Utah Paraeducator Handbook

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Handbook Committee

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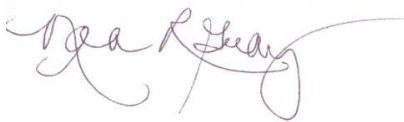
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Welcome

Welcome to the world of education! You are about to embark on a great adventure. It will be an adventure with unique challenges and unique rewards; an adventure in which no two days will be exactly alike. Your adventure will provide you with a wonderful opportunity to positively impact the lives of young people.

You will be a valuable member of an instructional team. Interact with that team enthusiastically. You will be providing valuable assistance to students as they develop their skills, discover their abilities, and gain confidence in their competencies. Celebrate their successes and help them understand that their mistakes are learning opportunities. You will be able to provide the warmth, patience, and enthusiasm your students will need to be persistent in the face of difficulties. Help them to recognize their accomplishments along the way.

Enjoy each student. Make every minute count. Have high expectations and teach your students the skills they need to exceed your expectations. Be thoughtful and ever mindful of the messages you send to your students, and make sure your messages communicate a belief in their potential. Savor the excellent days. Accept the challenges as opportunities. Your time and energy will be an invaluable investment in the future of Utah's youth.

Thank you for choosing to become a paraeducator. Thank you for your commitment; thank you for your competence; thank you for caring.

Sincerely,

Nan Gray
State Director of Special Education
Utah State Office of Education

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Introduction

If you are reading this handbook, you have been hired by your school district to serve as a paraeducator. Congratulations and welcome to a profession that has been providing valuable services to our schools and children for over fifty years!

You may be asking yourself a number of questions regarding your new job. What is a paraeducator? Will there be somebody to direct and guide my work? What kind of work will I do? Before answering these questions it's important to define a few terms.

A Few Definitions

Paraeducator: A paraeducator is a paid school employee whose position is either instructional in nature or who provides other direct services to children, youth and/or their families.

A paraeducator works under the ***supervision*** of a certified or licensed school professional who is responsible for the design, implementation, and assessment of student progress.

Supervisor: Your supervisor may be a teacher or another licensed professional. Your supervisor is responsible for including you in the "instructional team." Typically supervisors have many administrative responsibilities. This could include planning, scheduling, and assigning tasks. Your duties will be based on your experience and training. They are responsible for directing and monitoring your day-to-day work with students as well as giving feedback on your job performance.

Various roles of paraeducators: Paraeducators serve students on all grade levels from preschool to high school. They may:

- Provide support to students with special needs
- Supervise on the playground or bus
- Serve as a job coach in the community for students with moderate to severe disabilities
- Conduct small group sessions in reading, writing, and math
- Work in early childhood programs
- Assist non-English speaking students.

While job titles vary, to avoid confusion we use the term ***paraeducator*** throughout the handbook.

Job titles across school districts vary and include:

- Paraprofessional
- Instructional assistant
- Teacher's aide/assistant
- Job coach
- Home visitor
- One-to-one aide
- And many others

Over the years, paraeducators' roles have changed dramatically. Once they merely created bulletin boards, took roll, supervised recess, or made copies. Today, paraeducators may provide instructional and clerical support for classroom teachers by allowing them more time for lesson planning and

instruction. They may use the teacher's lesson plan to support and help children as they learn. Paraeducators may provide students with one-on-one attention. In addition, paraeducators may supervise students in the cafeteria, schoolyard and hallways, or on field trips. They may record grades, set up equipment, and help prepare materials for instruction.

How Many Paraeducators are There?

That's a good question. Most paraeducators work in primary and secondary education schools. Some work in preschools and childcare centers. Still, others work in transition programs. To complicate matters more, paraeducators may work full or part time. It is estimated that nationally there are currently over 1,300,000 paraeducators. In Utah, we have approximately 8,500 paraeducators providing key support services to our students.

You might be wondering, "Why so many?" Special Education has moved away from a "resource room" model toward an "inclusion" model (placement in the general education classrooms) for many students. There are not enough special education teachers to provide the necessary services in classrooms which requires school districts to hire paraeducators to meet student's needs.

Today, paraeducators play a crucial role in helping students succeed in schools and are considered essential members of educational teams. As such, it is vital for teachers and paraeducators to have a clear and common vision of their roles and responsibilities.

Research shows that paraeducators are better able to carry out their roles and responsibilities when they have appropriate resources, information, job training, supervision, and professional development.

This handbook provides you with an overview of issues related to your new job. It includes:

- Utah's Standards for Instructional Paraeducators
- Key information related to each standard
- Descriptions of disabilities and ideas to support students
- Definitions of terms frequently used by special education professionals
- Resources

This Handbook can help you understand your role as you support teaching and learning. It can also give your supervisor and administrator information on how they can support you.

The handbook can be used by:

- Paraeducators
- Supervising teachers
- Administrators

Utah Standards for Instructional Paraprofessionals

- The content of this book is based on the Utah Standards for Instructional Paraprofessionals (2003). The Utah standards and corresponding knowledge and skill competencies were developed to create approved performance expectations for paraeducators. These performance expectations are designed to be used across districts.

- Over the course of two years, the Utah Paraprofessional Consortium met to discuss and create the standards. This committed group of more than twenty individuals came from numerous districts, universities and community colleges, the Utah Personnel Development Center, the Utah State Office of Education and other agencies. They continue to meet on a monthly basis.

> In the Standards the term "paraprofessional" was used instead of paraeducator because "paraeducator" refers only to individuals who work with students in K-12 settings.
>
> Paraprofessionals work in other settings as well such as preschool, post high school, and transition. This is why in the standards the term "paraprofessional" is used.

- The Utah Paraprofessional Consortium divided the standards into two sections, core and supporting knowledge and skill competencies. The **Core Competencies** are common to all roles that a paraprofessional may assume. They are also based on "No Child Left Behind" federal legislation (2002), IDEA (2004) and state approved Special Education Standards (1985). The Utah State Board of Education approved the Standards and Core Competencies in October, 2003.

- The **Supporting Competencies** describe additional knowledge and skills needed by many paraeducators. Some supporting competencies such as "Respect Confidentiality" may be considered a **required competency** for all paraeducators even though it was not originally approved as a "Core Competency."Other supporting competencies may only be required for specific roles (e.g., personal assistants, job coaches, computer lab aides, etc.). Training programs at a district or university/community college /applied technology college should address such role distinctions and skill needs. The Utah State Board of Education reviewed the supporting competencies in October, 2005.

- The standards are on the following page. Please note that *ALL* of the competencies must be performed by the paraeducator ***under the direction or supervision of licensed and/or certificated personnel***.

| STANDARD 1
Support instructional opportunities | STANDARD 2
Demonstrate professionalism and ethical practices | STANDARD 3
Support a positive learning environment | STANDARD 4
Communicate effectively & participate in the team process |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Core Competencies:**
A. Have knowledge and proficiency[1] in
▪ basic reading/reading readiness
▪ basic math/math readiness
▪ basic writing/writing readiness
B. Have knowledge of strategies, techniques, and delivery methods of instruction
C. Assist in delivering instruction according to supervisors* lesson plans
D. Demonstrate the ability to record relevant information/ data about learners
E. Organize material and be prepared to support learning and the instructional process | **Core Competencies:**
A. Have knowledge of and adhere to the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers, paraprofessionals, administrators, families, and other team members
B. Carry out responsibilities in a manner consistent with all pertinent laws, regulations, policies and procedure | **Core Competencies:**
A. Use proactive management strategies to engage learners
B. Support the supervisors* behavior management plan | **Core Competencies:**
A. Serve as a member of an instructional team
B. Use effective communication skills (written, verbal, nonverbal) |
| **Supporting Competencies:**
F. Demonstrate the ability to use assessment instruments specified by supervisor* to document and maintain data
G. Demonstrate the ability to use strategies to facilitate effective integration into various settings (e.g., libraries, computer labs, learning centers, playgrounds, community, and assorted modes of transportation)
H. Use basic educational technology
I. Use basic interventions to adapt to learner needs, learning styles, and ability
J. Assist in providing objective documentation for observations and functional assessments
[1] *as determined by individual school districts* | **Supporting Competencies:**
C. Respect confidentiality
D. Have a positive attitude and contribute to a positive work environment
E. Have reliable attendance, punctuality, and dependability
F. Exhibit sensitivity to cultural, individual differences and disabilities
G. Adhere to the civil and human rights of children, youth, and their families
H. Have knowledge of health, safety, and emergency procedures
I. Pursue and participate in staff development and learning opportunities | **Supporting Competencies:**
C. Demonstrate knowledge of learner characteristics and factors that influence behavior
D. Assist in maintaining an environment conducive to the learning process
E. Assist in teaching children and youth social skills
F. Assist learners in using self control and self management strategies
G. Assist in monitoring learners and make appropriate decisions while coaching or tutoring in different settings
H. Assist in providing medical care and/or teaching self care needs | **Supporting Competencies:**
C. Provide relevant feedback and make recommendations regarding learner performance and programming to supervisor*
D. Participate in instructional team** meetings
E. Use appropriate channels for resolving concerns or conflicts
F. Participate in conferences with families or primary care givers when requested
G. Foster beneficial relationships between agency/school, families, children/youth, and community |

* **Supervisor** refers to supervising licensed and/or certificated personnel. ** **Instructional team** refers to those individuals who have day-to-day responsibility for providing education and other direct services to children/youth and their families. Instructional teams are found in general and special education settings, Title I, multilingual/ESL, early childhood, and school-to-work preparation programs.

Standard 1
Support instructional opportunities

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." (*William A. Ward*)

There are many different positions available to paraeducators. As a paraeducator you may have accepted a job in a Title I school. You may find yourself working in a charter school. You may be working with students who are educationally diverse. The students you work with may be English Language Learners (ELL). The students you work with may be receiving special education services.

> **The teacher is responsible for designing and implementing instruction.**
> **The paraeducator is responsible for supporting the teacher's lesson plans**

Title I schools receive additional federal monies that are used to provide educational programs aimed at ensuring students meet their educational goals. Title1 schools are committed to closing the achievement gap between low-income students and other students. Students in Title I schools may need special programs in order to meet these goals.

