

Paraprofessional's Path to Bridging the Gaps in the Inclusive Classroom



N R C Paraprofessionals Conference

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Presenter: Dr. Ashleigh Molloy

Director

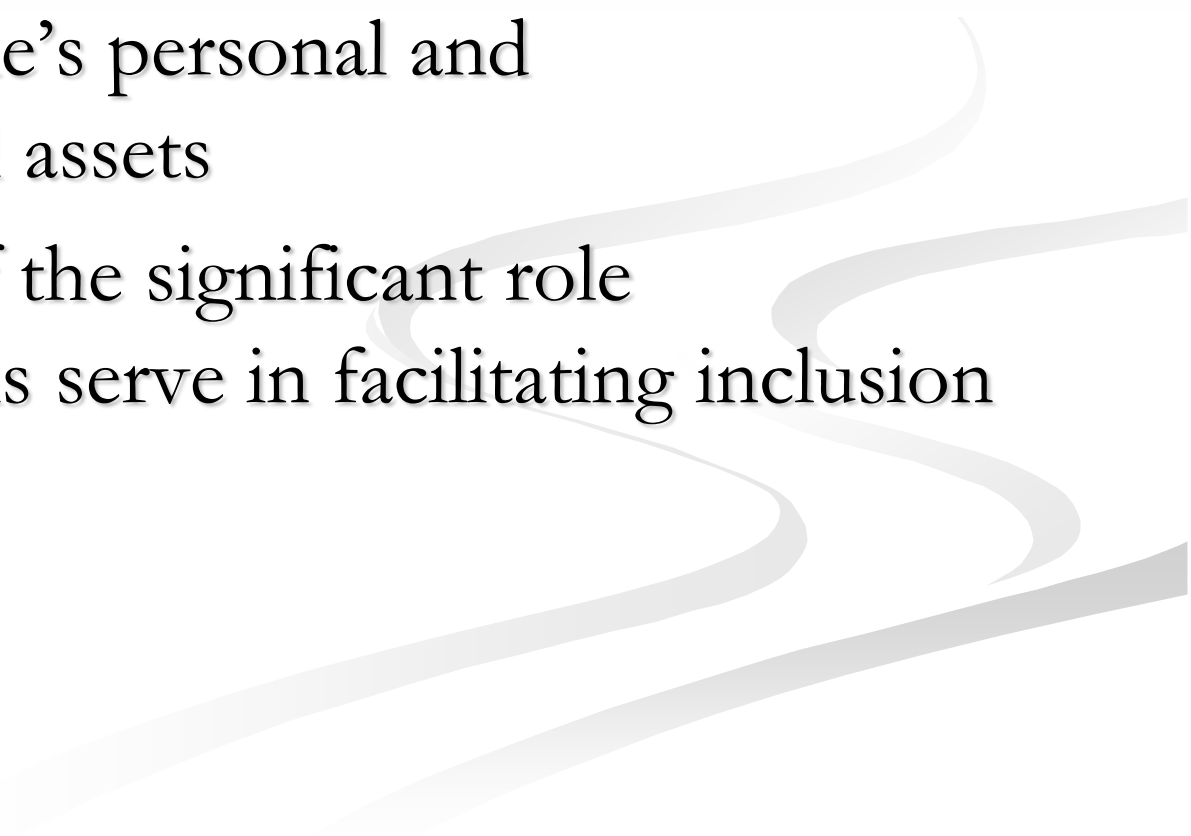
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Session Objectives

- To learn strategies that promote student success in an inclusive classroom
 - Validation of one's personal and paraprofessional assets
 - Identification of the significant role paraprofessionals serve in facilitating inclusion
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What is a Paraprofessional?



A **valued assistant** that teachers and other professionals need to deal effectively within a large and diverse classroom group, or to provide the level of support required to **include** students with identified challenges.

What are Paraprofessionals? (My Take)

- Para's are like...

BAYER ASPIRIN

They work miracles.

- Para's are like...

FORD

They have better idea ideas.

What are Paraprofessionals?

- Para's are like...

COKE

They are the real thing.

- Para's are like...

HALLMARK CARDS

They care enough to send their very best.

What are Paraprofessionals?

- Para's are like...

GENERAL ELECTRIC

They bring good things to life.

- Para's are like...

ALLSTATE

Your in good hands with them.

What are Paraprofessionals?

- Para's are like...

V0-5 HAIR SPRAY

They hold through all kinds of weather.

- Para's are like...

the U.S. POST OFFICE

Neither rain, nor snow, nor ice will keep them from their appointed destination.

What are Paraprofessionals?

- But Most of all...

Para's are like FROSTED FLAKES

They're **GRRRRREAT!!!!**



Hurray for Paras!

Group Activity



Historical Background

- Fastest growing position in public education
 - 1989-100 000 nationwide
 - 2001-930 000
 - 2007- 1 million plus
- Growth is exponential as a result of the rapidly increasing enrollment of students with special needs in the public education system

Haim Ginott

- “I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am **the decisive element in the classroom.** It’s my personal approach that creates the climate...I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

Para's Responsibilities in the Inclusive Classroom

- Many of the contributions made by paraprofessionals are as *unique* as each person is.



Your Tool Box

- Experiential Knowledge
 - You come with experiential knowledge based on your previous roles in life. These include being a sibling, parent, family, community member and working roles.
 - These are lived experiences that empowers one with skills and abilities that have been accumulated
- Formal Knowledge
 - Schooling
 - P.D./Courses

“We are Responsible”

- We are responsible for those
 - Who watch their parents and watch them suffer
 - Whose monsters are real
 - Whose nightmares come in the daytime,
 - Who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep
 - And to those who must be carried
 - For those who don't get a second chance
 - For those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it

By Ina Hughes

What is my role/goals?

- To increase independence and decrease dependence
- To assist the student to reach his/her potential using the IEP as the road map
- To increase peer interaction and inclusion
- To use appropriate strategies and materials
- To model appropriate behaviour and communication
- To prepare the student for life after high school

Create a Sense of Welcome



Paraprofessional's Hope

I wish for a teacher who will see me as a colleague with contributions to make.

I wish for a teacher who will see me as an assistant to all children, though with particular focus on a few.

I wish for a teacher who will ask for my ideas.

I wish for a teacher who will see me as a person, but feel free to guide me as a tool to benefit children.

