. Successful teams value the opinions and input of all its members. Make sure that the paraeducator has the opportunity to share her opinions with regards to decisions that impact

classroom operations. Finally, never forget to provide frequent feedback and acknowledge good work. Don't be afraid to say, "thank you."

Forming a Team

What Characteristics make a Successful Team?

Team members must:

- Be committed to working together**
- Have a clear understanding of goals**
- Define their roles together**
- Set expectations of each other**
- Communicate openly, frequently, and without judgment. This includes holding constructive and time-efficient meetings**
- Engage in team problem solving**
- Respect each other**

While some of these characteristics are self-explanatory and do not require long discussions, others call for self and group deliberation. An effective team must possess the commitment to accept new challenges and work through them. This cannot be done in isolation but must occur with the group as a whole. Once the team has been formed and all members are "on-board," they can work to identify and outline their team goals and then begin to come to consensus on roles and responsibilities of each team member. This process is unique to each team; however, we hope that this product will help guide your team through its development.

As an educator, you already know that any plan developed for a child requires documentation. Documentation is also an essential component of teamwork. In order for the team to monitor its progress and measure its accomplishments, plans must not only be discussed, but be written, implemented, monitored, evaluated, and re-written.

Defining Roles and Responsibilities.

Although there are many different ways to define roles and responsibilities, many educators choose to define roles and responsibilities through open communication. Most successful teams hold a meeting where all of the participants list their own view of their roles and responsibilities. These lists are then shared with the group and through discussion the group comes to consensus.

Decisions need to be made regarding who will develop, modify and adapt instruction, as well as how to divide up the responsibilities of monitoring student behavior and providing behavioral support. Some paraeducators act as a liaison between the general and special educator while others are also responsible for personal care and clerical duties. Roles may vary from school to school and even classroom to classroom, however. The team that tends to be most effective is the one that has collaboratively defined each member's roles and responsibilities.

Some guiding questions that may help to facilitate the group discussion are as follows:

Questions for the paraeducator to ask the general or special education teacher

1. How do you define my role in this classroom?
2. Which specific students in this class will I need to support? If they have IEPs, what are the goals and objectives that I will be targeting?
3. Can I expect to support or lead whole class, small group, or individual learning activities?
4. What type of record keeping system do you have in place? Will this system need adaptation in order to report on IEP goals and objectives?
5. What is the best method for communicating about individual students? Is it okay to ask questions throughout the day, or do you prefer for me to save my questions until the end of the day or lesson?
6. Do you have class-wide behavior expectations? How are these expectations communicated to the children? How should I support these expectations?
7. Will I be responsible for communicating with families? If so, how will my role be conveyed to families?
8. Are there any important details or unique characteristics that I should know about as I prepare to work in this classroom?

Questions for the general or special education teacher to ask the paraeducator

1. Do you have any specialized training or skills that you feel could benefit all children in our class?
2. Are you familiar with the children in this class? Do you know how to gain access to IEPs so that you can become familiar with the IEP goals and objectives?
3. Are you comfortable with leading whole class and small group lessons?
4. Have you been responsible for data collection in the past? If so, what techniques are you familiar with? If not, when can we meet to discuss the system that is used?
5. Will you be able to attend weekly team meetings to discuss curriculum and planning as well as individual student progress and concerns? If not, records from this meeting in addition to my daily lesson plans are kept on my desk.
6. Are you familiar with my class-wide behavior policies? Do you have any questions about how we can implement these policies together?
7. I will be responsible for overseeing your work and reporting to the administration on your performance. Do you have questions about how this process works?

Upon completion of this discussion, it is best to record the results of your discussions and copy this information for everyone on the team.

An example of a completed chart may look like Exhibit A:

Exhibit A.

<i>Defining Roles and Responsibilities</i>					
Task	General Educator	Special Educator	Para-educator	Other Personnel	How Often?
Develop lesson plans	X	X			Weekly
Adapt lessons for students on IEPs		X			Daily
Implement adaptations during the lesson			X		Daily
Collect data on IEP goals and objectives			X		Daily
Photocopy handouts and prepare materials for whole class lessons	X				As needed
Conduct review sessions with small groups	X	X	X		At the end of the unit
Teach enrichment lessons to small group				Parent Volunteer	Weekly
Administer assessments	X		X		At the end of the unit
Design poster displaying classroom expectations for behavior			X		First week of school
Discuss individual student progress	X	X	X		Weekly
Review and evaluate performance of paraeducator	X	X			In accordance with evaluation cycle
Review and evaluate performance of general and special educators				School Administrator	In accordance with evaluation cycle

It is important to note that an individual's roles and responsibilities are not static. This discussion should be ongoing as responsibilities, skills, and comfort levels change over the school year. A blank copy of the *Defining Roles and Responsibilities* is included so that you can use or adapt it to meet your needs.

Setting Expectations.

Although the duties and expectations of a paraeducator typically depend on his or her level and job title, the paraeducator can expect the general educator or special educator to guide and oversee all of his or her work. In addition, because paraeducators are not certified in designing and implementing instruction, they should expect that the teacher (either general or special education) would take the lead in lesson design and implementation. However, the paraeducator may want to work with the teacher to add their own creative ideas and provide the teacher with input regarding individual student needs. Paraeducators report that they think of their job in terms of facilitating, supporting, and assisting in the classroom where they work.

The general or special educator should expect that he or she will be responsible for mentoring the paraeducator. In addition, the teacher is most likely going to be the one who reviews the paraeducators' daily activities, execution of duties, and annual performance assessment. It is common for the school administrator to expect the teachers to provide the paraeducator with regular feedback on the appropriateness and effectiveness of their work. Reviewing the performance of a paraeducator may include keeping a log on how she is using her time and then reviewing that log with her, considering input from other certified staff and providing her with feedback or suggestions, and assisting the paraeducator in setting goals for personal performance and development. Two sample forms designed to provide feedback to a paraeducator on the effectiveness of their delivery of instruction are included below, as Exhibit B.

Exhibit B.

Evaluation of Instructional Activity for Sally Jones

Date: _____ Activity: _____

Report Completed by: _____

Competencies	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
Arrives on time				
Appears prepared with appropriate materials and supplies				
Provides advanced organizer to students and clearly states instructions				
Manages student or group effectively (uses reinforcement, collects data, manages behavior)				
Responds to questions, but keeps lesson "on-track"				
Incorporates learning styles				
Addresses IEP goals and objectives				
Evaluates work and follows-up accordingly				
Reports back to General and/or Special Educator				

Overall Performance Level: _____

Supervisor's Initials/Date _____ Paraeducator's Initials/Date _____

Adapted from *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, ed. A.L. Pickett and K. Gerlach, 1997, Austin, TX

Evaluation of Instructional Activity for _____

Date: _____ Activity: _____

Report Completed by: _____

Competencies	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments

Overall Performance Level: _____

Supervisor's Initials/Date _____ Paraeducator's Initials/Date _____

Adapted from *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, ed. A.L. Pickett and K. Gerlach, 1997, Austin, TX