Charter schools are public schools. They are created by individuals in a community that see educational needs that may not be met by traditional public schools. Charter schools may use innovative instructional strategies and focus their curriculum in a particular area such as the arts or sciences. Charter schools are required to follow the state core curriculum. They are also required to meet federal guidelines and are assessed for adequate yearly progress just like all other public schools.

English Language Learners are students who are learning English and speak another language as their first language. These students may have a hard time understanding information in classes that are taught in English. Federal law requires that states develop policies regarding English language proficiency. It also requires that English Language Learners be tested in math and reading. These tests may be given in the student's native language at first. This means that schools need to work hard to ensure that students who are English Language Learners receive services that will help them meet learning goals.

Special Education is specially designed instruction. There is no cost to parents. It should meet the unique needs of a student with a disability. This instruction could be in a classroom, at home, in a hospital, an institution, other settings, or in physical education. Special Education services could also include speech/language pathology services, travel training, and applied technology education.

Special Education students require specialized instruction. In order to meet their unique needs, teachers often need to rely on help from paraeducators.

Whether you are hired by a charter school or a traditional public school, working with students who are in Title I, ELL, Special Education, or other students at risk, an important responsibility you will have is to assist in instruction. In other words, you will help teachers teach students. In order to be effective, you must understand the subjects taught and know strategies that help students learn.

Section 1: Core Competencies

A. Have knowledge and proficiency in
- **basic reading/reading readiness**
- **basic math/math readiness**
- **basic writing/writing readiness.**

The school district that hired you will decide how much skill you need in reading, math, and writing. If you are in a position where you will assist in teaching students these subjects, you probably have the needed skills. If not, school districts may provide training. Also, you may find that you want to increase your skills in this area.

Look for training opportunities. Training opportunities are listed at http://utahparas.org/.

B. Have knowledge of strategies, techniques, and delivery methods of instruction

C. Assist in delivering instruction according to supervisor's lesson plans.

You may be asked to help teach students. As a paraeducator, you may do this only under the direction of the teacher. You DO NOT create lesson plans or plan instruction. You are part of a team who is responsible for student learning.

In order to be effective in this position it is a good idea for you first to have a basic knowledge of instructional strategies. One of the most important things to remember is that students in Special Education need direct, explicit instruction. When we use the term "instructor," we are referring to anyone who is providing instruction. It could be the teacher, the paraeducator, an intern, or another person. Just remember, the teacher has the final responsibility.

Direct Explicit Instruction

Direct, explicit instruction refers to high levels of student engagement within academically focused, instructor directed situations using sequenced, structured materials.

What does this mean? It means the instructor tells the students what they need to know (teaches the skill), and then models how to perform a task using the skill. After the instructor has determined the students understand the learned skill they practice with students until they can complete the task on their own.

In direct, explicit instruction, students don't need to determine what they need to learn on their own. Learning goals and expectations are made clear to the students. The instructor follows an instructional

cycle (lesson plan) which gives students many opportunities to respond, then provides feedback on their responses

This is often called the <u>Effective Teaching Cycle</u>. It includes the following steps.

Opening: The opening of a lesson is used to:
- gain student(s) attention
- present an overview of the lesson
- share expectations
- provide a rationale or reason why the lesson is important
- activate student background knowledge
- provide a review of any concepts that are important for the current lesson.

Effective Teaching Cycle

Opening

▼

Lesson & Demonstration

▼

Guided Practice

▼

Independent Practice

Lesson and Demonstration (I do): In this section of the lesson, new material is taught. The instructor may spend a small portion of the time lecturing or describing procedures. After the new material is discussed, the instructor models the new skill or strategy from beginning to end. Once the skill is demonstrated, the instructor will tell the student(s) to imitate or practice the skill.
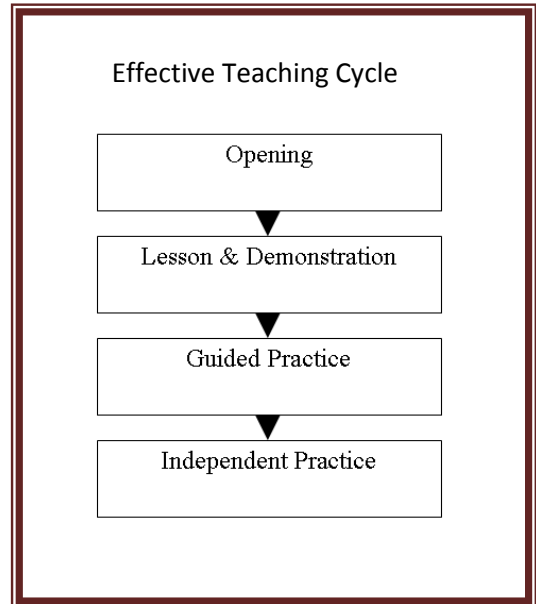
When modeling skills or behaviors for students, the instructor should:
- tell the student what step in the skill sequence is being modeled
- clearly and unambiguously perform the skill
- check for understanding
- include non-examples only after students are clear on the concept being modeled.

Always finish with a correct model. Students tend to remember the last piece of information given.

Guided Practice (We do): In this section of the lesson students practice new skills with assistance. Corrective feedback is crucial during guided practice. Students need to know what they are doing right as much as they need to know what they are doing wrong. If students make an error, the instructor needs to model the skill again, and then have the student complete the skill correctly. If the student is correct, it is important to praise the student. (See the Appendix for 101 ways to praise students.)

During this stage of the lesson, instructors should:

- Encourage students to verbalize their actions as they progress through the skill.
- Closely observe students as they perform the skill so errors can be prevented.
- Give ample opportunities for students to perform the skill correctly.
- Stop errors immediately and provide corrective feedback.
- Don't forget to praise, PRAISE, <u>PRAISE</u>!!!

Independent Practice (You do): After the student has successfully practiced the skill, you may move on to independent practice. You move on to this step ONLY after the students have completed Guided Practice successfully. At this stage of the lesson, the student must perform the skill without instructor assistance. If a student needs assistance, take note. This may mean that the instructor needs to reteach the skill and/or because the student requires more practice to master the skill.

Instructional Pacing

Instructional pacing is the speed or rate at which an instructor presents the task or lesson. Students will understand the material and stay engaged if the instructor presents the material at a speed that is neither too fast nor too slow. Research shows that students learn best with moderately paced instruction. When you are teaching, you need to observe the students. If they seem to be losing interest, appear frustrated or confused, it may be due to your instructional pacing. Sometimes it is difficult to determine if your instructional pace is appropriate for your students. Ask your supervising teacher to observe you while you teach and give you feedback.

 Active Student Response

Active student response (ASR) occurs anytime the student makes a detectable response to ongoing instruction. It is when you can hear or see a student responding to a prompt or question. Research shows that lessons high in ASR produce higher student achievement.

Examples of ASR could include:
- words read aloud
- words spelled correctly
- questions answered
- packages sorted
- envelopes addressed, etc.

How can you increase student responses? There are a variety of techniques you can use:
- choral responding
- response cards
- peer tutoring

Remember, the teacher chooses the instructional technique. Make sure that you are following the teacher's plan and instructions. You can share ideas for strategies with your teacher.

Choral Responding takes place when all students in the class respond orally in unison to each question, problem, or item presented by the instructor. Choral responding is appropriate for curriculum that:

- has one correct answer
- has relatively short answers, and
- is suitable for fast presentation.

To conduct Choral Responding you need to provide clear directions, inform the students of the type of response desired, and provide a model. You need to provide a thinking pause then give a clear signal or cue such as a snap or a "get ready." As with any other activity, you need to give immediate feedback. If all students make a correct response, give them praise. If some of the students make an error, state the correct answer with the questions ("yes, this apple is red") ask the same item a few trials later.

Response cards are similar to choral responding in that all students respond to a given prompt or question. Response cards are cards, signs, or items that each student holds up to display his or her answer for the teacher. Response Cards have an advantage over Choral Responding because you can see each student's answer. This makes it easier for the teacher to assess each student's performance. There are two types of response cards, "pre printed" such as yes/no or true/false cards, and "write on" where students write their answers on a white board, gel board, or piece of paper.

When using pre printed response cards:
- Make the cards easy to see (consider size, print type, color codes).
- Make the cards easy for students to manipulate and display.
- Put answers on both sides of cards so students can see what they're showing the teacher.
- Make the cards durable (heavy cardboard, lamination). Start with a small set of cards (perhaps only 2) and gradually add more cards as students' skills improve.
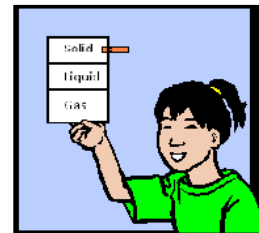
When using "write on" response cards:
- Limit responses to 2-3 words or problems.
- Some students may hesitate to respond because they are concerned about spelling. If so, consider using the "don't worry" procedure.
  - writing new/key/technical terms and words on the board or overhead projector
  - pre-practice
- Keep a few extra markers on hand.
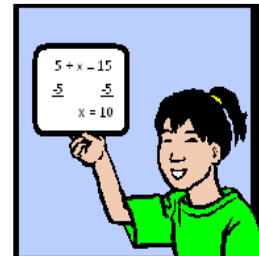
Peer Tutoring involves the delivery of instruction by one student to another.
It provides frequent opportunities to respond, a rapid teaching pace, immediate error correction, praise for correct responses, and reinforcement for correcting errors. Peer tutoring can be class-wide, use same grade partners, or use cross-age partners. In peer tutoring, students take turns being tutor and tutee. Students typically use flash cards to practice and test their partner's knowledge.
For more information on setting up peer tutoring, please see:
http://www.interventioncentral.org/htmdocs/interventions/rdngfluency/prtutor.php.

D. Demonstrate the ability to record relevant information/data about learners

You may be asked to keep records or monitor the progress of a student. Most teachers have a progress monitoring system in place. If you are to perform this task, ask the teacher for training on their specific data collection procedures. Data you collect may come in many forms. It could be tally marks for academic responses on a piece of paper, timed observations during math facts, or recording assessment scores. Teachers may also use spreadsheets or grading programs to summarize the data. If you are not sure how to use these programs, ask for assistance.

You will probably be asked to monitor student progress using scores on curriculum based assessments (CBAs) or curriculum based measurements (CBMs). (See Competency E below.)

You may be asked to grade student performance on CBAs or CBMs, then record the grade/score on a score sheet.