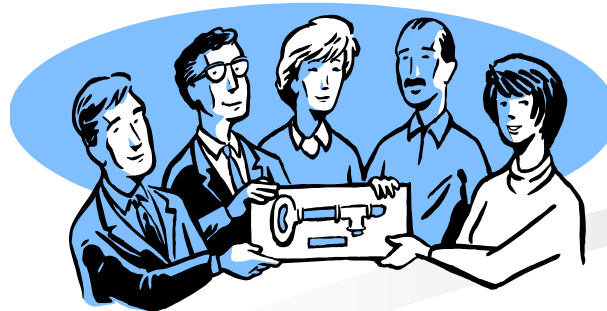
I wish for a teacher who will challenge me to do my best.

I wish for a teacher in whom I can see a role model.

Gary Bunch, York University

Parameters of Responsibility: Teacher and Professional Staff

- Initial design of the pupil plan
 - e.g., teacher lesson plan, developmental program
- Provide paraprofessionals with the necessary information, training and direction to fulfill their responsibilities
- Implementation and evaluation of the instruction



■ **T**ogether

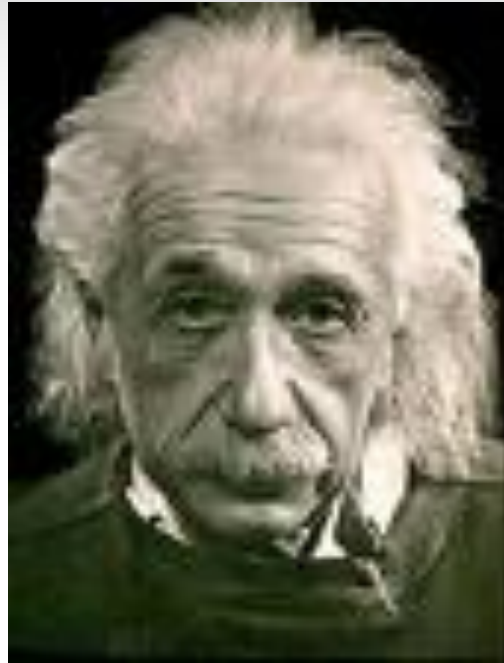
■ **E**ach

■ **A**chieves

■ **M**ore



“Knowledge is Power”