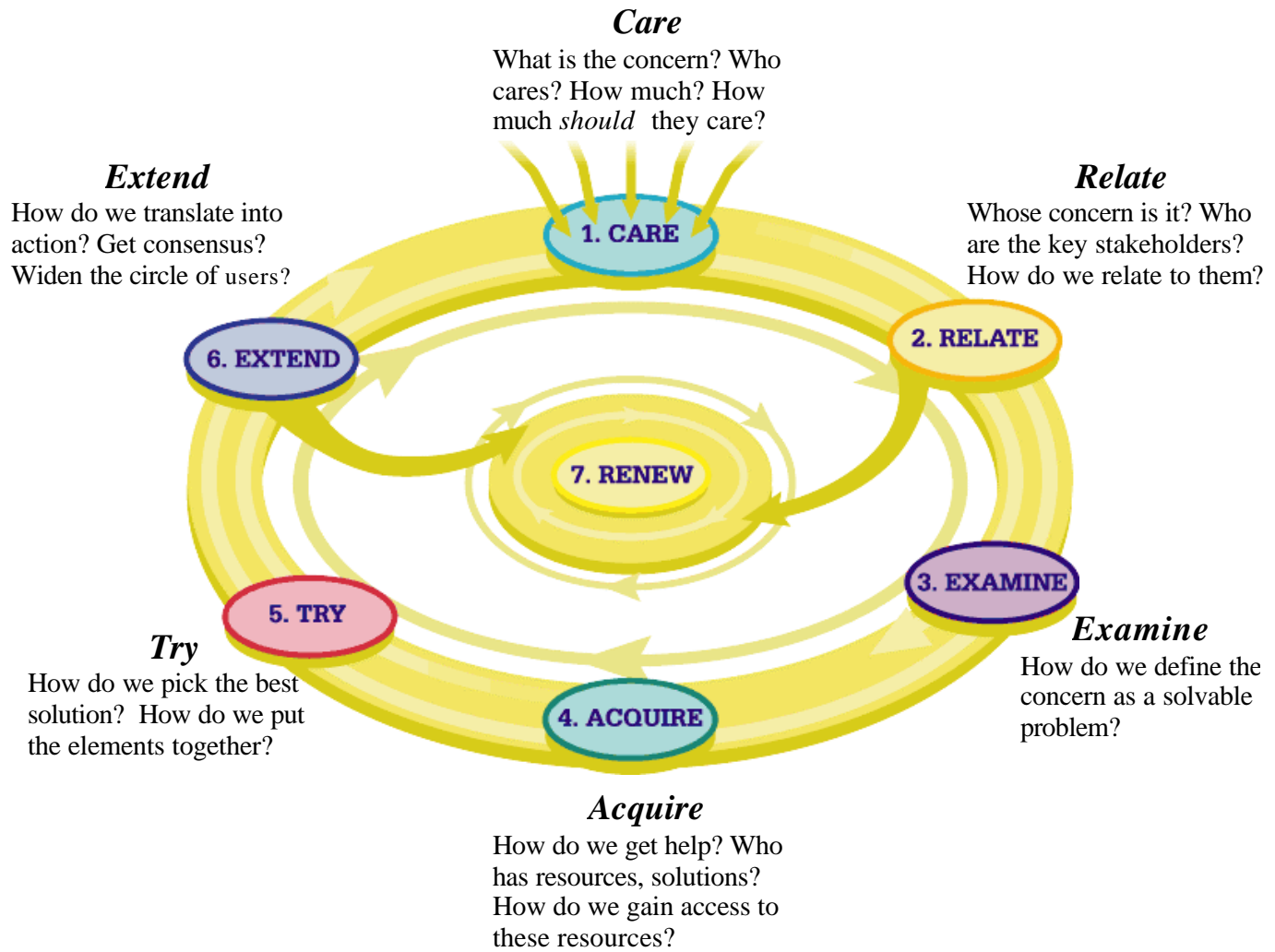
Communication and Problem Solving.

The best way to avoid conflicts is through open and effective communication. This involves not only expressing yourself clearly, but also listening to others. In a team situation where you are working with many distinct personalities problems or conflicts are inevitable. The numbered list below, as well as Exhibit C, outlines a seven step collaborative problem solving process (Pickett and Gerlach, 1997). This process is aligned with the Havelock (1995) change cycle described in the Elementary and Middle Schools Technical Assistance Center (EMSTAC) on-line training program and illustrated in the exhibit below. Following each of the steps outlined by Pickett and Gerlach, we have identified in parentheses the corresponding Havelock stage(s).

1. Team members should meet to clearly identify and define the problem (CARE, RELATE).
2. Identify the needs or desired outcomes. Do not confuse this with a solution (RELATE).
3. Collect input from each team member to come up with a list of possible solutions (RELATE).
4. As a group, discuss the possibilities and come to consensus on the most appropriate solution (RELATE, EXAMINE).
5. Form an action plan based on the solution selected (EXAMINE, ACQUIRE).
6. Put the plan into action (ACQUIRE, TRY).
7. Through follow-up discussions, evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and determine if the problem requires additional attention (EXTEND, RENEW).

Exhibit C.

Havelock Change Cycle



Working Together as a Team

There are many ways that teachers, paraeducators, and related school personnel can collaborate to create an effective inclusive environment. Some strategies for fostering informal and formal meetings are provided below, in addition to strategies that address paraeducator proximity, encouraging and supporting positive classroom behavior, ongoing paraeducator

training, and supervision and evaluation of paraeducators in the classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of strategies that can be employed for effective use of all personnel in the classroom; rather it is a framework that can be used as a foundation to be individualized as appropriate in your school setting.

Regular Meetings.

Regular team meetings are an essential ingredient to effectively working together as a team. Although the paraeducator, general education teacher and special education teacher may discuss daily routines such as instruction, modification and adaptation of curriculum, and

implementation of behavior plans informally throughout the school day, it is important to schedule formal meeting times which all team members, including other related service personnel can attend. These meetings should occur once per week.

During formal team meetings, the members of the team can, but are not limited to, brainstorm new plans for effectively

working with the student with a disability, develop new procedures for integrating the student with a disability into all classroom activities and establish procedures for unexpected situations such as when teacher and/or the paraeducator are absent, visitors are present, or field trips.

Worksheet A, *Team Meeting*, provides a framework for planning the meeting agenda, recording the results of discussion, and ensuring follow-through.

Fostering daily communication among the team members is important to maintain the flow of communication. Often this time is not specifically scheduled into the classroom routine

Generating and Maintaining Communication

Formal meetings

- ✓ Establish a Regular Weekly Meeting Time
- ✓ Generate a list of topics to be discussed at each meeting (see worksheet – Team Meeting)
- ✓ Keep the minutes of the meetings at hand to ensure follow-through and that all activities are accomplished on time

Daily Communication

- ✓ Make time to communication every day with paraeducator about daily routines
- ✓ Develop a classroom calendar or schedule (see worksheet – Daily Schedule or Classroom Calendar)

but is a continual flow of problem solving throughout the day. Developing a clear classroom schedule that delineates the subject, activities, and who is responsible for each provides the classroom organization needed for both the teacher and the paraeducator to address the needs of the students in the class and address arising problems as necessary. Please refer to Worksheet B, *Classroom Schedule*, to plan and schedule daily classroom activities.

Worksheet A.

Team Meeting

Date:

Participants:

General Classroom Planning (class-wide behavior, curriculum, administrative, field trips):

Discussion Topic

Activities to be done

By who?

Date Completed

Student Planning (Individual student objectives):

Student Name

Objectives/Goals

Concerns

Action planned

Paraeducator Proximity to the Student.