Some teachers graph student performance as seen in the example of Jan's Graph. You may need to use line graphs. This means you will need to plot student performance on a chart and connect lines representing student progress. Again, ask your teacher for assistance if you are not clear about charting and graphing procedures.
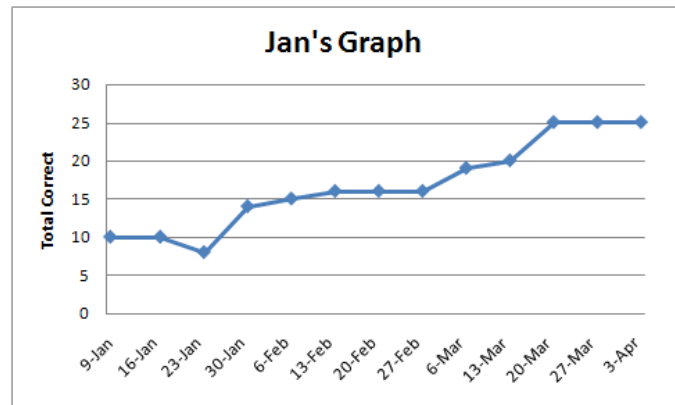
E. Organize materials and be prepared to support learning and the instructional process

Like any job, organization is a key to success in teaching. If teaching materials are not ready and organized before a lesson, valuable instruction time can be lost. Typically, students with disabilities are already behind academically and cannot afford to miss any instructional time.

You may be asked to prepare lesson materials. Again, this does not mean you should write lesson plans. However, you may need to copy lesson materials, organize supplies, and make sure everything is ready before teaching begins. Be sure you know how to use the copy machine, where to get supplies, and where the teacher keeps instructional materials before you begin assisting in instruction. If you don't know these things, ask your supervising teacher.

Section 2: Supporting Competencies

F. Demonstrate the ability to use assessment instruments specified by supervisor to document and maintain data

If you are a paraeducator working in a Title I school or with students who are English Language Learners, you may be part of a team working in a Response To Intervention (RTI) model. In Utah our RTI model uses a three-tier model of instruction. In this three-tier model, assessment and intervention are blended

to maximize student achievement. Students identified as at risk for poor learning outcomes are placed in tiers that provide more intensive instruction. Assessment is a key component of this model. Student placement and student progress are determined using assessments. Usually these take the form of curriculum based assessments (CBAs) or curriculum based measurements (CBMs). CBAs or CBMs use course content to assess student knowledge and skills. For more information on Utah's three-tier model go to:

Reading:
http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/servicesinfo/pdfs/3-tierread.pdf.

Math:
http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/math/sec/documents/Utah%27s%203%20Tier%20Model%20of%20Mathematics%20Instruction%20for%20web.pdf.

If you are a paraeducator in special education, you may be asked to work with students receiving individualized services. Each Special Education student has a written Individualized Education Plan (IEP), which outlines a student's goals. We record data to monitor student progress towards these IEP goals. Data is usually in the form of scores on assessments (tests). Assessments used for monitoring progress towards IEP goals are usually curriculum based assessments (CBAs) or curriculum based measurements (CBMs). CBAs or CBMs are tests based on the curriculum; they use course content to assess student knowledge and skills.

In any of these situations, you may be asked to give students CBAs /CBMs. If so, make sure you follow the testing procedures given to you by the teacher. The point of these assessments is to find out what the students know (or can do) <u>WITHOUT ANY ASSISTANCE</u>. Helping the students with the answers is <u>NOT</u> allowed – including providing hints and prompts.

 You may also have to score these tests and place the scores in a data monitoring system such as those described previously in Competency C.

G. Demonstrate the ability to use strategies to facilitate effective integration into various settings (e.g., libraries, computer labs, learning centers, playgrounds, community, and assorted modes of transportation)

You may be asked to help get students ready to move to settings outside the special education classroom. Before we discuss what this entails we need to define some terminology.

<u>Transition</u>: Movement from one situation to another. For example:
* small children transition from pre-school to elementary or, from one activity to another
* in elementary students, transition from lunch to recess
* in secondary school, students transition from one class period to the next
* after high school, students transition from school to work life.

Pre-teaching: Providing instruction on a skill before a situation arises where they will use the skill. For example, give students rules before a transition: "Be sure to keep your hands and feet to yourself when you line up for lunch."

Generalization: This occurs when students take skills learned in one class (or setting) and apply them in another.

As part of instruction, you need to plan for generalization. In order for students to be successful in new settings, you may be asked to pre-teach skills that students will use in those settings. This can range from academic skills (reading, writing, or math) to behavioral skills (social skills, organization skills, or school skills). You also need to give the students opportunities to practice these skills with materials or situations that are similar to anticipated settings. For example, have students in Resource Language Arts class practice writing papers on science topics. Have students practice their newly learned social skills in role-plays. In math, students may learn how to count coins and dollars so they can make change for customers at their job.

If a student needs to move from one setting within the school to another, you may need to pre-teach the rules of moving through the school. For example, if a student needs to go from a general education class to the resource room, teach him the route he should take and the behavior that is expected as he walks through the building such as, use appropriate voice levels and language, keep feet and hands to himself, respect school property, etc.

H. Use basic educational technology

You may be required to use basic educational technology. This could be a computer, a piece of medical equipment, or a projector. If you are asked to do this, you should be trained in their use. If you are not sure how to use technologies, be sure to ask for help. It is always better to admit you don't know something rather than make mistakes. Have someone demonstrate.

I. Use basic interventions to adapt to learner needs, learning styles, and ability

When you are instructing students, it is important to remember that all students learn differently. Some strategies you will need to help students learn are listed in Competency C. Additional strategies include:

> *It is always better to ask for help than to make a mistake.*

- Use the child's name to get her attention before asking a question or giving an instruction.
- Be in close proximity to the student when giving an instruction or making a request.
- After giving an instruction, allow wait time (4-6 seconds). If a student does not respond immediately, do not repeat the question or you risk disrupting his thinking. This may cause the student to begin again or lose his train of thought entirely.
- Communicate in simple sentences giving one instruction or piece of information at a time. We are prone to issuing strings of instructions that very few students can remember long enough to follow

with any precision, especially students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). See the glossary of terms in the Appendix.

- Use personal and meaningful vocabulary. The children's reading material needs to be relevant to their own experiences.

- The vocabulary used to introduce reading concepts must be meaningful to the child. The names of family members-such as Mommy or Daddy or the names of siblings, pets, favorite foods, toys, places, TV shows, and characters, all serve as excellent vocabulary builders. Students get hooked on the reading process or buy into the concept.

- Recognize that a child's spoken language may be at a higher level than her reading comprehension. If so, you may need to adapt reading materials or curriculum.

> ## Keep in mind
>
> The teacher is responsible for:
> - *Defining the behavior in observable and measurable terms*
> - *Determining the type of data to be collected*
> - *Demonstrating how to collect the data*
> - *Providing an appropriate data collection form*
> - *Assisting you in summarizing the data*

J. Assist in providing objective documentation for observations and functional assessments

Finally, you may be asked to help in observing student's behavior. These observations may be used to assess individual performance or as part of a functional based assessment. When observing students, the teacher will let you know what behaviors you are looking for and what to do. They should also provide you with a data collection form and demonstrate "how" to collect the data. Because the data is used for monitoring student progress and making placement decisions, be sure you fully understand the process.

Before we get started on data collection methods, let's talk more about functional behavioral assessments or FBAs. FBAs are used as part of a problem solving process for determining why students misbehave. In an FBA, your supervisor or other professionals are trying to determine the function of a student's behavior. That is to say, what is the student getting out of the behavior? Students behave for a variety of reasons. A student may giggle loudly because he wants to gain peers' or the teacher's attention. A student may want to get out of completing the math assignment and throws it on the floor. A student may want something tangible like a toy, so takes it from her friend without asking. A student may engage in self-stimulatory behavior because he likes the visual and physical stimulation he gains when flapping his hands.

Without observing a student, it is hard to guess at why he or she misbehaves. This is why we conduct observations as part of an FBA. Before conducting any type of observation your supervisor or other professional will specifically define the student's behavior you are to observe and will train you in observation procedures.

One type of observation you may assist with is an ABC, often referred to as an anecdotal observation. With an ABC you are looking for what happens right before the student's target behavior (B=behavior)

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occurs (A=antecedent) and what happens right after the target behavior (C=consequence). For these observations, you will write down the antecedent, target behavior, and consequence over a continuous period of time.

Identifying Antecedents, Behaviors, and Consequences

  A **Antecedents** are the events that happen BEFORE the student behavior occurs.

  B **Behavior** is the specific way the student acts.

  C **Consequences** are the events that happen to the student IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING the behavior.

When you conduct an ABC consider the following questions:

Antecedent	Behavior (student)	Consequence
Where did it happen? Who was there? What was said or done immediately before?	What did the student do? What did the student say?	What were other student's reactions? What did the instructor say or do?

An ABC observation isn't the only type of observation. There are many different types of data. For data collection purposes your supervisor may want to collect data that can be quantified (counted) and graphed. The most commonly used are frequency, latency, and duration.

Frequency is the number of times a behavior occurs within a specific period of time. For example, if a student has a problem with remaining in her seat, you may be asked to observe the student during math class and count each time she is out of seat (target behavior).

Latency is the time it takes from a teacher prompt or direction to when a student's behavior occurs. For example, if a student has a problem with starting work, you may be asked to measure the amount of time it takes him to begin working after the teacher has given the direction.

Duration is the amount of time a behavior occurs from beginning to end. For example, if a student has a problem with temper tantrums, you may be asked to time how long the tantrum (target behavior) lasts. Providing objective documentation of student performance, helps the teacher plan instruction to meet individual student's needs.

Standard 2
Demonstrate professionalism and ethical practices

"Education...beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery...It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich; it prevents being poor." (*Horace Mann*)

Parents and the community expect school personnel - and that includes you - to keep children safe from discrimination, abuse, improper relationships, and from exposure to harmful substances.

Paraeducators and professional educators must be honest in their communications, show integrity in their responsibilities, and be law abiding in all areas of their lives.

The public expects teachers and other adults in the school to help their children understand how they can be better citizens and contribute to society. There is a term used in education law — "in loco parentis," which means "in place of the parent." This term highlights the responsibility of educators to protect students. Of course, the courts do not intend for school personnel to replace parents but you need to take this responsibility seriously. However, this doesn't mean you should allow the students to call you "Mom."