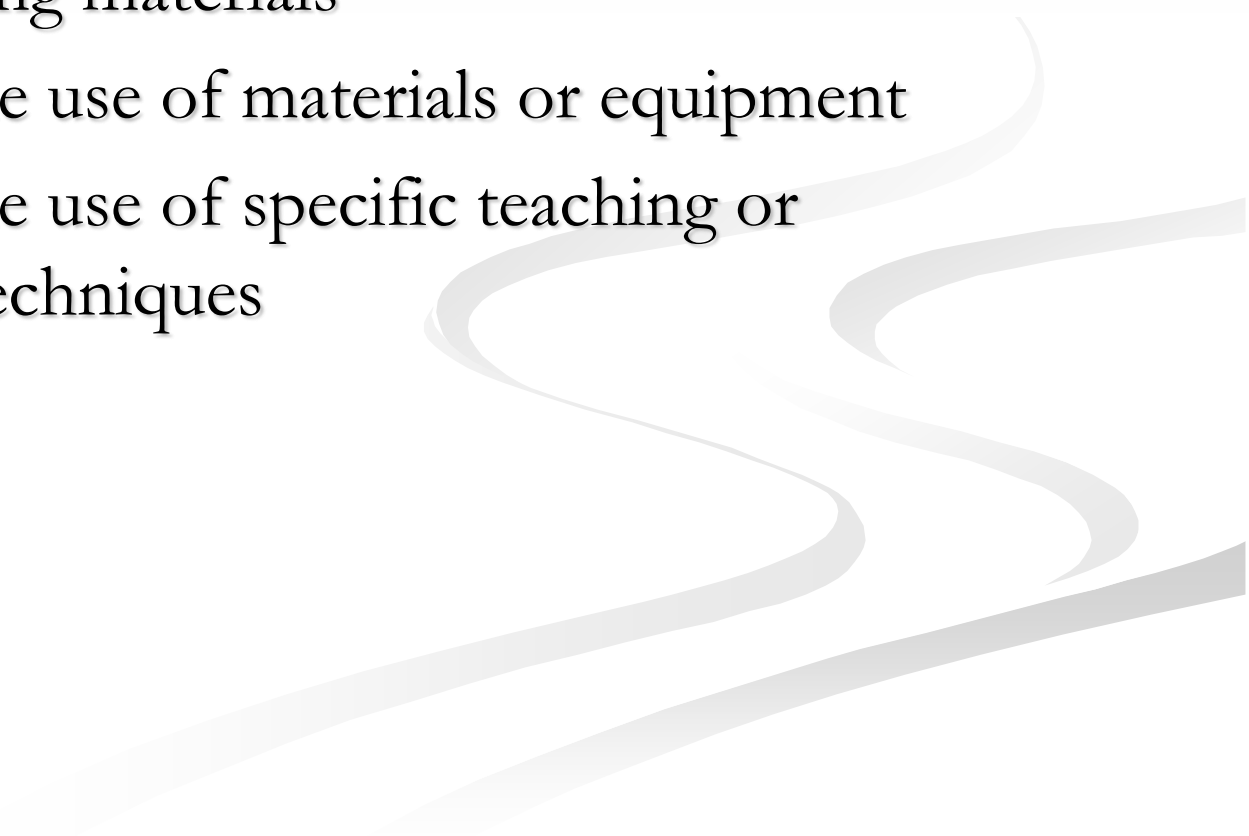


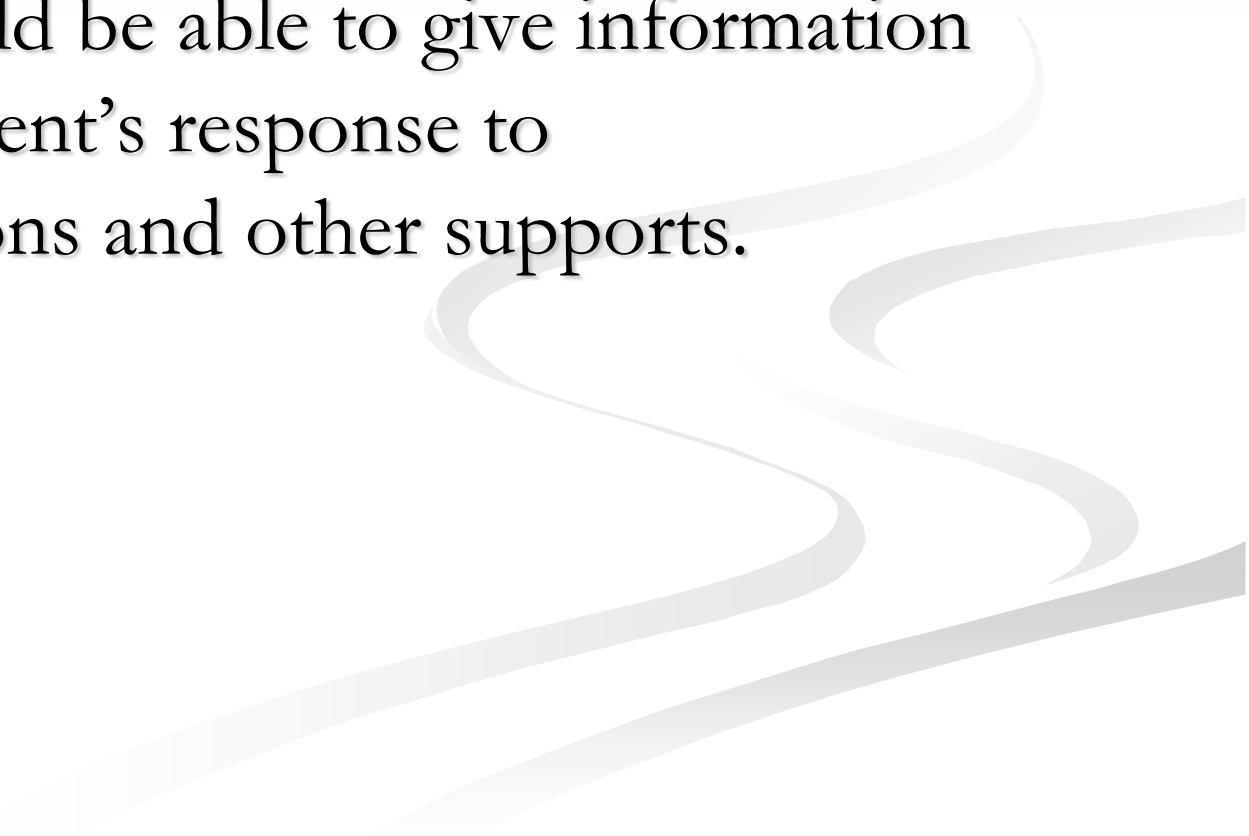
Albert Einstein

Knowledge is Power

Teams work best if you know the following:

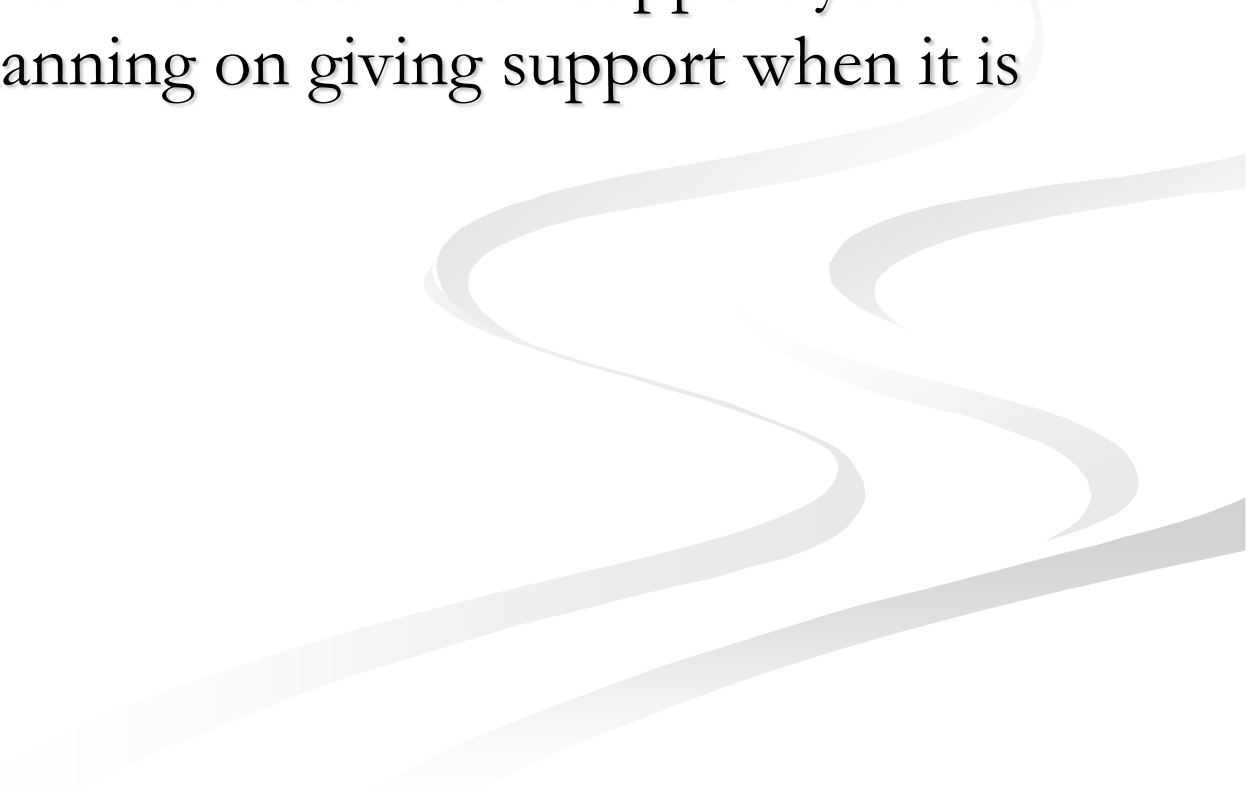
- 1. What is to be done
 - What teaching, process and evaluation accommodations need to be created for the student to be successful?
 - Adapted materials
 - Manual supports (scribing, reading, holding)
 - Extra time to do the work, less work to do
 - Incorporating multi-model strategies
 - Added visual, auditory or tactile cues

- What support does the para need to be helpful to the student
 - Time to find or create materials
 - Help in creating materials
 - Training in the use of materials or equipment
 - Training in the use of specific teaching or behavioural techniques
- 

- What is the para to do if the student does not cooperate? Is there a behaviour program in place?
 - The para should be able to give information about the student's response to accommodations and other supports.
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■ 2. Who is to offer the support

- No student needs support all the time; sometimes having the student work with peers is helpful and necessary.
- Sometimes the student must work with the teacher to build the student-teacher relationship which is critical to learning.
- At times, the student needs to work alone to experience autonomy of learning, if he has never worked alone, he may think he can't.