There are numerous challenges to providing the best educational opportunities for students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. As mentioned previously in the Background section of this product, the proximity of the paraeducator to the student with a disability can have an impact on student performance and outcomes. Giangreco (1997) identified eight primary categories related to paraeducator proximity that could, however, negatively impact student performance and achievement if not addressed. These categories include: 1) interference with ownership and responsibility by general educators, 2) separation from classmates, 3) student dependence on adults, 4) reduced student interaction with peers, 5) reduced teacher-led instruction, 6) loss of student control, 7) loss of gender identity, and 8) interference with the instruction of other students. Each of these eight categories is discussed briefly below with an example of detrimental paraeducator behavior and a few examples of strategies for the paraeducator to avoid the potential negative impact. This list is not exhaustive and additional strategies should be discussed in team meetings and added as the paraeducator works with the individual students in the classroom and better understands the unique needs of each student. Because students will react to these strategies in a variety of ways, and the effectiveness of one strategy may be more appropriate for one student than another, the worksheets on the following eight pages have been developed to keep track of the specific strategies that are most effective with each student.

1. *Interference with Ownership and Responsibility by General Educators*

Problem: Close paraeducator proximity can lead to teachers relinquishing the responsibility and ownership of the student with a disability. Due to the closeness of the paraeducator, the teacher might assume that the paraeducator is responsible for the instruction, assessment and evaluation of the student with a disability.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

- ▼ Ensure that the student with a disability is included on the main classroom grade book.

- ▼ Have the adapted materials prepared in advance so that the materials appropriate for the student with a disability can be distributed when the materials for other students are distributed.

- ▼ Establish a classroom routine that allows time for the teacher to provide direct instruction for the student with a disability.

- ▼ Discuss the student's IEP goals and objectives in team meetings and collaborate about how the team of individuals is going to help the student meet these needs.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

2. Separation from Classmates

Problem: It is tempting for the paraeducator to sit with a student with a disability at the back of the classroom or on the fringe of a circle of students so that if the student begins to exhibit inappropriate behavior it is easy to remove the student from the lesson.

Problem: The special education teacher removes the student with a disability from the classroom to provide individualized instruction.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

- v Have the paraeducator sit with the student with a disability in the middle of a row and next to a classmate.

- v Have the student with a disability sit with peers in the circle while the paraeducator stands on the outside of the circle monitoring the activity.

- v The special education teacher can provide individualized one-on-one instruction within the classroom during times when students are working independently.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

v

v

v

v

v

3. Student Dependence on Adults

Problem: Continual close proximity of the paraeducator fosters a dependence on the paraeducator that can be transferred to all adults such that the student does not have any confidence that he or she is able to accomplish tasks independently.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

▼ Encourage peers to assume a role in assisting the student with a disability – especially in situations when the student with a disability can participate with the assistance of peers or independently (such as in the cafeteria or on the playground)

▼ Use a fading technique.

1. The paraeducator provides the necessary assistance.
2. As the student with a disability becomes comfortable in the setting and with the activity, begin to pull back assistance.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

▼

▼

▼

▼

4. Reduced Student Interaction with Peers

Problem: Due to close paraeducator proximity, a student with a disability is often not able to naturally develop relationships with peers. Peers can feel threatened by the presence of the adult and, therefore, avoid interacting with the student with a disability.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

- ▼ Whenever possible, create an environment that allows for peers to assist the student with a disability in the classroom activity. Increasing opportunities for peers to assist and decreasing the prevalence of participation by the paraeducator will allow for greater interaction to occur.

- ▼ Establish a routine for asking for assistance in which the student with a disability must identify and ask three students for assistance prior to asking the paraeducator.

- ▼ Use cooperative learning strategies where student can work with a peer or a group of peers.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

5. *Reduced Teacher-led instruction*

Problem: Close paraeducator proximity often leads to increased individualized instruction by the paraeducator that is not consistent with the classroom activities and results in minimal time receiving instruction by the classroom teacher.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

- ▼ The classroom teacher and paraeducator should work to prepare lesson plans and modify/adapt curriculum in advance and establish how the lesson will be taught to maximize teacher instruction and paraeducator support.

- ▼ Prepare lesson plans for small group work that allows the paraeducator to oversee and manage the classroom while the general education teacher provides individualized instruction to the student with a disability.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

6. Loss of Student Control

Problem: As a result of close paraeducator proximity, the student often loses personal control to make decisions regarding what he/she wants to do, likes, etc.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

▼ Facilitate opportunities for the student with a disability that require decision-making. Encourage patience among all personnel and do not decide for the student.

▼ Provide students with a reasonable list of options and provide opportunities for the student to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of each.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

7. Loss of Gender Identity

Problem: Most paraeducators are female and, therefore, male students with disabilities can often experience a loss of gender identity.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

▼ Find a male adult in the building that is willing to assist male students with disabilities in a variety of activities, including tutoring, dressing, lunchroom, and bathroom skills.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

▼

▼

▼

▼

▼

8. Interference with the Instruction of Other Students

Problem: Paraeducators working closely with students with disabilities often participate in small group-work. As a result, the presence of the paraeducator in the small group discussion and work can impact the progress of student independence and production.

Potential Appropriate Strategies:

- v** Encourage students with disabilities to interact and work in small groups independently as much as possible. Assign the student to a peer in the group for assistance and support.

- v** If the paraeducator is participating in the small group work, ensure that the student with a disability asks their questions to the group rather than just the paraeducator and encourage peer responses.

Additional Strategies Utilized:

Please list any additional, effective strategies used in your classroom

v

v

v

v

Encouraging Positive Behavior.

There are numerous reasons why students choose to display specific behaviors. Behavior can be viewed as an attempt to communicate something, seek attention, avoid or escape a situation, event, or person, obtain something tangible, self-regulate one's energy output or play. Often, the role of the paraeducator is to assist the teacher in addressing inappropriate and challenging behaviors exhibited by students with disabilities. In these situations, power and control are often not effective ways to shape the student's behavior. Exerting power and control over the student could, in fact, lead to additional disruptive behavior. The first step to encourage positive behavior is identifying potential reasons for the behavior and the possible communicative intent of the student.

Identify the Reason for the Behavior

- ▼ Clearly explain the student's behavior
- ▼ Identify the situational context when the student displayed the behavior
- ▼ Make logical guess of behavior's purpose or communicative intent
- ▼ Make multiple observations

Once the situational context in which the student exhibited the inappropriate behavior and the potential communicative intent has been identified, the teacher, the paraeducator and other related school personnel need to communicate and work together to develop a behavior plan. The behavior plan should identify 1) the target behavior that is inappropriate, 2) the communicative intent of the behavior, 3) the potential misinterpretations of the behavior, 4) a replacement behavior that is appropriate in the

classroom, 5) how the new behavior will be taught, and 6) how the teacher, paraeducator, and other school personnel will respond to the new behavior (See Worksheet C – *Behavior Plan*).

Supporting Positive Behaviors.

Supporting positive behaviors provides reinforcement which is essential in encouraging desired behaviors and leading to student internalization of the behavior. Fostering a positive atmosphere in which all adults in the classroom work together to create a warm environment helps students to succeed.

Paraeducators and Teachers can Foster a Positive Classroom Atmosphere by:

- ✓ Welcoming all students into the classroom, greeting each student by name.
- ✓ Avoiding yes-or-no questions during instruction – instead, offer students choices and opportunities to express their ideas. This will give students a sense of control and contribution.
- ✓ Avoiding repeated verbal cues that can come across as nagging.
- ✓ Being consistent with their approach to teaching positive behaviors.
- ✓ Avoiding threats, bribes, lectures and power struggles.
- ✓ Implementing individualized support plans.
- ✓ Asking for help, suggestions and feedback from the teacher and other related school personnel on a regular basis.