> Here are a few things you must know and guidelines to follow:
>
> - Avoid misrepresenting or falsifying information.
> - Follow policy when using public funds or property.
> - Understand "breach of contract."
> - Avoid improper relationships with students.
> - Avoid the use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, misuse of legal drugs, or use of pornography while on school property or when working with students.

Section 1: Core Competencies

A. Have knowledge of and adhere to the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers, paraeducators, administrators, families, and other team members

Find your district's job description. Look at what you are required to do. Then refer to the specific responsibilities the teacher has determined you should do. Also, learn the things you should not do.

- ***Never counsel students on personal issues.*** If the situation warrants it, refer students to your professional peers in the school.
- ***Don't meet students outside of the school setting*** – this includes having intimate physical, verbal, or written contact.
- ***Paraeducators should not meet the personal needs of students.*** This can be hard when you see a student coming to school during winter without adequate clothing or coat, or going hungry at lunch. If it is necessary to address such needs, take your concerns to your supervisor and have the school team come up with a solution. You should never provide personal items such as clothing, lunch money, personal care items, or medicines (even aspirin).
- ***DO NOT text or use your cell phone while at work.***

B. Carry out responsibilities in a manner consistent with all pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and procedures

Unlike paraeducator jobs in the past, there are federal laws that regulate what you and your supervisors do in the schools. You are required to obey the law. If you break the law or a policy unintentionally or unknowingly, you will have the same punishment as someone who breaks the law on purpose.

The basics of professional ethics are often outlined in school or district policy. Of course, we all have a set of personal ethics - beliefs or principles that govern what we do in our private lives.

In some cases, there may be a difference between what your job requires and what you choose to do in private. Sometimes, you will feel that your personal beliefs are better than what you are required to do for your job. *You still have to follow the law as well as the policies, and procedures of your Local Education Agency (LEA), public or charter school, and district.*

Avoid misrepresenting or falsifying information

In short, be honest. Whenever you are unsure about what is right, err on the side of honesty. If you have a question, ask before you act. You will save yourself a lot of grief.

> **Dishonesty may take two forms:**
>
> 1. Falsifying or deliberately misrepresenting information
> 2. Omitting information

Dishonesty may take two forms:
   1. Falsifying or deliberately misrepresenting information - that is, giving inaccurate information or changing information provided by someone else. Some examples could be:
      - Listing classes or courses that you took but did not complete - then you don't show that you didn't finish the class.
      - Stating or implying that you have licenses that you have not earned - calling yourself a "teacher" when you do not have a teaching certificate. (Under the "No Child Left Behind" Act, parents have a legal right to know if their child is receiving services from a paraeducator rather than a teacher.) You should be especially careful if you have had a job where you have been given the title of "teacher" even though your assignments and qualifications have been those of a paraeducator.
      - Stating or implying that you have authority that is not yours.
      - Changing students answers on tests.
      - Teaching students the answers to test items in advance.
      - Giving unauthorized tutoring during tests.
      - Changing grades with the teacher has given

2. Omitting information - that is, not providing all information requested. Examples include:
   - not disclosing offenses and misdemeanors of which you have been convicted
   - failing to share information about previous employment
   - failing to reveal that you have a contagious disease (such as tuberculosis) – see Section 504 in PART I, Chapter 2. While we protect the rights of people with contagious diseases, we have to weigh that against the risk of giving that disease to others.

This applies to all types of communication. For example, you may be giving incorrect or misinformation in writing, verbally, text messages, or in an email.

You may be asked for information on a number of issues. It needs to be accurate and complete. This information may be given to administrators, teachers, parents, or students. This could include:
- information about your qualifications, high school diplomas, staff development credit, university and college degrees, academic awards, and employment history
- information for compliance reports submitted to federal, state, and other governmental agencies
- information relating to the evaluation of students and/or school personnel, including tests results and grades
- reasons given for absences or leaves
- information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation.

Follow policy when using public funds or property

You may handle money in the course your employment. For example, you may handle lunch money or funds collected for field trips. Once money or property is handed over to a school employee, it is considered "public funds or public property." It becomes the responsibility of the school system. For example:

- Items or equipment donated by a local business.
- Items on loan from a parent in connection with a class project.

If you are trusted with public funds or property, you should be completely honest and responsible. You can do this by:

- Using them only for the purpose for which they were intended.
- Keeping careful and accurate records of money received and spent.
- Keeping careful and accurate records of property received and how it was used.
- Requesting honest reimbursement for expenses incurred on behalf of the school or for services rendered.
- Keeping anything you are trusted with in a safe place to avoid loss or theft.

It would be unethical to:

- Spend money on personal items rather than school-related items.
- Use donated or loaned property for yourself, family, or friend without prior permission.

- Be unable to account for money or property entrusted to you.
- Be unable to account for property loaned or donated.
- Submit requests for reimbursement of fraudulent expenses or for pay that isn't earned.

Make sure that you have your supervisor's approval before spending your own money on the school's behalf. But, if you spend your own money for school supplies and wish to be reimbursed by the school, you must show a receipt for the money spent. School secretaries and education auditors cannot just "take your word for it," because they must show that the expenditure was legitimate.

Also, you will probably develop relationships with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, and perhaps even businesses. This places you in a position of some influence in the school and community. You should not use that influence for personal gain, or agree to use your influence on someone else's behalf for gain.

This means that you should never accept anything - gifts, gratuities, favors, or additional money - that is intended to influence you.

Students will often bring small gifts. These are perfectly acceptable if their intention is to express their appreciation for your work and not to influence your behavior. It is a good idea to check to see if your school district has a policy on receiving gifts so you don't get yourself in trouble.

> **Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:**
>
> - Soliciting students or their parents to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from you as part of your private business, or in exchange for your using your influence on their behalf in some way;
> - Promoting summer camps, athletic camps, or any other out-of-school activity that you are involved with, without the written approval of your administration;
> - Tutoring students from your school for remuneration, unless approved by the school principal, local board of education, or superintendent;
> - Accepting gifts for personal use from vendors or potential vendors in return for your promoting their merchandise or services with your teacher or students.

The critical distinction is **whether or not there is a conflict of interest**. Others could think that your behavior is unethical—even if there is no explicit agreement to use your influence on the vendor's behalf. If someone offers you merchandise to use in school, you should refer the person to your supervisor.

Understand "breach of contract"

The term "breach of contract" is a formal term referring to your agreement with your employer (probably a school district). They agree to pay you for the work you do. You agree to perform the work. While you probably will not have a written contract, you still have an agreement to do the work you were hired to do.

- Your job description tells you what you agreed to do.
- As long as you are an employee, you must do the work. You cannot refuse to do certain things or to work with certain students.
- You must work the days and hours you are assigned to work.
- If you claim pay for 6 hours of work in a day, you need to work the <u>full</u> six hours.
- If you are told to be to work at a certain time, you need to be at work AND ready to begin your work by that time.
- You are to serve students according to their needs as outlined by your supervisor. Your personal needs and desires are secondary.

A breach is breaking the agreement in any sort of way. Sometimes, breach of contract is accidental - the person who breaks the contract does so without realizing it. For example, a job description may be changed without the employee's knowledge. Nevertheless, breach of contract is serious. You can protect yourself by carefully reading your contract or discussing the job requirements with your supervisor and then carrying out your duties.

<u>Avoid improper relationships with students</u>

Most state and local districts have policies that do not allow them to hire people who have broken the law. They are often required to fire those who break the law.

Many school districts require a police background check before hiring a new employee. They are especially concerned about improper relationships between adults and children.

An educator should always maintain a professional, caring relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

> **Improper relationships include:**
>
> - any act of child abuse, <u>including</u> physical and emotional abuse
> - any act of cruelty to children or any act that endangers a student
> - committing or soliciting any sexual act
> - any act of sexual harassment or involvement with a student whether in person or writing.

We shouldn't even have to mention how to behave appropriately. Nevertheless, educators have been guilty of abusing students. We want to avoid further problems at all costs. So, we have to discuss the obvious.

The best policy is to avoid any appearance of an improper relationship. Ask for help from a supervisor if you see a potential problem. Sometimes a student misinterprets the actions of an adult. Other times, the student initiates the inappropriate relationship. It doesn't matter who begins the problem. Work on solving the problem before it blossoms.

All forms of child abuse are despicable. When we hear about abuse, we usually think of physical or sexual abuse. There are also other kinds of abuse. Emotional abuse usually receives less attention but may be more common. It devastates a child or teen who suffers from it. It can be very subtle. In its

mildest forms, it includes any sarcastic or critical comments that belittle or reduce a student's self-esteem.

Public school personnel are our front-line protection against child abuse. Report all suspected or known abuse. Learn the procedures you should follow within your school setting for reporting abuse.

Follow these simple guidelines:

- ***Use caution in the ways you touch students.*** You may be accused of molestation if you touch students improperly. It can also lead to unexpected situations. Avoid hugging students. Avoid touching a student frequently. Some acceptable ways of being friendly and supportive include praise, rewards, and smiles. You may have to explain to students that we save our hugs and affectionate physical expressions only for family and very close friends. They need to learn the boundaries of general society. Indiscriminate hugging may set up a student for possible abuse outside of the school setting.
- ***Avoid the appearance of wrongdoing.*** Never spend more than a few minutes in isolation with a student (for example, behind shut or locked doors). If you are tutoring or coaching a student, providing toileting care, or providing a service, leave the door open or have another adult in the vicinity.
- ***Never meet a student outside of the school setting or outside of school hours.*** Don't go to their home nor have them to yours. Don't have social activities with students. Don't offer them rides to and from school. Don't meet with them outside of the school setting.
- ***Avoid sexual jokes, language, or behavior.*** Don't you do it! Don't let your students do it.
- ***Be positive and kind in the way you treat ALL students.*** If you have to correct a student, you should be firm but kind. Criticize the behavior, not the person. Tell the student it is the behavior that is objectionable, not the student. You should also express your belief that they can behave more appropriately. Build student confidence rather than destroy it.

<u>Avoid the use of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, misuse of legal drugs, or use of pornography while on school property or when working with students</u>

In your private life, you may choose to use alcohol, drugs, or pornography. As an adult, you have the freedom to do that. However, in your work with students you neither have the freedom to use these things, nor to promote their use by students. If students ask your opinion about these, you should clearly state the school or district policy and your support for that policy. You must not undermine the school policy by expressing personal opinions that contradict it. This applies even if you believe your personal beliefs are more ethical or moral than the school policy.