- 3. When you need to offer support
 - No student requires adult support every minute of everyday; there are times when other forms of support would suffice.
 - The issue is often not how much support you need to give, but planning on giving support when it is needed.
- 

Ten Tips (K. Lachina & T. Borgdon)

- Let students make mistakes and take risks. Let natural consequences be part of the classroom experience. We all make mistakes.
- Watch your voice and volume. Discussions often disrupt the learning environment.
- Maintain student dignity: Be discreet about physical needs. Schedule tube feedings, toileting, etc. at natural break times

Ten Tips continued

- Communicate and consult with caregivers: find out what is working at home; maintain confidentiality
- Facilitate peer relationships. Remind others to talk directly to the student, seat the student with other students, give the student freedom to socialize
- Help the teacher. See your role in relationship to the entire class; time away from an individual student promotes independence.

Ten Tips continued

- Ask for help
- Give as few prompts as possible. Foster independence. Use hand over hand assistance to teach a skill; not complete it
- Help students to create their own work. Avoid correcting or completing assignments
- Enable students to make choices. Give them some control over their lives and environment. Choices also improve behaviour.

Curriculum Adaptation for a student with disabilities

Unit: Solar System

Date: Month of October

Concept 1:

The organization of the
Solar system

Adapted information

Multilevel curriculum and
Instruction

There are 9 planets



Unit content adapted for a student with disabilities

Unit: Solar System

Date: Month of October

Concept 2:

The characteristics of earth

Adapted information

Multilevel curriculum and
Instruction

The earth is made up of
land and water

Unit content adapted for a student with disabilities

Unit: Solar System

Date: Month of October

Concept 3:

Rotation of the earth and sun

Adapted information

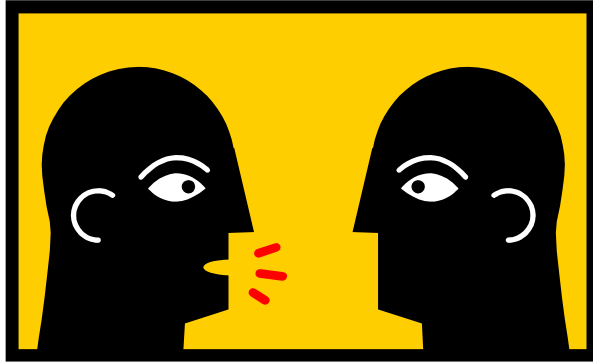
Multilevel curriculum and Instruction

The earth revolves around the earth and sun

Group Activity



The Skills: Communication



- With staff colleagues, administration, parents, and students
- Confidentiality, freedom of information
- On regular basis (e.g., daily journal with home, dedicated discussion with teacher)

The Skills: Child Development

- Know typical learning and growth patterns of children
- Know how disabilities or other challenges affect a student's learning and school life
- Age-appropriate ways of supporting students





The Skills: Teaching & Support

- Guided by educational plan
- Differentiated learning
 - Visual learners
 - Tactile learners
 - Auditory learners
- Student motivation: positive and proactive
- Use of a variety of strategies, resources (e.g., technical supports and equipment)
- Intervention that respects dignity and rights

Sensory Modality



Encourage Cooperative Learning



- Positive interdependence
- Individual accountability
- Cooperation skills
- Face-to-face interaction
- Heterogeneous groups
- Equal opportunities for success

The Skills: There's More!

- Time management
- Adaptability
 - e.g., to schedules, to students, to colleagues
- Negotiation: finding common ground
- Management of transition



**No two children with a
similar exceptionality are
the same!**

The background features several thick, light gray wavy lines that flow from the bottom right towards the center, creating a sense of movement and depth.

The Paraprofessional in
Inclusive Education:
the *Inclusion Facilitator*

Classroom Culture

The inclusive classroom is one that has accepted the right of any student to participate with all others in the process of learning. Difference in race, ethnicity, and gender do not lessen that right. **Neither does difference in ability.** All learners are accepted as members of the classroom community as equal participants within their abilities and needs.