Most students respond favorably to consistency and find comfort in knowing what is expected of them in the classroom. Teachers,

If a student is not responding to a request

1. Restate the expectation or request
2. Provide the student with a time frame for completing the activity
3. If the student responds, positively acknowledge his/her response
4. If the student chooses not to respond, make note of the behavior (use Worksheet – Reasons for Behavior) and plan to discuss the situation in the next team meeting.

paraeducators, and related service personnel can support a student by providing cues to

remind the student of the behavior that is expected in the classroom. Some students will respond more favorably to one type of cue than another and, therefore, the most effective strategy should be discussed during team meeting times to ensure utilization of the most appropriate cues. Sample strategies are listed below.

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Description</u>
1. <i>State the expectation</i>	Provide clear directions of what you want the student to do.
2. <i>Proximity</i>	Stand close to the student engaging in inappropriate behavior while maintaining your focus on the instruction.
3. <i>Gentle touch</i>	While the student is engaging in inappropriate behavior, gently touch their shoulder or arm to refocus the student.
4. <i>Indirect verbal cues</i>	Comment about the appropriate behaviors that other students are exhibiting in the classroom.
5. <i>Verbal cues</i>	Calmly tell the student how you expect him/her to behave.
6. <i>Offer a choice</i>	Provide the student with options that disengage the student from the inappropriate behavior. For example, if the student does not want to engage in a silent reading time ask him if he would like to read book A or book B.

Offering choices to students provides them with the opportunity to feel in power and in control. Whenever possible try to present the student who is exhibiting inappropriate behaviors with various options. Choices that continue to keep the student on task and participating in the classroom yet provide the student with the opportunity to feel in control of the situation are the most effective. Students could be provided with the choice

of who they want to work with, where they want to work, when they would like to participate in an activity, and when they would like to transition to a new activity.

Worksheet C

Behavior Plan

Student Name: _____

Description of inappropriate target behavior: _____

What is the purpose or the communicative intent of the behavior? _____

What are the potential misinterpretations of the behavior?

-
-
-

What appropriate behavior could replace the inappropriate behavior? _____

How will the new behavior be taught?

Activity

Strategies

Who's Responsible?

How will you respond to the new behavior?

Adult

Response

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

Adult(s) Present: _____

Other Students involved: _____

Description of Behavior:

Situational context in which the student displays the behavior (for example – transitioning into classroom group work, working independently without paraeducator or teacher support, waiting in line at the cafeteria, ending recess on playground, etc.):

Antecedent-behavioral-consequence (ABC) analysis –

- what happened immediately before the student displayed the behavior
- what did you see and hear when the student exhibited the behavior
- what happened immediately after the student displayed the behavior

Determining the reason for displayed behavior:

- ? To communicate something – What do you think that student was attempting to communicate?
- ? To seek attention – Why did the student feel the need to seek additional attention?
- ? To avoid or escape a situation, event, or person – What is the student afraid of?
- ? To obtain something tangible – What does the student want and why is it preferable?
- ? To self-regulate one’s energy output – Has the activity surpassed the student’s ability to focus or attend to task?
- ? To play – How is the behavior inappropriate for play?
- ? Other – Please describe and explain why you believe the student exhibits inappropriate behavior.

Ongoing Training.

Providing paraeducators with training and professional development opportunities is essential and mandatory under the standards of IDEA '97 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Unfortunately, many school districts are not offering paraeducators the training opportunities needed to develop their skills or content knowledge to effectively meet the demands and expectations of their role. Classroom teachers and paraeducators should encourage school districts that do not provide training to examine training programs developed by other states, school districts, and schools, and adapt the program to meet the needs of their school system. Providing paraeducators with the skills and content knowledge to effectively meet their responsibilities is beneficial to all persons in the classroom and increases the positive impact of paraeducator support.

Training should include an initial orientation to the school, structured on-the-job coaching by members of the team and other related school personnel, and formal in-service training. Ideally, these training programs would create opportunities for paraeducators to earn academic credit. For more information related to specific skills and content knowledge that would be appropriate to include in a training program, please refer to the background section of this product. If formal training opportunities are not currently offered at the district or state level, teachers, paraeducators and related school personnel are encouraged to develop on-the-job training programs that address the needs of the paraeducator. The team meeting is a good time to determine training goals for the paraeducator, to clarify the roles and duties of the paraeducator, and to determine how feedback, evaluation, and supervision will be provided to the paraeducator (See Worksheet D – *Training goals*).

Worksheet D

Training Goals

Date: _____

Name of Paraeducator:

Name of General Education Teacher:

Name of Special Education Teacher:

Other persons in attendance:

Skills to be mastered

How?

When?

(A few questions to consider: Who will pay for the training? Will it be a formal training (in-service/pre-service workshops) or informal (in the classroom). How will successful learning of the skills be measured? What is the target date for obtaining the required skills?)

1.

2.

3.

4.

Case Study

Andrea

This is Andrea's second year as a paraeducator with Woodlawn Elementary School. She began working as a paraeducator when her son entered Woodlawn's pre-school program. Andrea saw the position as an excellent way to earn a salary, while keeping a work schedule that coincides with her son's school hours, so they are able to spend time together at the end of the school day.

Andrea began her job in Ms. Rogers first grade classroom with Kaelynn, a seven-year-old girl with severe mental retardation. Andrea and Kaelynn worked well together in Ms. Rogers' classroom. Andrea received support from both Ms. Rogers and Mr. Mercer, the school's special education teacher. Together, they worked to modify and adapt the general education curriculum to meet Kaelynn's needs and address the goals on her Individualized Education Program (IEP). At the end of last year Mr. Mercer, Ms. Rogers, Kaelynn's first grade teacher, Kaelynn's parents, and Andrea met to discuss Kaelynn's IEP and her progress throughout the year. Having reached her IEP goals as a first grade student, it was decided that Kaelynn was ready to graduate to Ms. Hunt's second grade classroom. At Kaelynn's parents' request, Andrea agreed to move with Kaelynn to Ms. Hunt's classroom in order to continue her academic progress.

Ms. Hunt

Ms. Hunt has been a second grade teacher at Woodlawn Elementary School for nine years. She has served as the school's research coordinator and has been interested in creating inclusive academic settings for children with special needs at Woodlawn for several years. Ms. Hunt is happy to provide a classroom environment that offers Kaelynn an opportunity to learn

alongside her peers. While Ms. Hunt has never worked with a paraeducator, she has team-taught with a third grade teacher in the second and third grade combination class.

Kaelynn's integration was progressing well in Ms. Hunt's classroom for the first 3 months of the school year. Ms. Hunt and Andrea met twice a week before school to discuss Kaelynn's daily activity plans and to ensure her academic work was aligned with the general curriculum and the specific goals of her IEP. Ms. Hunt usually designed her lesson plans to cover a two-day period with curricular modules that lasted for two to four weeks. For example, the class was currently studying the rain forest. They covered plant life in the first week of the module, mammals in the second week, birds in the third week, and were now moving on to the need for rain forest preservation in the face of animal endangerment. Together, Ms. Hunt and Andrea adapted and modified the curriculum to meet Kaelynn's IEP goals as well as the district standards for learning. Mr. Mercer also met with Ms. Hunt and Andrea bi-monthly to assist in preparing appropriate modifications and adaptations and to ensure Kaelynn's goals were being addressed.