All educators must refrain from the use of alcohol, drugs, and anything that might be construed as pornography while they are on school premises or around students. Again, what you do on your personal time is your business as long as it does NOT affect students.

You should avoid:

- being on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students while you are under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming alcohol
- being on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students while you are under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs
- accessing "adults only" websites through a school computer—most districts have an automatic dismissal order for pornography violations
- taking adult magazines to the school to read or to share
- driving under the influence (DUI) and/or other substances.

Section 2: Supporting Competencies

C. Respect confidentiality

The short definition is "Keep private stuff private." In practice, it can be much more confusing and complicated.

You are now a school employee and you must take appropriate steps to ensure the protection of the confidentiality of any student with whom you work. This means that personally identifiable data, information, and education records collected or maintained by the schools must not be shared with others who do not have a right to the information.

What is an "*education record?*"

Education records are broadly defined in the law as: "those records, files, documents, and other materials, which

(i)   contain information directly related to a student; and
(ii) are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a person acting for such agency or institution."

[20 U.S.C. §1232g(a)(4)(A).]

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that gives parents the right to some control over their children's educational records. It deals with:

- Access to educational records.
- Parental right to inspect and review records.
- Amendment of records.

Destruction of records.
FERPA protects the student's privacy interests in "education records." Education records are school records that are directly related to a student.

- You should consider the educational record to be "everything in the school records that is maintained for each student . . . used in making decisions that affect the life of the student."
- These include special education files and some information in the permanent file such as the fact that the student is in special education.
- It could include information you have read in reports or information gained by observing the student. It can even mean information that has been shared or verbally disclosed by family or service providers.
- Another type of education record that should be protected is a list of the names of students who are served in special education. Sharing that information would violate FERPA but failing to protect the student's privacy.

> DO NOT disclose confidential information about your students or their families to others,
> spoken or written,
> in or out of school

What information is confidential?
Keep anything that can be considered *personally identifiable information* confidential. This includes

- Student's name, parent's name, address
- Social security number
- Personal characteristics
- Other information that makes the student easily identifiable

How can you violate confidentiality?

- By talking too much and verbally disclosing information to someone who does not "need to know."
- By sending information or copies of reports to agencies or persons without written parent consent
- By allowing unauthorized access

The two federal laws that regulate confidentiality are the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Some people think that IDEA mirrors FERPA in its requirements for keeping records confidential. This is not the case. While IDEA includes many of the same requirements, it extends some of FERPA's provisions and adds protection. For example, notices to parents are more fully described in IDEA. One area that is especially important to you, the paraeducator, is called "Record of Access." Record of Access requires the Principal to keep track of anyone who accesses Special Education records such as IEPs. You may have noticed the paper taped to the filing cabinet in your classroom. It's there for anyone who accesses a file to sign (unless it is the parent of the student or an authorized employee). If you ever open

Examples of confidential information

- Report cards
- Test scores
- Special education IEP
- Medical records
- Disability category, if in special education
- Information about medications, behavior problems, or family issues
- Any personal information

the cabinet and review a student's file, you must sign the paper with your name, job title, the date, and your purpose for looking at the file.

If you have permission to review a student's education records, you may only look at that individual's record – and NOT any of the other files in the cabinet. Look only at the pieces of information that you are authorized to see.

What can happen when confidentiality is violated?

Students and families can be hurt. Trust will be lost. Employees can lose jobs. The school districts can be sued and you could be named in the lawsuit.

What can you do to preserve a student's confidentiality?

First and most important respect the student and the family's right to privacy. You do not share information with anyone who does not have a legitimate right to know. You don't share information with outside agencies without written parental consent. Special education records should be kept in a locked cabinet and anyone who reads them must sign an access log.

You (the paraeducator) should learn to "listen to" questions from others who request confidential information, then refer them to the IEP teacher.

> **No matter how concerned you are about a situation, you may not call parents or the local newspaper to resolve the problem.**
>
> **Go through your supervisor and exhaust all remedies before you go to the next level of administration.**

Questions and Answers about Confidentiality

Q. I'm not a licensed/certificated employee, does confidentiality apply to me?

> **Answer.** Most employees of the district know some information about a student that is confidential. However, because you work in a classroom, you have direct access to confidential information. You may know who is in special education, who has a seizure disorder, or specific services a student receives. However, you should never share that information. Respecting confidentiality is critical for <u>ALL</u> employees.

Q. I have a student in my class on an IEP. May I read the IEP? May I have a copy of the IEP?

> **Answer:** Teachers have a <u>responsibility</u> to read the IEP. They should share the information of the goals with you and other paraeducators who work with that student. You need to know what skills you will be supporting. If the teacher shares the IEP information with you, please hold that as confidential and don't share it. You should not need a copy of the IEP and none of the information should leave the classroom.

Q. I work with a student who has ADHD, is easily distracted, and sometimes runs away. I know he is going on an overnight scout activity this weekend. May I tell the Scout Master to make sure the student takes his medicine?

> **Answer.** NO. You cannot tell the Scout Master. Your supervising teacher cannot, either, unless the parent signs a "Release of Information" form. Without a signed parental release, you can talk about <u>nothing</u> – not even the fact that the student is in your class. Consult your teacher whenever you are in doubt about whether or not to disclose information. A better way to handle this scenario is for the teacher to talk with the parent. The parent has every right to discuss any concerns with the Scout Master.

Q. You are in line at the grocery store and your neighbor asks about the fight at school. Her son was hit by an aggressive student who is identified as Seriously Emotionally Disturbed. Can you tell her about the diagnosis and that the student forgot to take his medication?

> **Answer.** NO. Tell her to contact the teacher or administrator if she needs more information. This is a good time to practice your listening skills.

D. Have a positive attitude and contribute to a positive work environment

There are many ways you can contribute to a positive work environment. Having a positive attitude as you go about your work each day is certainly one way to help the school. Support the team you work with by being complimentary and supportive.

Avoid being a complainer. Think of solutions to the problems that bother you and then work with your team to resolve them.

E. Have reliable attendance, punctuality, and dependability

Be there. Be on time. Students quickly learn who you are and may watch for you to be there to support their learning. They are disappointed when you do not show up or you are unreliable. Teachers rely on your punctuality and dependability, too. They need your help in order to build and maintain momentum for student learning. If you have an illness or family emergency, be sure to call the school and keep your supervisor informed. If your district or school has substitutes, find out if you are supposed to find a substitute when you are unavailable.

It is very important to have a good attendance record. You should report to work when scheduled. You need to know when your workweek and workday begins and ends. You need to keep those hours faithfully. This is important to your coworkers and supervisors. It is a significant factor in promotion decisions, probation, and daily operation of the classroom.

Your good attendance provides a model for students and you can help to encourage their attendance. Kids cannot do well in their academics without good school attendance.

F. Exhibit sensitivity to cultural differences, individual differences, and disabilities

We are a nation of diverse populations, groups, and cultures. The future of our society depends upon our ability to talk effectively with one another, to reach mutual understanding, and to realize that in diversity there is strength.

The valuing of diversity in the schools is no longer merely a social goal. With the make-up of the student body changing so rapidly we need to learn new techniques and skills to understand, motivate, teach, and empower each individual student regardless of race, gender, religion, or creed.

It is predicted that by the year 2056, the "average" U.S. citizen will trace his or her descent to Africa, Asia, the Hispanic countries, the Pacific Islands - almost anywhere but white Europe. By the year 2075, African Americans, Alaskan Natives, American Natives, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans will be the statistical majority in the United States. The United States is changing significantly. Obviously, the meaning of the word minority is quickly losing its significance, especially in America's classrooms.

What does this mean to paraeducators in the classroom?
- It means that along with the teacher, you must follow non-discriminatory practices .
- Give English language learners access to English language services, as well as social-behavioral and academic instruction.
- Ensure that all students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education
- Do your part to ensure that students feel accepted and in a comfortable environment
- Work to ensure equal opportunity for all students

Discrimination against students

The Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment guarantees protection against discrimination. Many state laws have further defined discrimination. Discrimination is essentially a form of abuse, as it involves unfair and unequal treatment of students—that is, some students will receive a lower quality of education, or less encouragement and assistance to succeed, than others will receive.

Paraeducators need to be mindful of treating all students fairly and equitably. Unfortunately, discriminatory actions are common, often not

It is against the law to discriminate against students on the basis of:

- race
- national origin
- color
- religion
- gender
- disability
- pregnancy

deliberate, but should be avoided. They happen out of thoughtlessness. Our beliefs govern our actions. If we assume or believe that some students are less capable than others are, we may inadvertently treat students unequally and unfairly. We need to carefully examine our beliefs and consider their implications on our work.

Here are some ways to help all students feel comfortable:

- In math and science, be sure to ask girls and boys questions at similar levels of difficulty.
- Provide appropriately challenging work for all students, especially those of other cultures, or for whom English is not their first language.
- Plan ways in which you can include all students in an activity or discussion.
- Give all students an opportunity to respond to questions. This may mean you wait before calling on a student to answer. Remember, diverse students may need extra time to think.
- Model positive behavior. Name-calling or putdowns should never be allowed.

* Discrimination against adults (based on race, color, religion, gender, disability, or age) is equally illegal. However, we focus here on discrimination against students. They are our first responsibility.

Ten Steps Toward Cultural Sensitivity

1. Take the initiative to make contact with the "international," the "outsider," and the "foreigner" even if language is a problem at first.

2. Show respect for their culture and language. The student may be in culture shock and grieving over the "loss" of his culture or at least the fear of losing his cultural identity. Ask, "How would I feel if I were in his shoes?"

3. Learn how to pronounce names correctly. Their name is as important to them as yours is to you. Practice saying it until you get close to how it should be pronounced.

4. Be sensitive to their feelings about their homeland. Developing nations are not as poor, backward or uneducated as many North Americans tend to think. Read about their countries. Become informed.

5. When speaking English, do so slowly and clearly. Remember, raising your voice does not make English more understandable.

6. Be yourself. Show that you care about them as people and that you honestly want to help.

7. Take time to listen. If you don't understand, or you are not understood, take time to find out why. Explain or ask questions. A key question might be, "Would you help me understand?"