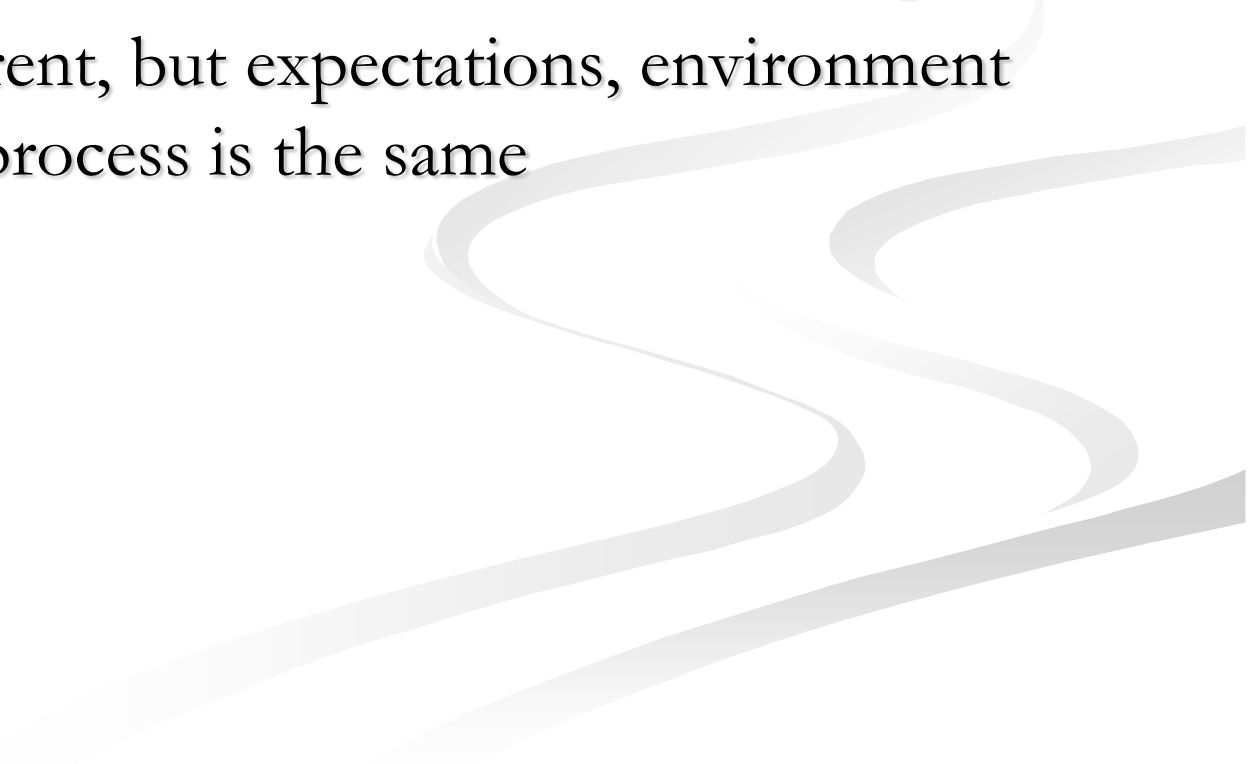
Inclusion: Basic Principles

- All children have a right to a place in the regular classroom
- Each student should participate, at some level, in all classroom activities
- All children have individual abilities and needs that should be recognized
- All children are learners
- Teachers, paraprofessionals and students are colleagues in the act of learning

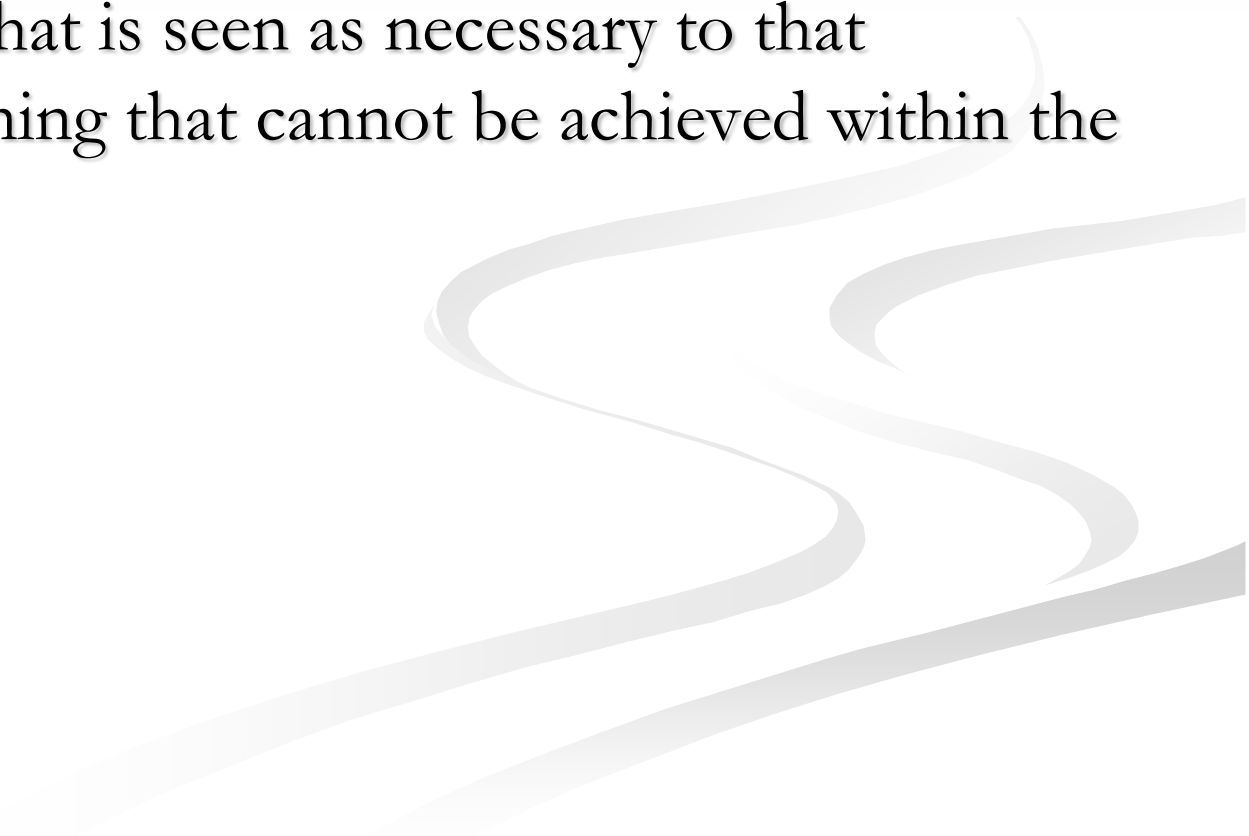
Types of Participation

- Full participation
 - Student joins others throughout the activity to the same extent as his/her peers
 - E.g., group work, cooperative learning
- Partial participation
 - Student participates in some part of the activity that is seen as important and equal to what the students are doing

Types of Participation

- Parallel participation
 - Student completes a similar activity at a similar time and within the same environment as his/her peers
 - Work is different, but expectations, environment and learning process is the same
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Types of Participation

- Pull out
 - Student taken to a specific area to complete a specific task that is seen as necessary to that student's learning that cannot be achieved within the classroom
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A Few More Words...

- Student never “pulled out” because you do not know what to do with him/her
- Student should be “pulled out” because you know what you need to do and you believe that working in a specific setting would be more beneficial than working within the classroom
- Helpful to have a peer(s) accompany the student and join the activity
 - 1:1 work may be perceived as stigmatizing
 - Learning to work with others is more important than learning to work alone