Everything was running smoothly in the classroom until just before Thanksgiving when a new second grade student named Jeremy came to Woodlawn Elementary and joined Ms. Hunt's classroom. Jeremy had been suspended from his previous elementary school twice before his family enrolled him at Woodlawn. His school record indicated a history of aggression in the classroom. He was suspended once for fighting and a second time for bringing a plastic gun to school, in defiance of the district's "Zero Tolerance" policy.

Jeremy was angry to be removed from his old school, away from his familiar surroundings and friends, and expressed these feelings from his first day in Ms. Hunt's classroom. Jeremy threatened another child in the classroom and threw an eraser at Ms. Hunt.

Not wanting to draw the class's attention away from the planned lesson, Ms. Hunt asked Andrea to take Jeremy out in the hall in order for him to have some time to cool down. With Andrea in the hallway with Jeremy, Ms. Hunt would have to assume full responsibility for Kaelynn in the classroom.

Andrea took Jeremy into the hall and reminded him of the classroom rules that he and Ms. Hunt had discussed earlier that morning. Jeremy's response was "So what! You're not the teacher and you're not the boss of ME." He then ran off in the direction of the cafeteria.

Unclear of her responsibilities in this situation, Andrea started off down the hall after Jeremy. He was much faster than she was and ran through the building as though he knew where he was going, in spite of the fact that he had never been there before. Fifteen minutes later, as Andrea was ready to give up and head back to the classroom, she caught up with Jeremy as he was ducking into the boy's restroom. She held his arm and escorted him back to the classroom.

When they arrived back in the classroom, circle time had broken into chaos and Kaelynn was crying. She needed to be taken to the restroom during circle time but was unable to ask for help. Kaelynn had an accident on the rug and the other children, who were ordinarily understanding of Kaelynn's differences, were reacting poorly. Andrea left Jeremy and went to calm Kaelynn while Ms. Hunt tried to regain control of the classroom.

During the lunch period, Ms. Hunt and Andrea found an opportunity to meet and discuss the incident. Ms. Hunt was distressed that Jeremy had run off and that Andrea had been gone for such a long period of time. Andrea wanted to tell her that she did not feel that it was appropriate for her to be running after another student, leaving Kaelynn alone in the classroom, but was not able to say it for fear of appearing too attached to Kaelynn and of angering Ms. Hunt. Quietly, she hoped that this problem would not resurface.

- *What could Andrea and Ms. Hunt have done differently in this situation?*
- *What could Ms. Hunt and Andrea have done before Jeremy arrived in the classroom that would have made the transition easier?*
- *What measures could Ms. Hunt and Andrea take now to prevent potential future disruptions in the classroom?*

Jeremy's behavior did not improve over the next few weeks. He frequently disrupted classroom lessons, initiated fights in the cafeteria, refused to participate in most classroom activities and often left the classroom without permission. Although Ms. Hunt never asked Andrea again to leave the classroom to find Jeremy, Ms. Hunt asked her to lead the whole class lesson when Jeremy left, as Ms. Hunt went to look for him.

Andrea felt that she could adequately lead the class lesson, but felt unable to provide Kaelynn with the appropriate individualized instruction while teaching the entire class. Also when Andrea was left alone for long periods of time she did not feel comfortable transitioning the classroom and Kaelynn into another activity without Ms. Hunt's assistance and often lost control of the classroom trying to do so. She simply could not assist Kaelynn with her modified lesson and lead the lesson for the twenty-three other second grade students.

Ms. Hunt's and Andrea's bi-weekly meetings began to dwindle. Ms. Hunt was spending more and more of her time and energy attempting to address Jeremy's poor behavior and less time became available to devote to helping Andrea modify lesson plans for Kaelynn. Andrea did what she could to create modified and adapted activities. She continued to meet with Mr. Mercer and asked for additional help and input in aligning classroom activities, the curriculum and Kaelynn's IEP goals. Due to the large caseload of students Mr. Mercer was responsible for, he

was unable to meet more often with Andrea but provided as much assistance as possible during their bi-monthly meetings.

During the next IEP meeting, Kaelynn's parents expressed concern about Kaelynn's slow progress academically and in meeting her IEP goals. Not only was she not meeting her IEP goals, but they felt she was also more frequently neglected in the classroom. Her parents were beginning to doubt that the general education classroom was the best placement for Kaelynn. Andrea felt overwhelmed and distressed. She was well aware of the progress Kaelynn made the previous year and was discouraged at the thought of her parents requesting a self-contained placement for her. Ms. Hunt sensed Andrea's feelings of discomfort during the IEP meeting and asked to meet with her after Kaelynn's parents left the school building.

What are some of the issues Andrea and Ms. Hunt would benefit from addressing during this meeting? Drawing from the Best Practices section of this product, what do you think is most important to address during their meeting?

Here are some points to consider:

- How can Ms. Hunt and Andrea improve their communication with one another and Mr. Mercer? Ensure that both Ms. Hunt and Andrea feel free to offer suggestions to one another and bring up issues with one another as they arise. Make sure that bi-monthly meetings stay consistent to maintain team responsibility.
- How can Ms. Hunt and Andrea more clearly define their job roles and responsibilities? Establish clear guidelines for potential classroom situations. Establish common goals to achieve with individual students and the classroom as a whole.

- How might Andrea and Ms. Hunt work together to handle Jeremy's aggression in a consistent manner? Key to handling potential problem situations as a team involves setting agreed upon expectations of each other that are clear and realistic.
- In what ways can Ms. Hunt ensure that Andrea has the appropriate time and opportunities to create and teach her modified and adapted lessons to Kaelynn? Ms. Hunt and Andrea need to carefully consider ways to best share classroom time and divide classroom responsibilities in a respectful and collaborative way.

State and District Status

The following section discusses the general trends of states' paraeducator training programs and skills and content standards using data collected from an extensive website search. The website search began with the fifty state websites found on <http://www.globalcomputing.com/states.html> in order to gather baseline information. Often times the research expanded to more specific department of education websites embedded within the state websites. In a few cases, states had created specialized websites for special education or paraeducators. Keywords used to find relevant documents on state standards and training for paraeducators, and the supervision for paraeducators by teachers include the following: paraprofessionals, paraeducators, teacher aides, standards, training, and supervision. The search yielded relevant information on thirty of fifty websites, although most of the hits on these sites provided **general information** about state standards and training, rather than clearly delineating among training programs. Since no specific standards or guidelines have been accepted for paraeducator training and certification at a national level, and few at a state level, it appears that many states defer the establishment of hiring and training standards to the discretion of the districts. Therefore, districts are able to make hiring judgements based on the specific availability and needs of the individual schools within the district.

Three major themes have been discussed throughout this product that reflect the current research and literature on paraeducators: 1) guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, 2) pre-service/in-service training and (if applicable) certification requirements, and 3) the educator role of supervisor to the paraeducator. The findings of our website research will be discussed in the context of these three major paraeducator themes.

Roles and Responsibilities of Paraeducators

The current literature emphasizes that paraeducators are often being used inappropriately in the classroom because clear job responsibilities for the paraeducator have not been identified within the school district or at the state level. While thirty states provided some general information on paraeducators, only ten of those states mentioned the general importance of having roles and responsibilities of paraeducators clearly delineated; of those ten, only nine outlined these roles and responsibilities in detail (see Table A). The most common theme among paraeducator roles/responsibilities is best captured in Minnesota's statement that "paraeducators are respected and supported as integral team members responsible for assisting in the delivery of instruction." In some cases, states expanded on this idea by listing specific activities acceptable in the classroom; North Dakota explains that paraeducators can assist teachers in the following: 1) implementation of IEPs developed by the team (under the direct supervision of the teacher), 2) collecting student assessment data, 3) performing noninstructional duties such as preparation of materials, 4) scheduling and maintenance, and 5) use teaching strategies and methods that are appropriate for the students' need and required adaptations and accommodations. Several states also emphasized the importance of ethical practice and working collaboratively within the instructive team.