8. Be careful about promises. In English we express the subjunctive (possibility, probability or contingency) in a way that is sometimes misunderstood by internationals.

9. The key ingredient to developing and maintaining a long-term relationship with internationals is old-fashioned friendship built of mutual respect and a desire for understanding.

10. Don't allow cultural differences (preferences) to become the basis for criticism and judgments. Differences are neither good nor bad. What we do with them is the key.

Office of Civil Rights

G. Adhere to the civil and human rights of children, youth and their families

As a paraeducator, you must guard against treating students unfairly because they are "different" in any way. Students have individual learning needs. To meet those needs, good teachers make distinctions between students in the work that they assign or the behavior management strategies they may ask you to implement. This is a positive practice and not discrimination because it is based on the student's individualized educational needs.

H. Have knowledge of health, safety, and emergency procedures

Health

Many schools have declared themselves a "safe zone" which means that it is against the law to possess alcohol, drugs and/or illegal substances, and pornography on the school grounds. Know your school's policy with regard to the school premises. If you are not familiar with it, obtain a copy for your own reference from your supervising teacher.

You need to know how to keep yourself and the children you support safe. Universal health precautions refer to the practice of reducing health risks to students and adults. This topic is so important that many school districts have written policies that require personnel to wear gloves in the presence of blood or body fluids, require first-aid kits at convenient locations throughout the school, or require other similar safety/emergency procedures. You need to make sure you clearly understand your school's policies in relation to these procedures. If you have questions or concerns, please check with your supervising teacher.

In the health care field and in the government's regulations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the term "**universal health precautions**" refers to the practice of assuming that any specimen of tissue or blood may be infectious or contaminated. Anyone at risk of touching such specimens must wear gloves and use other standard safety measures.

Whenever large groups of people come together, the chances of germs and diseases being transmitted are increased. Many of these happen because of direct contact from person to person, and through indirect contact. For example, diseases can be transmitted through the air or via contaminated towels or clothing.

Be alert to the diseases that are common in your community and ways in which you can protect yourself and your students. Here are a few things you can do to reduce your risk:

- Use good personal hygiene to keep infections and disease from spreading. What your grandma told you is true—plenty of soap and fresh air, and use your own comb!
- Do not share personal items such as cups, towels, or lip balm.

- Wash your hands after coming into contact with any secretions from a student. Wash your hands thoroughly several times during the day for at least 30 seconds.
- Never touch or pick up used tissues that may be lying around the classroom, unless you are wearing gloves or use another clean tissue as a barrier between your hand and the dirty tissue.
- Use gloves if you toilet students or bandage injuries from the playground or parking lot. Use disposable latex gloves to protect against infectious diseases, especially blood-born diseases.
- Some of the most common communicable diseases to guard against are hepatitis A, influenza, impetigo, lice, ringworm, scabies, and tuberculosis (TB).

Safety

Respond effectively to threats and harassment. Although we will discuss behavior management in Standard 3, we may have to respond to an emergency or challenging situation. Under such circumstances, it's important to know how to deal with threatening behavior from students or adults.

Sexual harassment is a potential threat. Your employer should have a policy on how to identify and handle sexual harassment. You need to find it, read it, and understand it. You may want to do some research on your own for techniques of dealing appropriately with sexual harassment. If it becomes a problem for you, you will know how to handle it.

Other types of harassment and threatening behavior can be based on race or religious beliefs. The tactics that work with sexual harassment often work with other types of harassment.

School-wide behavior or discipline policies should define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. They should clearly outline positive consequences for appropriate behavior and the negative consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Schools adopt behavioral policies and have ways to make sure that they are safe environments where students can learn without feeling intimidated or threatened. Occasionally, however, students may actually threaten you with violence. A parent or other family member may take exception to something that you have said or done and confront you with it in a threatening manner by shouting or making threatening gestures.

> If you feel threatened in any way by students or parents and especially if you are alone with them - you should:
>
> - immediately seek a more public place, where other adults are present
> - tell the parent or student that as a paraprofessional you need to talk to them in the presence of a teacher or administrator, rather than alone
> - if they are not prepared to go with you to another location, where you feel safer--then leave. Find another adult, tell him or her about the situation, and ask for support.
>
> YOU SHOULD NOT TRY TO HANDLE THE SITUATION ALONE!

Often, these gestures or shouting are meant only to intimidate rather than as a prelude to violence. However, school should be a safe place for you as well as for students. You should not have to be exposed to threats of violence or actual violence.

Emergency Preparedness

Schools are still the safest place in the U.S. for students to be. However, since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, we are more aware of potential problems. Tornadoes, earthquakes, and fires are still in the news. In the event of any school emergency, your responsibility will be to help keep the students safe. Get a copy of your school's emergency preparedness plan and read it. If your role is unclear in the plan, ask your supervisor what your role will be. Your knowledge of what to do for yourself and the students will help you to respond in a calm, decisive way. *Earthquakes*. Utah is considered "seismically active." We have experienced damaging earthquakes in the past and larger earthquakes are likely to occur in the future. Our population is concentrated in the areas where they are most likely to happen. Many of the older buildings including some of our schools have low earthquake resistance. Be aware of expectations and evacuation procedures in case of an earthquake.

Fire Procedures/Evacuation. Every school has an evacuation plan to use in case of fire in the building. Students and staff need to exit the building in a systematic, safe, and orderly manner in case of a fire or other emergency. You must find, read, and understand this policy. You need to help keep people and property safe.

Your school will have drills so that students and staff can practice and know what to do in case of an emergency. It also gives administrators the opportunity to see that everyone knows how to evacuate a building quickly and safely. Fire alarms and other equipment are checked to see if they function properly. It is important to keep everyone safe until the fire department arrives.

School buildings have safety features that you can use. They should have:
- Smoke detectors in all common areas and corridors.
- Manual Pull Fire Alarm Stations on the walls at each outside door entrance/exit.
- Fire extinguishers throughout the building - These weigh around 15 pounds and require you to pull a pin before aiming the hose and squeezing the handle. Take a few minutes to examine the extinguisher and learn how and when to use it.
- Emergency exits illuminated EXIT signs
- Automatic sprinkler system
- Most schools have an emergency power and lighting system which will provide enough electrical power for evacuation
- Familiarize yourself with locations and operating procedures for the above safety features.

Lockdowns are commonly used to protect students from potentially dangerous situations. When you know the school procedures for emergencies you can be better prepared to remain calm and support others. Each school will have an emergency lockdown plan. Get to know it. If you serve in more than one school, check them both, as they may not be the same. Ask your supervisor what your role is to be.

When school staff is aware of a breach of physical security, authorities <u>must be notified</u> of the dangerous situation. A possible procedure may be:

    A.   Students, faculty, and staff in the hallways should go to the nearest classroom or room.
    B.   Lock all doors and windows. Close window blinds.
    C.   Everyone should seek immediate cover under desks or tables and remain low to the ground. Keep away from windows or doors.
    D.   An adult (faculty or staff) should take a head count and get the names of each individual in the room.

The school will have a signal to notify everyone when the school is considered safe. Check to learn what the "all clear" signal is for your school and when in a lockdown situation be sure to wait for that signal before leaving the classroom. Your school has an emergency preparedness plan. It should be shared with you. If you haven't seen it, take responsibility to ask for it.

I. Pursue and participate in staff development and learning opportunities

As a part of their personnel development plan, districts and schools should provide paraeducators training opportunities directly related to their daily work responsibilities. Additionally, they should offer basic training in current issues and strategies related to supporting teaching of students with disabilities.

Training comes in many shapes and sizes. For example, your district may provide a 1 ½ hour "awareness" training designed to inform you about students with autism while another training may consist of a 2-3 hour "hands-on" inservice about effective reading practices. Typically, you gain more information and skills from on-going, in-depth trainings tied to specific follow-up by your supervisor.

> As a paraeducator and a member of the instructional team,
>
> it is important to improve your knowledge and skills by participating in ongoing, training opportunities related to your job.

Possible training options for paraeducators:
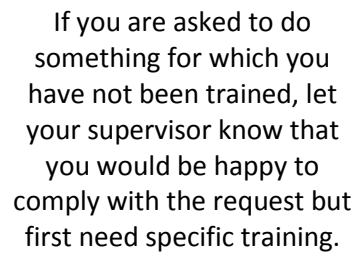
- District workshops in general areas relating to your job responsibilities.
- Courses offered through a local community college such as the Salt Lake Community College or university (see list of training resources in the Appendix).
- On-line courses related to specific academic/behavioral topics or other internet sources (see resources in the Appendix).
- Conferences such as the Utah Paraeducator Conference, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).
- On-the-job training by your supervisor for specific skill development.

Common topics addressed in paraeducator training:

- Orientation to the role of paraeducators in your district as well as policies and procedures
- Classroom management strategies
- Instructional strategies for reading, writing, or math
- Communication and teaming skills
- Working with students with challenging behaviors
- Small group instructional support

In many states and districts, teacher and paraeducator teams may be trained together on a particular topic. When both members of the team hear the same instructional content it becomes easier to implement an academic or behavioral strategy because everyone is "on the same page."

Don't forget to ask for feedback. Paraeducators should receive ongoing performance feedback from their supervising teacher as well as their administrator.

> If you are asked to do something for which you have not been trained, let your supervisor know that you would be happy to comply with the request but first need specific training.

Standard 3
Support a positive learning environment

"The task of the excellent … (paraeducator) *is to stimulate 'apparently ordinary' people to unusual effort. The tough problem is not in identifying winners: it is in making winners out of ordinary people."* (K. Patricia Cross)

Students need to feel safe, welcome, respected, valued, and accepted at school. This extends beyond the classroom to the playground, cafeteria, hallway, and any other area where students may gather.

A positive, supportive learning environment encourages learning. Students must feel safe to inquire, participate, collaborate, and study. As a paraeducator, it is your role to support your supervising teachers in maintaining a positive, proactive environment. This is one of the most important things you can do for students.

When a classroom does not have a positive, supportive learning environment, students struggle, no matter how well prepared your lesson.

Section 1: Core Competencies

A. Use proactive management strategies to engage learners

There are many ways you can support your teacher in creating a positive classroom.