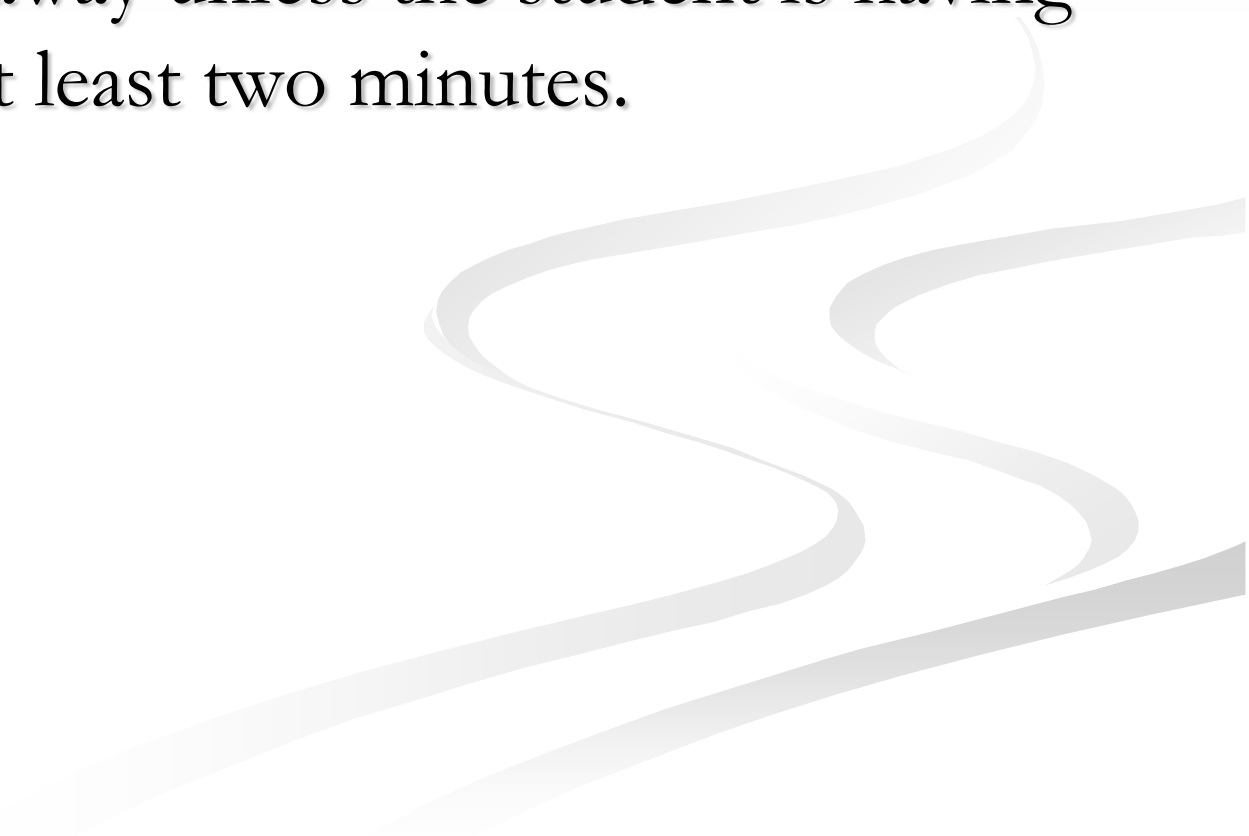


Proximity

I don't think any child should go to school with an adult “attached to the hip”

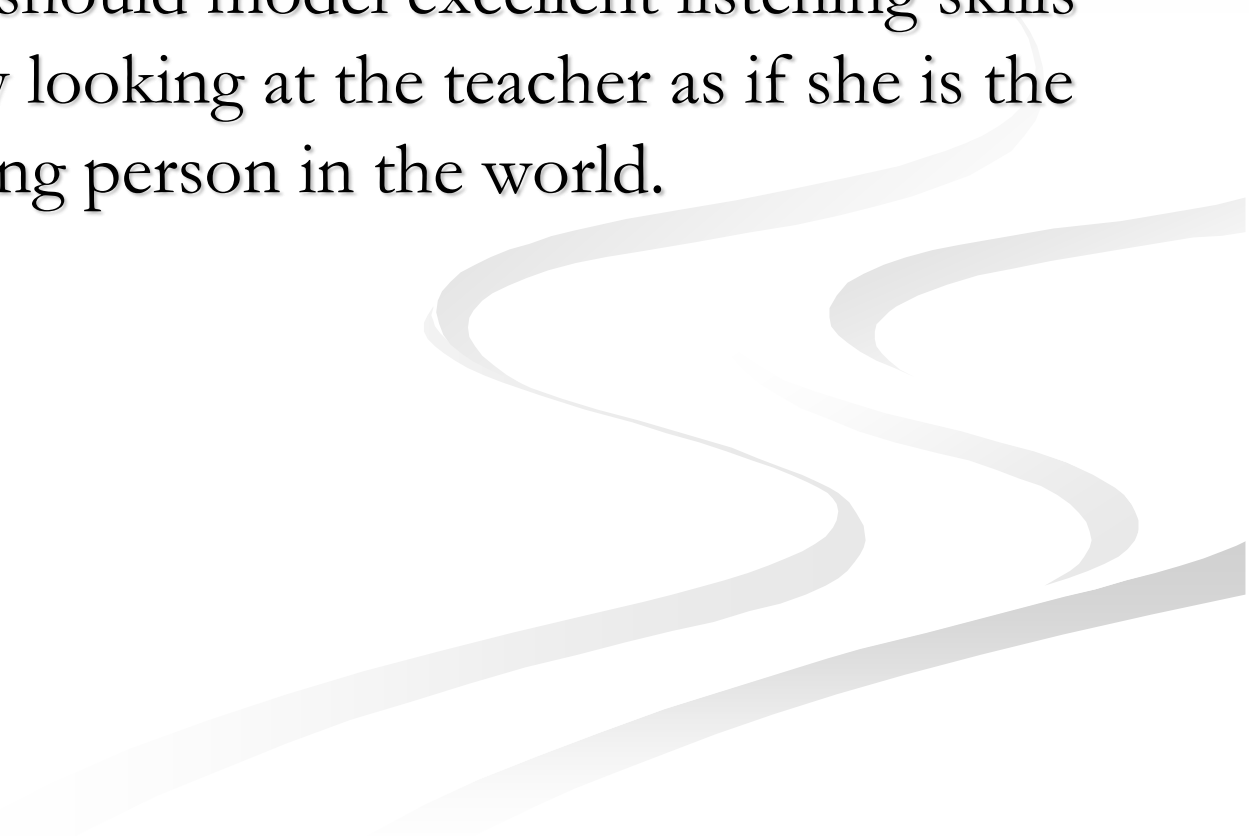
- Assistants need to be able to support students without interfering with their learning and social connections. This is a difficult challenge. How do you help someone, yet leave her space to learn from others, to make mistakes, to have privacy and form relationships with others.

I like the Four Foot Rule:

- Stay four feet away unless the student is having difficulty for at least two minutes.
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Effects of Paraprofessional Proximity

- Challenge
 - separation from classmates
- Example of the challenge
 - The paraprofessional sits with the student at the back of the room near the door.
 - The special educator pulls the student out of the classroom for instruction.
- Example of how the challenge can be addressed
 - The student can sit next to a peer in the middle of the row
 - The special educator can provide instruction in the classroom during reading time.