Another common organizational scheme used by states to define roles and responsibilities includes listing a series of core competencies. For example, Colorado's Department of Education sponsored the Colorado Paraprofessionals Advisory Committee to develop and recommend core competencies for paraeducators. Some of these core competencies include: professionalism and awareness of ethical practices, knowledge of instructional content and practice, ability to support the learning environment, and ability to communicate in team partnerships. Iowa developed core competencies, adapted from Washington and Utah, listed in

the 1998 booklet called the “Guide for Effective Paraeducator Practices in Iowa.” Competencies listed in this booklet include: an understanding of the value of serving youth and children with disabilities, an understanding of the roles/responsibilities of paraeducators, an ability to communicate with colleagues and work as part of an instructional team, a general knowledge of legal and human rights of children/youth and their families, an ability to practice ethical standards of conduct according to their employing institution, a sensitivity to diversity, a general knowledge of childhood development, an ability to motivate students to develop self-esteem, independence and interpersonal skills, an ability to follow health and safety rules, and an ability to use assistive technology and special accommodations for children. Washington, according to the Northwest Policy Paper, has developed 14 Core Competencies for paraeducators, and skill standards for community college have been developed from the core competencies to define roles, responsibilities and training requirements for paraeducators in Washington State.

Table A consolidates many different state lists of core competencies and job responsibilities to allow comparisons to be drawn and patterns observed. Following the sub-categories mentioned in the introduction, the roles and responsibilities in Table A have been divided into five sub-categories: 1) instruction, 2) monitoring student behavior and behavioral support, 3) liaison and team members, 4) personal care, and 5) clerical duties. A sixth category that is not included in the introductory section has also been added to the chart: general knowledge. Several states, such as Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Washington and Wisconsin, emphasized the importance of paraeducators’ understanding of ethical practices, such as confidentiality, in working with students. Other general knowledge topics encouraged by states include understanding and distinguishing between the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators and their supervisors, knowledge of early childhood development, awareness of diversity among

children and families, knowledge of legal issues related to children with disabilities, and an understanding of the value of serving children with disabilities. Since these job responsibilities incorporate the knowledge and attitudes of paraeducators, rather than specific tasks or actions, 'general knowledge' about children with disabilities did not emerge as a major subcategory in the literature. However, our research results indicate that states do want paraeducators to meet certain standards and criteria of general knowledge about children with disabilities before working with students.

Of the five major sub-categories of paraeducator roles and responsibilities, instruction seems to be the area most emphasized by states. For example, Iowa, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Wisconsin all emphasize the importance of paraeducators assisting general education teachers in implementing student accommodations or modifications, such as assistive technology, and in understanding the value of providing instructional services to youth with disabilities. Some of the instructional roles/responsibilities were quite general and would probably be more helpful to paraeducators and supervisors if they were more specific, such as the "ability to support the learning environment and provide quality education services due to adequate training," mentioned by both Colorado and Minnesota. Several states, such as Iowa, North Dakota and Wisconsin, believe that paraeducators should help motivate children to build self-esteem and interpersonal skills, although they do not specifically explain how to do this. Five of the nine states listed in Table A emphasize the importance of communicating with colleagues in a collaborative partnership and four states encourage paraeducators to follow the safety, health and emergency procedures where they are employed. As Table A demonstrates, many similarities can be drawn from the state lists of roles/responsibilities for paraeducators. The important task seems to be to encourage more states to develop *specific* state guidelines and

publish this information publicly for districts and local schools to use as models. Minnesota’s website, called the Minnesota Professional Consortium (<http://ici2.umn.edu/para/>), provides a good model for how states can develop specific guidelines for paraeducators and offers this information to the districts through public access. Minnesota’s website not only offers districts direction on how to hire, train and supervise paraeducators, but it also gives paraeducators a forum through which they can gather information and network with one another.

Table A: Paraeducator Roles and Responsibilities by State

*Only listed states with Roles and Responsibilities clearly delineated on state websites

	CO	IN	IA	MN	NH	ND	WA	WV	WI
<i>Instruction</i>									
Knowledge of instructional content and practice (implement instructional strategies to support all student learning)	✓								✓
Ability to support the learning environment and provide quality education services due to adequate training	✓			✓					
Assist general education teachers in implementing student adaptations, modifications, and accommodations in the classroom (including assistive technology)			✓			✓	✓		✓
Facilitating in the instruction and direct or indirect supervision of pupils under the direction of a professional educator								✓	
Understanding the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities			✓			✓	✓		✓
Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certified/licensed staff							✓		

	CO	IN	IA	MN	NH	ND	WA	WV	WI
<i>Monitoring Student Behavior and Behavioral Support</i>									
Ability to provide positive behavioral support and management							✓		
Ability to motivate and assist children and youth to build self-esteem, strengthen interpersonal skills and develop independence			✓				✓		✓
<i>Liaison and Team Members</i>									
Ability to communicate with colleagues in a collaborative instructional partnerships (participating in clearly defined roles)	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Assisting in the implementation of IEPs developed by the team, under the direction of the supervising teacher						✓			
Assist in collecting student assessment and performance data						✓			
<i>Personal Care</i>									
Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed			✓	✓			✓		✓
Awareness of personal care and/or health related support							✓		
<i>Clerical Duties</i>									
Perform non-instructional duties such as preparation of materials, scheduling, and space/equipment maintenance						✓			
Carry out school and classroom policies, procedures, and tasks									✓
<i>General Knowledge</i>									
Awareness of ethical practices, including confidentiality	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓
Understanding the roles and responsibilities of certified/licensed staff and paraeducators, as well as the roles and responsibilities of other professional educators			✓	✓			✓		✓
Knowledge of (a) patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages, and (b) risk factors that may impede typical development			✓				✓		
Knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families			✓				✓		

	CO	IN	IA	MN	NH	ND	WA	WV	WI
Understanding of the value of serving children with disabilities			✓						
Sensitivity to diversity in cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, and value systems among children and their families			✓				✓		

Paraeducator Training and Certification

Previous sections of this paper established that an integral component of effective paraeducator implementation is providing paraeducators with comprehensive training that addresses both general and specific skills and knowledge in academic content areas. Some areas include roles and responsibilities, confidentiality and ethics, behavior management, and communication skills as well as reading and math curriculums (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999). Anna Lou Pickett suggests that certifying training for paraeducators has several benefits. First, certification would set standards guaranteeing some degree of quality (1986). The lack of standards, or the lack of coordination at the local and state level regarding paraeducator standards has meant that there is no constructive way to measure quality. Second, it would provide paraeducators with the means for further professional advancement.

Paraeducators do not appear to have the infrastructural support to advance their careers. Providing both certification and training would encourage and enable paraeducators in this way by clarifying career choices and identifying areas of expertise. Third, roles and responsibilities would be clarified in the light of certification. As it stands right now, either there are no defined roles and responsibilities for paraeducators, or if they are, they vary significantly across states and school districts. And fourth, it would give a formal recognition to paraeducators as valued members of the education team. Providing guidelines, defining roles and responsibilities, and providing career advancement opportunities legitimizes and recognizes the importance of the

paraeducator. Pickett goes on to say that these standards need to be addressed from both the state and the local level.