- Modeling appropriate academic and social behavior
- Caring about the needs of ALL children
- Offering encouragement
- Answering questions
- Praising on-task behavior
- Redirecting off-task behaviors
- Thanking a student for following directions quickly
- Encouraging children
- Assisting students in problem solving

This means taking the necessary steps to eliminate or prevent problems *before* they arise. When you are aware of your surroundings, you can anticipate and address safety issues, instructional questions, and/or inappropriate behaviors. You don't need to wait for directions from your supervising teacher once you have been trained and understand his or her expectations.

Using proactive management strategies helps students remain on task and allows the teacher to teach with few interruptions. For example, a paraeducator may notice a student across the room talking to classmates, distracting them from listening to the teacher. Instead of waiting for the teacher to intervene, the paraeducator walks quietly over to the student and re-directs the student's attention back to the lesson.

We often use the term "intervention" or "strategy" interchangeably in this handbook. An intervention or strategy is anything you **say** or **do** to change the present situation.

No intervention works 100% of the time. Our best strategy is to keep the problem from occurring in the first place. If that doesn't work, we try to eliminate or decrease the problem using validated strategies. These strategies are described in Utah's Least Restrictive Behavioral Intervention Guidelines (LRBI, 2008).Your special education teacher should have a copy of the LRBI for you to review and discuss with her or him.

Proactive management strategies and Interventions are more effective if you have a good relationship with the student. People are more likely to say yes to those whom they know and like. Without a mutually respectful relationship, interventions are less likely to work. Here are some ways to build a respectful relationship:

- Be a good role model in words and actions.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Spend time with the student.
- Be open to concerns or criticism. *LISTEN* first, and then provide guidance and direction.
- Show the student you care and understand their situation.
- Ask the student for help and advice, when appropriate.
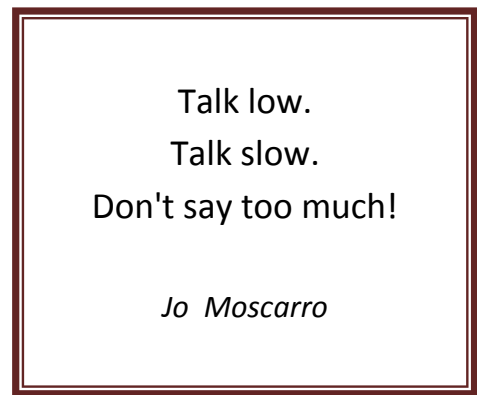
Don't react. Step back from a stressful or frustrating situation to prevent it from escalating and to give yourself and the student(s) time to cool down.

> Talk low.
> Talk slow.
> Don't say too much!
>
> *Jo Moscarro*

Some interventions are simple, such as talking to a student about a problem or situation. Others can be complicated and involve many individuals such as a behavior management plan for a disruptive student. How do you know which intervention(s) might be more effective or which to use and with whom? Your supervising teacher and/or other team members make that decision. It is the role of your supervising teacher to tell you which strategy(s) should be used and provide training as needed. Along with the training, your supervisor should give you ongoing feedback. A student's behavior is much more likely to change when everyone on the instructional team is responding to the student's behavior in the same way.

Before we talk about specific proactive management strategies, we need to review the ABCs of behavior. Remember there is always an interaction between a student's behavior and the learning environment. It's as easy as ABC:

A   **Antecedents** are the events that happen BEFORE the student behavior occurs.

B   **Behavior** is the specific way the student acts.

C   **Consequences** are the events that happen to the student IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING the behavior.

| Antecedent | Behavior | Consequence |
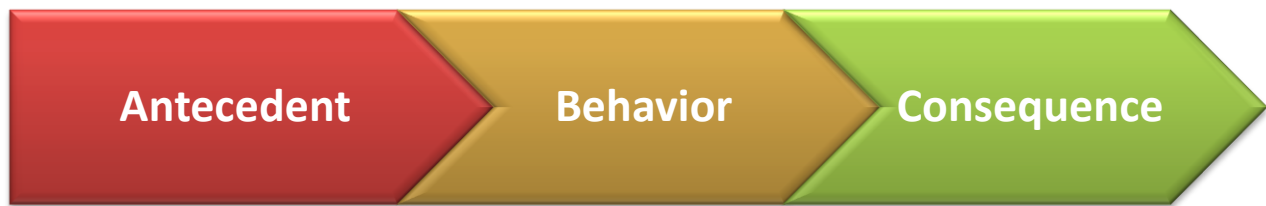
For example:

A   Eli's paraeducator asks him to begin his work
B   Eli throws his book on the floor
C   Eli's teacher directs Eli to take "a seat away"

Identifying Antecedents, Behaviors, and Consequences

To determine why a student's behavior is occurring, ask yourself the following questions:

Antecedent	Behavior (student)	Consequence
Where did it happen? Who was there? What was said or done immediately before?	What did the student do? What did the student say?	What were other student's reactions? What did the instructor say or do?

By understanding the ABC's of a student's behavior, you can use proactive strategies to prevent problem behaviors from occurring by eliminating or adjusting the antecedents or by changing consequences.

For example: Students in a science class lose important instructional time because they always clean up long before the class lets out at 1:50. The ABC might look like:

A   The clock on the wall displays 1:40
B   Students see the clock and begin cleaning up without instructor permission
C   Students leave right when the bell rings

To correct the problem, you may consider changing the antecedent. First, at the beginning the period, it is important for the teacher to explain the new clean up procedure which will increase instructional time. Then later during class:

A   The instructor prompts the students to clean up,
B   Students begin cleaning up
C   Students leave when the bell rings

In the above example, the ***antecedent*** was changed to influence student behavior. In the next example, the consequence will be changed to influence student behavior.

If Hannah (a student with Down Syndrome) is working on learning to respect personal space and is having difficulties, the ABC's may look like:

A	The paraeducator enters the room
B	Hannah runs up and hugs the paraeducator
C	The paraeducator laughs and pats Hannah on the back

Because hugging adults is inappropriate in many situations, you need to change the consequence.

A	The paraeducator enters the room
B	Hannah runs up to hug the paraeducator
C	The paraeducator extends her hand for a high five or a handshake.

Making small changes in antecedents and consequences such as these may be all that is needed. However, because behavior problems can be complex, don't expect to find a magic wand that will fix all problems. Here are some proactive behavior strategies that have worked for others.

Positive reinforcement occurs when something is given to a student immediately following a target behavior that increases the likelihood that the behavior will happen again. This means the reinforcement must be valued by the student.

Types of positive reinforcement include:
- Verbal praise
- Social praise
- Access to preferred
  - Activities
  - Material items
  - People

> The Golden Rule for choosing a reinforcer is:
>
> **The cheaper, the faster, the better**

Praise is one of the simplest ways to positively reinforce appropriate behavior. It is any verbal or nonverbal action by the instructor that indicates approval. Nonverbal praise may consist of an eyewink, pat on the back, or a thumbs up. Verbal praise usually consists of two parts: 1) a praise word, and 2) a description of what was good. "Fantastic! You remembered to raise your hand without talking," or "John, that's an excellent answer!"

> When appropriate behavior is not reinforced, inappropriate behavior may return

To be effective, praise should be:

I	<u>Immediate</u>	– Deliver the praise immediately following the desired behavior. The more immediate the praise the more effective.
F	<u>Frequently</u>	–Use positive statements for every negative.
E	<u>Enthusiasm</u>	–Deliver the praise with enthusiasm and sincerity.
E	<u>Eye contact</u>	– Use eye contact when giving a praise statement.
D	<u>Describe</u>	the behavior – Be concrete and specific.
A	<u>Anticipation</u>	– Build excitement through your praise statements and use of reinforcement.
V	<u>Variety</u>	–Use a variety of terms and methods.

Be sure to pay attention when you use praise. If the student's appropriate behavior continues or increases, the praise serves as a positive reinforcer. However if behavior stops or decreases, the student was not reinforced. Talk with your teacher and discuss other ideas for reinforcing the student.

<u>Extinction (planned ignoring)</u>

Extinction occurs when we withhold reinforcement such as our attention following a student's behavior. Typically, this includes ignoring inappropriate behavior. For example, when a student talks out in class, instead of responding to the student, withhold your attention by looking and moving away. To make extinction more effective you can use the "praise around" strategy. That is, find a child who is raising his hand quietly and praise him.

Caution: Because the student's talk out behavior was reinforced in the past, it may increase when it is first ignored. With this in mind, follow these guidelines:

- Use extinction only if you can tolerate some disruption in the classroom. Continue to teach, praise other students for appropriate behavior. Don't respond to behavioral "noise" (complaining, grumbling, etc.) from the student.
- Peer as well as adult attention may reinforce a student. It is important to withhold attention from all sources if extinction is going to work.
- To be effective, extinction MUST be used consistently over time.

<u>Pre-Teaching</u>

As discussed in Standard 1, pre-teaching occurs when students are taught the desired behavior before they need to use it. Specific instruction is very important. Tell the students exactly what they are to do and practice, if possible.
For example, you are taking a group of students on a field trip to the ballet. Before going, you should:
- tell and show the students how they should sit in the theater
- have the students practice
- remind the students before leaving on the field trip how they should behave, and
- remember to praise the students for sitting appropriately at the ballet.

Consequences

Remember from the ABCs of behavior that consequences follow a behavior. In order to be proactive you and the teacher should have planned for these in advance. Consequences should be logical and connected to the behavior. It is logical because it "fits" the nature of the behavior. For example, if a student completes his work early, he is able to do something he enjoys such as reading a book. If a student fails to complete an in-class assignment, she will have to finish it during free time. These are examples of reasonable consequences that match the behavior.

For more information on proactive strategies see:

http://www.una.edu/faculty/onlineacademy/State/Adobe%20Reader/DO%20NOT%20OPEN%20program%20files/Management/During%20-%20Encouragement%20.pdf.

B. Support the supervisor's behavior management plan

It is the responsibility of your supervising teacher to create and implement the classroom management plan. As a member of the instructional team, it is your responsibility to support that plan through words and actions. This is important. Students learn and progress when all team members are on the same page.

Paraeducators show support when they prompt or remind students to follow classroom expectations or rules, enforce consequences, and encourage students to meet expectations. Examples of supporting the behavior management plan include:
- reminding a student to stop talking and focus on the task at hand,
- praising students who are listening and paying attention,
- redirecting a student who is distracted,
- at the teacher's request, directing a student to another seat as a consequence for continuing to talk to classmate, and
- praising a student for making a good choice.