- When to talk and when to listen
 - It does not matter what you know if you are unable to communicate with other people.
 - The assistant should model excellent listening skills at this time by looking at the teacher as if she is the most interesting person in the world.
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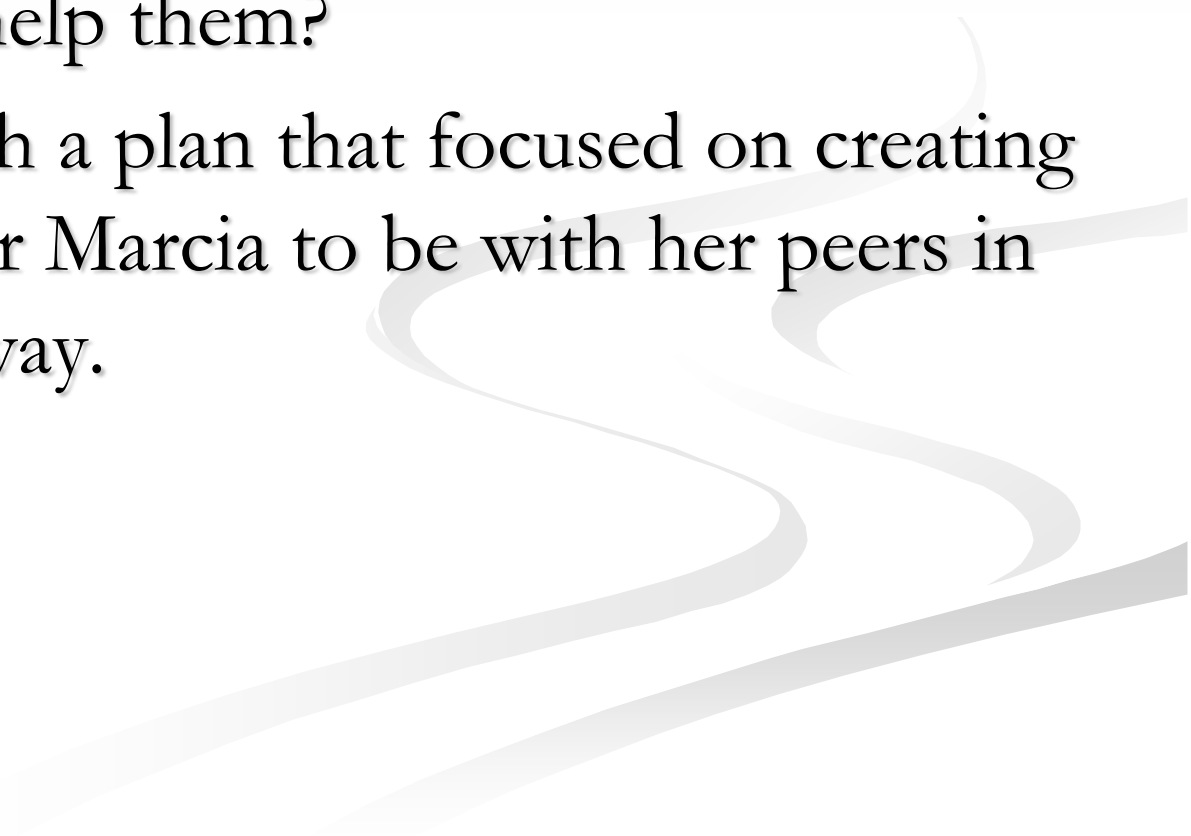
- When to “wean” a student
 - No student should be expected to spend all of their learning time with one person.
 - No student should attend school and interact with only one person.
 - If a student does not function without an assistant constantly by his side, it is imperative that the assistant create a plan to “wean” that student immediately. To do this, the assistant will need to find ways to gradually move away from the student without causing added stress to the students.

- Don't respond immediately to every request that a student makes, let there be a 10 second delay on some requests. You may need to raise your hand to show him that you are coming or teach him to..."wait until I am finished" or "I'll be right with you". You will need to teach him how to "wait."
- While standing close to the student, talk to others and offer support to others; expect the student to "share" you.
- Work at a site within view of the student but not next to the student.