Our findings highlight that many variations exist both at the state and local level in terms of employment guidelines and certification processes for paraeducators. Rather than devising more formal certification systems, several states have developed administrative guidelines that regulate the education and experience needed to work as a paraeducator. For instance, a state may recommend specific competencies that a paraeducator must develop and provide training to develop these competencies. In addition, in the absence of state requirements, several school districts have developed their own guidelines and requirements.

Supervision of Paraeducators

Website research indicated that most states emphasize paraeducator training and roles and responsibilities, with little attention given to the availability and training of licensed/certified teachers to serve as appropriate role models and supervisors for paraeducators. Only Iowa, North Dakota and Minnesota mentioned the role of the supervisor in paraeducator training and certification, and two of these three, Iowa and North Dakota, mentioned the topic only briefly in the context of the Northwest Policy Paper of 1999. In a Resource Manual published by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, North Dakota outlined in detail the importance of paraeducators working under the “direct supervision of a licensed teacher,” because the paraeducators role should be one of assistance, not teaching of actual content. The document also included a section on a developing plan for the ongoing training and supervision of paraeducators, including a minimum of 4 hours of training per year and “the frequency of supervision and consultation as approved by the building and/or special education administrator.” While interesting that so few states emphasize the role of paraeducator

supervision, this observation seems hardly surprising when so little specific information on the roles, responsibilities, and training of paraeducators exist for public review.

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium is an example of a state that includes information emphasizing the importance of training supervisors of paraeducators. The website emphasizes the importance that “teachers and others responsible for the work of paraeducators have the skills necessary to work effectively with paraeducators.” In addition, resource manuals in the Training and Resource Directory can be found that give specific instructions and methods to help supervisors, such as *Improving the Performance of Paraeducators in the Workforce: A Technical Assistance Manual for Administrators and Staff Developers (1993)* and *Strengthening the Partnership: Paraeducators and Teachers Working Together*. The chat room, newsletter, and links to other paraeducator websites, also provides some resources for paraeducator supervisors. In order for paraeducators to be used more efficiently and appropriately in the classrooms, states need to recognize the important role that supervisors and general education teachers play in the pre-service and ongoing training of paraprofessionals.

State Paraeducator Standards and Certification Regulations

Sixteen states have either training and/or certification requirements in place for all paraeducators (American Federation of Teachers, November 2001). These include Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and Washington. Even among these states there is significant variation in the implementation of standards.

Table B, adapted from the American Federation of Teachers website, summarizes the training or certification requirements for each state. The ensuing discussion elaborates on the requirements of several of the states in the table through independent research of state, local, and federal websites, journal articles, and published books.

Some states provide straightforward regulations for the number of hours that must be spent in training (e.g., Alabama and Illinois both require that paraeducators spent 30 hours in formal training, while Missouri requires 60 hours of college training per year). While there are no statewide standards for paraeducators in Washington; they must demonstrate an understanding of fourteen core competencies developed through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Special Education and their Paraeducator Project. Table C highlights these competencies, which range from having knowledge of the stages and milestones of human development to the ability to motivate and assist children and youth. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC 392-172-200) states “classified staff shall present evidence of either formal and/or adequate in-service training or successful experience in working with special education students. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, through the special education Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, shall identify the minimum competencies classified staff must possess and develop in-service training strategies to meet staff needs” (Washington Education Association, n.d.). Other states have loosely defined regulations that may reflect their commitment to localized implementation. However, poorly defined regulations may contribute to a lack of clarity at the time of implementation.

Minnesota passed the Minnesota Omnibus Education Bill of 1998 and section MS125A.08(b) required paraeducators in special education to have prior training as: “sufficient knowledge and skills in emergency procedures, building orientation, roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, vulnerability, and reportability, among other things, to begin meeting the needs of the students with whom the paraprofessional works”. The regulations additionally ensure that “annual training opportunities are available to enable the paraprofessional to continue to further develop the knowledge and skills that are specific to the students with whom the

paraprofessional works, including understanding disabilities, following lesson plans, and implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities.” The responsibility for ensuring that this training is adequately provided rests with school boards in each district (Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium, 1998).

Similarly, in New Mexico, it is required that a paraeducator complete a training program designed by the local school district to meet the competencies defined by the state (State of New Mexico Department of Education, 2001). While the New Mexico Administrative Code states that “all persons who perform services as educational assistants (“EAs”) in public schools must hold valid, educational assistants licensure issued by the State Board” and define a series of 12 competencies for paraeducators, they do not specify the content of the training that paraeducators must achieve in order to receive a license.

States may also have a structure in place for ensuring both preparation and further development of paraeducators. Vermont, for instance, has four levels of training for paraeducators. A Level I paraeducator is required to complete six credit hours at an accredited university, renewable on a yearly basis. A Level II paraeducator should have completed 30 credit hours at a university, have one year of prior experience as a paraeducator, and this is renewed every two years. Level III paraeducators should have accumulated 60 hours of college credit hours, have two years of experience as a paraeducator, and this is renewed every three years. Finally, Level IV must have completed 90 college credit hours, and this requirement and is renewed every four years. New Mexico also has three distinct levels of “EA” dependent on past experience and education.

An additional five states have standards for training in place specifically for special education teachers with the understanding that approximately half of all paraeducators work with

children with disabilities. These include Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, a state license requires that a special education paraeducator must spend three years in college or three years supervising youth activities, or some combination of these. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction through the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CPSD), and in collaboration with the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) has developed a nationally recognized training program that supports the needs of all paraeducators (Wisconsin Executive Summary). The training program, known as the Educational Support Personnel Certificate Program, consists of 40 hours of structured learning with the goals of:

- increasing professional development opportunities;
- raising the level of professionalism;
- developing a broad curriculum;
- assuring quality through pre-approval process;
- and assuring statewide availability of offerings (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction).

North Dakota provides extensive requirements for their special education paraprofessionals. The North Dakota *Guide 1: Laws, Policies, and Regulations for Special Education for Exceptional Children* describes in detail that paraeducators must receive a minimum of 20 hours of in-service instruction. In addition, orientation must be five hours long and be conducted within the first five working days that the paraeducator assumes duties. Orientation training must include the following: expectations of the paraeducator, confidentiality of records and verbal information, introduction to assigned supervisor and work areas, building routines, and reviewing the individual needs of the students being served. A minimum of 15

hours of in-service must be conducted within one year of employment, with ongoing training per additional calendar year of four hours (Office of Special Education, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2000).

Four states, Maryland, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah, are moving towards legislation that reflects the training needs of paraeducators. These include Maryland, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Utah. As of November 2001, Maryland was developing state regulations after a State task force had recommended licensure standards to the Legislature in 1998 (American Federation of Teachers). In Oklahoma, the legislation had passed in July 1999, but licensure and certification details were in the process of being worked out at the State Department of Education. The Bill states:

The State Board of Education shall adopt a program for the career development of public school paraprofessionals. The purpose of this program is to provide public school paraprofessionals a system of career development that is based upon education and training advancement to encourage excellence among public school paraprofessionals”
(American Federation of Teachers, 1999).

There are several examples of training programs that are the result *not* of any specific state mandate or requirement, but instead reflect the needs of the local school districts. Arkansas is an example of a state where while there may not be specific regulations in place, the Department of Education has made efforts to provide a thorough training process for paraeducators. The Director issued a Memo on February 26, 1998 stating, "It shall be the policy of the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) that, paraprofessionals employed by public agencies to assist in providing special education and related services to children with disabilities, birth to 21 years of age, will be appropriately trained and supervised in accordance with guidelines established by

the ADE, Special Education Unit." To address this requirement, the Arkansas Department of Education, through the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, has developed a training program for paraeducators that includes Core curriculum and elective secondary modules (Arkansas Department of Education, 2000).

Moreover, our research found that while few states may offer requirements or mandates in terms of certification for paraeducators, there are a number of training programs in place (30+) that offer varied and instructive programs to guide paraeducators in their positions and in their careers. This demonstrates the need for a structured training that exists on the local level at the same time as finding that the needs of each school district, and even state are somewhat different.

TABLE B.
Status of state paraprofessional standards and certification regulations

ALABAMA LETTER OF APPROVAL

Required. 30 hours of formal training; permanent
--

ALASKA

NONE

ARIZONA

NONE

ARKANSAS

NONE

CALIFORNIA

NONE

COLORADO

NONE

CONNECTICUT

NONE

DELAWARE STATE PERMIT

Requirements are not specified. Must have "evaluated experience and training" and "skills relevant to the position"; permanent.

FLORIDA

Legislation outlining career ladder with LEA option (not mandatory) passed in 1998. Current regulations specify standards and procedures that apply to teacher aides including health, age, knowledge of policies & instructional practices.
--

GEORGIA STATE LICENSE

2 years of college or 50 hours is required; renewable every 3 years, requires additional 50 hours instruction or in-service.

HAWAII

NONE

IDAHO

Special education--state standards for knowledge and performance. Recommendations for orientation and training in first year of employment.

ILLINOIS STATE CERTIFICATE

Completion of a teacher aide training program approved by the superintendent or 30 semester hours required; permanent.

Legislation pending for revision and creation of task force to study issue.

INDIANA

Special education--appropriately trained paraprofessionals may work under the direction of a teacher or related services personnel. Public agencies must provide pre-service and in-service training.

IOWA

New hires must complete in-service in first year of employment.

LEAs must have staff development plan that includes paraeducators.

Special education--pre-service and in-service requirements.

Certificate--granted to those who complete a recognized paraeducator preparation program with 90 clock hours of training.

KANSAS STATE PERMIT

Special education only

Effective May 2000--no longer in state regulations but districts must follow these standards in order to receive state reimbursement of approximately \$8,000 per special education paraprofessional.

Level 1--20 hours, renewable every year.

Level 2--30 semester hours & 450 hours in-service & 2 years experience at level 1; renew every 3 years.

Level 3--60 semester hours or AA degree & 900 hours in-service & 3 years at Level 2; renew every 3 years.

KENTUCKY

NONE

LOUISIANA

NONE

MAINE STATE CERTIFICATE

Education technician/level I--high school diploma, orientation, ongoing in-service.

Education technician/level II--2 years college & in-service.

Education technician/level III--3 years college & in-service.

All are renewed yearly.

MARYLAND

State task force report recommending licensure standards presented to state Legislature in 1998; no LEA mandate.
(2001 - development of state regulations in progress).

MASSACHUSETTS

NONE

MICHIGAN

NONE

MINNESOTA

Special education: Prior to or immediately upon employment, sufficient knowledge and skills is necessary. Annual training should be available for further development of knowledge and skills. Can only work under the supervision of a licensed teacher or nurse.
General student body: Guiding principles have been developed for paraeducators of all student groups. (FOUND ON WEBSITE: ici2.umn.edu/para/)

MISSISSIPPI

Assistant teacher: complete the reading, language arts & math portions of a current nationally normed eighth grade standardized achievement test (exempt if holding a teaching certificate); HS diploma or GED; participate in annual training provided by the district.

MISSOURI STATE REQUIREMENT

Instructional aides only, 60 hours college required, renewed yearly

MONTANA

NONE

NEBRASKA

NONE

NEVADA

NONE

NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE CERTIFICATE

HS diploma, 1 year experience; complete a 2-week orientation session on special education. Certified paraprofessionals must complete 50 hours in areas determined by the professional development master plan for their district.

NEW JERSEY

The county superintendent of schools who must develop job descriptions and standards for appointment approves paraprofessional positions.

NEW MEXICO STATE REQUIREMENT

A paraprofessional must complete a training program designed by the local school district to meet competencies defined by the state. Training varies according to district and how it uses paraprofessionals.

NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED

Teacher aide: must fulfill civil service requirements; responsibilities are non-teaching.
Teaching assistant--temporary license: HS diploma; responsibilities are instructional in nature.
Teaching assistant--continuing certificate: 6 hours of collegiate study; one year of experience; responsibilities are instructional in nature.
Teaching assistant--level I: HS diploma; satisfactory level of performance on the New York State Teacher Certification Examination Test.

Teaching assistant--level II: all requirements of level I plus 6 hours of collegiate study.
Teaching assistant--level III: all requirements of level II plus 18 hours of collegiate study.
Teaching assistant--pre-professional certificate: all requirements of level III plus must be matriculated in a program registered as leading to teacher certification.

NORTH CAROLINA

NONE

NORTH DAKOTA

NONE

OHIO STATE PERMIT

Education aide--"Skills sufficient to do the job," 1-year permit.
Education assistant--HS diploma and participation in unspecified in-service training under a 1-year permit; renewed every 4 years.

OKLAHOMA

Legislation passed 1999/in process at state Department of Education.

OREGON

Under discussion at state Department of Education.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE CERTIFIED

Private schools only.

RHODE ISLAND STATE REQUIREMENT

High school diploma; training at discretion of district (Rhode Island Federation of Teachers is working to revise)

SOUTH CAROLINA

HS diploma, participation in pre-service and in-service training programs for aides.

SOUTH DAKOTA

NONE

TENNESSEE

NONE

TEXAS STATE CERTIFIED

Education aide--HS diploma and experience working with children.
Education aide II--15 hours of college or "demonstrated proficiency."
Education aide III--30 hours of college & 3 years as aide I or II.
Legislation introduced for revision, 1999.

UTAH

IN PROCESS

VERMONT STATE CERTIFIED

Level I--6 hours college, renewed yearly.
Level II--30 hours college & 1 year experience, renewed every 2 years.
Level III--60 hours college & 2 years experience, renewed every 3 years.
Level IV--90 hours college, renew every 4 years.

Personnel standards for paraprofessionals will be included in special education rules in 2002.

VIRGINIA

NONE

WASHINGTON

Current system defined but not mandatory.

WEST VIRGINIA

NONE

WISCONSIN STATE LICENSE

(Special education only) 3 years college or 3 years supervising youth activities or some combination that can include 2 years at voc-tech school specializing in childcare, renewed every 5 years.

WYOMING

NONE

(Adapted from a table on the American Federation of Teachers web site
(<http://aft.org/psrp/certification/status.html>) revised on November 28, 2001)

Table C.
Washington State Competencies for Paraeducators

WASHINGTON STATE CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PARAEDUCATORS

To work in education and related services programs for children and youth with disabilities, paraeducators will demonstrate:

1. understanding the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth 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 certificated/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.

(Retrieved from the Washington Education Association Website
http://www.wa.nea.org/Prf_Dv/PARA_ED/RCMDTNS.HTM)

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