Case in Point

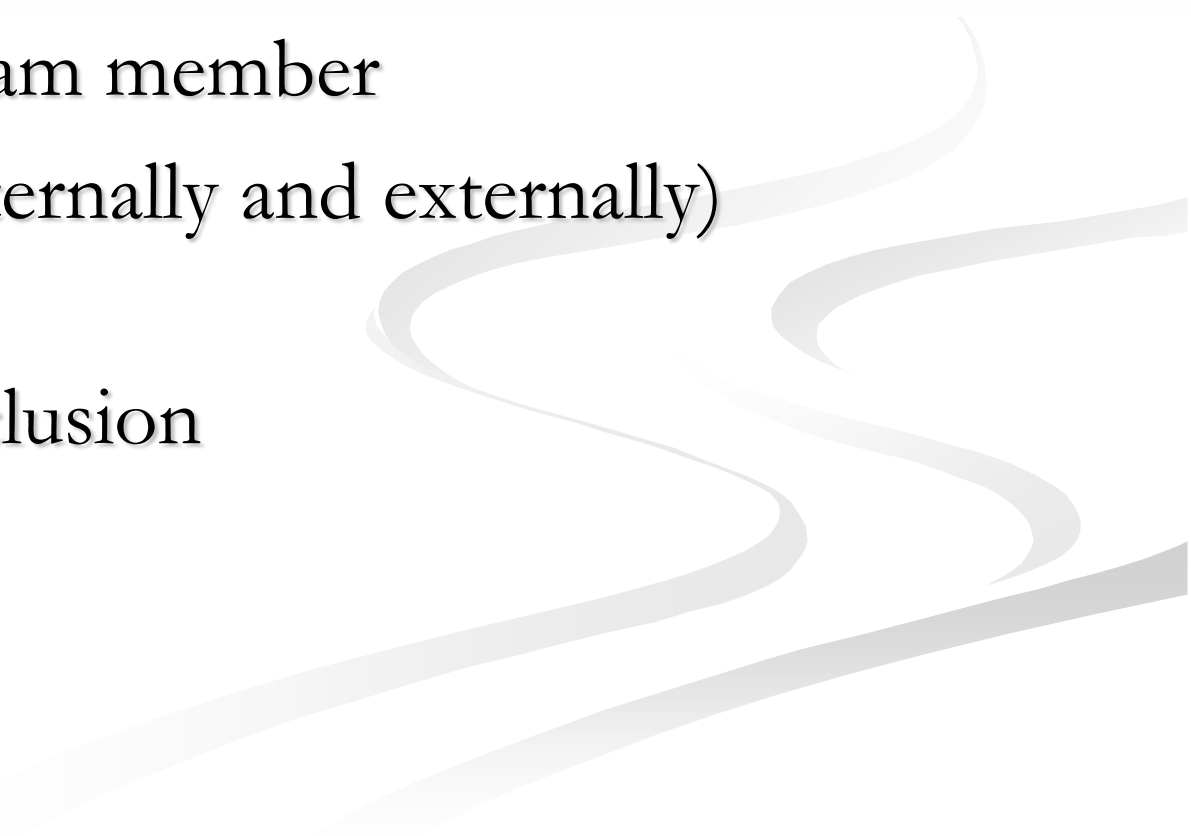
Working to Include

- Marcia was in grade six and she was having difficulty getting along with her peers.
- In the past, Marcia had a few girls she played with; this year the girls were “too cool” to play. Rather than be left out, Marcia began to bug others in the lunch room and at recess, she took things from them and ran away laughing. She jumped on the boys and tried to wrestle with them. She was becoming a “pain” as her peers reported.

- Upon reviewing the situation, we agreed that the other students were maturing and Marcia was still wanting to “play” as a younger child would. How could we help them?
 - We came up with a plan that focused on creating opportunities for Marcia to be with her peers in an appropriate way.
- 

- 1. Rather than look at the teacher's magazines during free reading time, Marcia was to bring some magazines of interest to teens (Teen People, YM, etc.) She would then have something she could share with her peers.
- 2. Marcia was to bring some hemp and beads in her backpack and her assistant was to learn how to bead (over the weekend). Marcia and her assistant would sit down at lunch and start a beading project, hopefully some girls would join them.
- They did and the assistant left Marcia with her friends creating a variety of hemp jewelry.

Paraprofessional's Goals

- Lifelong learner
 - Effective service to students
 - Collaborative team member
 - Empowered (internally and externally) contributor
 - Supporter of inclusion
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Paraeducators Do Make a Difference

A Parent's Voice

In my personal experience, paraeducators have always made a difference in my daughter's life.

Lindsey, who has Down syndrome, started junior kindergarten at the young age of 4. I was totally overwhelmed with the idea of my baby girl away from mom. Elizabeth Mora was assigned to be Lindsey's "educational assistant" or "paraeducator". She was with Lindsey from kindergarten until grade 6.

To say this lady made a difference in my daughter's life is an understatement. This paraeducator was compassionate, caring, patient, loving and very much the advocate for Lindsey. Yet she was firm and did chastise when the need arose. They understood each other.

So many new things were learned with the help of Elizabeth. Lindsey learned how to drink from a cup, how to use a straw, eat donuts and drink hot chocolate like the other children.

When Lindsey started school, she was well on her way to read. She loved books. Elizabeth continued the reading, taught manners and helped Lindsey with peer-interaction. Our little girl became very sociable at school with most of the other students. Thank you Elizabeth!

I remember one day the girls were skipping in the yard. Lindsey was learning to skip at home but had not mastered the sport yet. The girls refused to let Lindsey participate because “she can’t skip like us.” Elizabeth turned to the girls and asked if they had always skipped this well or had they also learned. From that day forward Lindsey became the “skipping queen” in the yard. Thank you Elizabeth!

Another time it was house league soccer sign-up. All the children in the primary grades were put on teams with a teacher as coach. Lindsey's name was absent from the list. Elizabeth approached the coordinator and commented "Lindsey's name has been forgotten. What team should she be on? Way to go Elizabeth!

Kudos to this wonderful lady who never stopped advocating for our daughter Lindsey.

Paraeducators in my opinion are wonderful dedicated people who are essential in facilitating our children to become the best that they can be.

Grateful Mom,
Michelle Molloy

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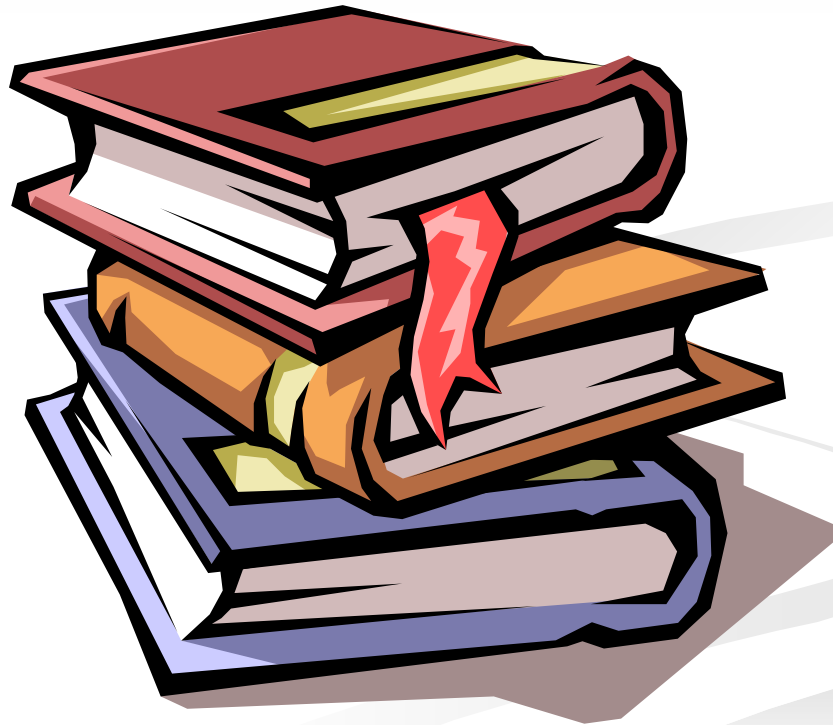
A Paraprofessional's Reflection

- Open, honest and direct communication is a very important part of developing a healthy education team.
- Requires that your team actually finds time to meet.
- Use a formal agenda in order to stay focused on our tasks.
- Discuss: Training/concerns/curriculum planning

Paraeducators Moving Forward

- **Respect and communication.** That's what teachers and paraprofessionals say makes an effective classroom team.
- Paraeducators are better able to use research-based techniques when the teachers are also using them.
- Paraeducators do a better job of assisting students individually when the special education teacher and classroom teacher communicate about what kinds of assistance the child needs, what kinds of modifications, how the paraeducator can help other students etc.

Resources



Town Hall Sharing Session Questions?