Section 2: Supporting Competencies

C. Demonstrate knowledge of learner characteristics and factors that influence behavior

A student's disability affects his or her learning needs. It is important for you to understand how a child's disability affects learning. If a student is classified with one disability, she may also have characteristics of other disabilities. For example, a student may be classified as having a specific learning disability. Due to years of frustration in school, the student may have learned some acting out behaviors that interfere with his or his ability to learn. A good Individualized Education Plan (IEP) addresses all behaviors of concern for that particular student.

The more you understand and relate to your student's needs, strengths, and learning styles, the more you can assist and support them. Students feel comfortable with someone who understands their

frustrations, anger, or fears. Your supervising teacher should discuss each student's characteristics and needs with you. There are also many resources available to help you. See the Appendix for glossary and web resources.

D. Assist in maintaining an environment conducive to the learning process

Students take cues for their own behavior from adult examples. Show the students that you take learning seriously by setting the stage. Here are some examples of how you can support the learning process throughout the day:

Before	- Arrive on time and ready to work - Be prepared - Take charge of your responsibilities. Don't wait to be told unnecessarily. - Greet and welcome the students to establish a safe learning environment.
During	- Begin promptly - Eliminate distractions - Encourage students to stay on-task - Remain focused
Closing	- End on time - Help students make a smooth transition to the next activity - Leave the work area clean and organized
Review	- Take time to reflect - Ask yourself, "What went well? Should I do anything differently? Were the students engaged?" - Accept advice and suggestions graciously, then implement them.

A crucial time for the learning process is <u>during</u> instruction. Here are some additional strategies to keep students engaged.

Scanning

Scanning is a strategy used by teachers and paraeducators. Scanning is periodically glancing around the classroom to see if students need help or redirection. With scanning you can also see students that need praise. Work with your teacher to determine what actions should be taken in each of these situations.

With-it-ness

You need to be aware of your students at all times. Students notice if you are "with it." Even if you are working with small groups, periodically scan the classroom to assure other students are working. Provide verbal prompts to students as needed.

You get more of what you reinforce!

Specific Praise

Whenever you are providing instruction remember students do better when they are praised for positive behavior. Also praise students for correct answers, good effort, polite behavior, and anything else you want to increase.

Giving Effective Directions

Students need to be told what you want them to do. Unfortunately, they do not always know what is expected of them. Because we are polite, we often ask students if they would like to do something.

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10 Variables That Effect Student Behavior

1. Close the gap. Stand 2-3 feet from the student when giving a direction.
2. Give the student time to comply.
3. Use eye contact.
4. Don't ask. Tell the student what you want.
5. Give more "start" requests than "stop" requests.
6. Stay calm.
7. Use descriptive requests.
8. Monitor your voice. Use proper tone and volume.
9. Don't nag. Only give two requests.
10. Praise the student when she complies.

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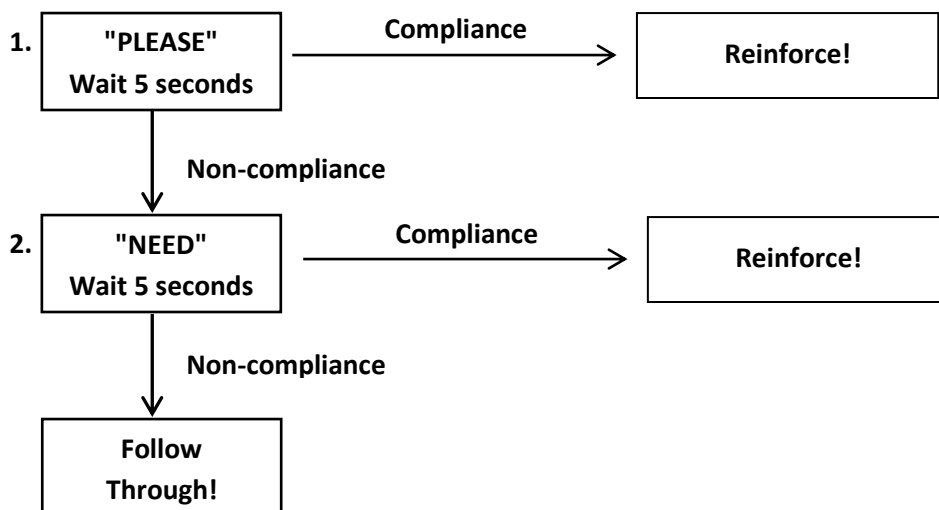For example: A paraeducator may ask students "Would you like to get your math book out?" This request gives students the option of saying "No!" A better way is to say, "Please get your math books out." If this does not work we may need to use precision commands.

Precision Command is a specific statement used to increase student compliance. Usually we like students to comply within 8-10 seconds of the direction.

1. " __(Name)__ __(Direction__ please."

2. " __(Name)__ you need to __(Direction__ ."

> It is important to use the same wording in the same order with ALL directions. (e.g. "come here," "sit down," etc.)

1. **"PLEASE"** / **Wait 5 seconds** → **Compliance** → **Reinforce!**

↓ **Non-compliance**

2. **"NEED"** / **Wait 5 seconds** → **Compliance** → **Reinforce!**

↓ **Non-compliance**

Follow Through!

It is always important to work with your supervising teacher to create a proactive classroom environment. When all members of the team are on the same page, using proactive strategies consistently, students have a more positive experience and learn more!

E. Assist in teaching children and youth social skills

Social skills, like academic skills, need to be taught. While some students may learn social skills by observing others, some students need to receive explicit instruction.

There are many social skills. Some examples of social skills are:

- greeting or introducing oneself
- sharing
- following directions
- asking and making clarification
- negotiating
- accepting criticism.

Explicit Instruction

I do - Instructor

⇩

We do - Instructor and Student

⇩

You do - Student

Basic appropriate social skills help a student make and keep friends, get and keep a job, and be successful in life. While a student may be lacking several important social skills, your supervisor may identify only one or two to work on first. Make sure you understand which specific social skills your supervisor needs you to model and support so there is no misunderstanding.

One example of assisting in teaching children and youth socials skills is saying, "Thank you" when given something tangible. When given a compliment, a student needs to learn to thank that person graciously. You can model saying "Thank you" as you interact with students. When students see you doing this regularly, they are positively reinforced and will start doing it, too.

F. Assist learners in using self control and self management strategies

Self-control and self-management strategies are important skills needed to live a productive and independent life. Without self-control, students may be at risk of hurting themselves or others. Many students have difficulty organizing, problem solving, and asking for help. This can impact their performance and interpersonal relationships at school, work and home.

Learning self-control and self-management skills is difficult for some students because of their disability. Students have to learn perseverance and develop the discipline necessary to make ongoing progress. It is important for you to follow the plan outlined by your supervisor as you help students take the lead in their education.

Here are some examples your supervisor may want you to use as you assist students in using self-management strategies:

- Allow the student time to think and respond before prompting or providing them with the answer.
- Rehearse with the student about how they could respond to a specific situation before class begins or immediately after class ends.
- Model self-management skills at all times because students are always watching!
- Use pre-teaching; prepare the student for activities that in the past have triggered inappropriate behaviors.
- Encourage the student to identify several appropriate choices he may use in a problem situation.
- Praise the student when he makes a good choice.

Caution: Occasionally, we unwittingly are overprotective as we try to make things easier for students. We end up teaching them to depend on us for too much. Over time, students learn to depend on parents, teachers, paraeducators, and others to solve problems for them. They are reluctant to try new things on their own, whether it is physical, social, or academic. Instead, students will wait for prompting or assistance from others. This student behavior is detrimental and is called "learned-helplessness." Our goal is to teach students to be independent, acting on their own using self-management skills.

G. Assist in monitoring learners and make appropriate decisions while coaching or tutoring in different settings

It is important for you to understand and confirm your classroom teacher or supervisor's expectations _before_ making coaching, monitoring, or tutoring decisions. It is better to ask questions before you begin than to assume or incorrectly interpret your supervisor's intentions.

> **When in doubt ask for clarification**

Monitoring includes collecting and recording academic and/or behavioral data on students. Collecting and recording data is also called progress monitoring (for more detail see Standard 1). Your supervisor may have specific information that she needs gathered for a particular student.

Academic Example	Behavior Example
You may be asked to administer a one minute timed oral reading fluency (ORF). Oral reading fluency scores can help your supervisor determine the student's instructional level.	A student's behavior intervention plan requires the student to bring a tracking notebook with her to each classroom to document her attendance.
Procedure: The student reads out-loud to you from a selected passage. You count the total number of words the student attempted to read in one minute, add up all of the errors, and then subtract the total number of errors from the total number of words the student read.	Procedure: During seventh period, the student brings her tracking notebook to you. You review the attendance for each class period and record a plus or minus on the teacher's attendance spreadsheet.

Once the data has been collected, the teacher is responsible for interpreting the data and determining the next step.

Some paraeducators work outside of a traditional classroom such as a job coach or personal assistant. A person in this role may be teaching a student job skills, using public transportation, or providing personal care. You need to be trained properly by your supervisor so you can make appropriate decisions while on the job when your supervisor isn't around. Your supervisor should tell you which data to collect. It is your job to provide these data to your supervisor on an ongoing basis As an instructional team you should discuss student performance together and make decisions about next steps for the student's program

H. Assist in providing medical care and/or teaching self care needs

Some students require medical care during the school day. Other students are either not able to perform self-care needs or they may require a lot of support.

Student's medical and self-care needs vary and may include suctioning, toilet training, tying shoelaces, putting on a coat, using eating utensils, feeding, and other physical skills.

It is illegal for you to help with medical or self-care needs until you are properly trained by a nurse or other professional. You may also be required to document handling of medications or certain procedures. The laws were written to protect you, the school, and the student. More detailed information is available in Standard 2. As with everything else, if in doubt, ask your supervisor.

> You may be asked by your supervisor to assist students with these tasks. You <u>must</u> be trained before attempting to assist students. If you have not been trained, ask your supervisor for the appropriate training.
> ***Do <u>not</u> attempt to help a student prior to training.***

Standard 4
Communicate effectively & participate in the team process

*Coming together is the beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success. (*Henry Ford)

You are a paraeducator. You are part of a team. Every team needs a leader. You are not it. But you are an important member of that team. It may take some training and time, but you will find your place and contribute to the welfare of the students you serve. You will develop skills and increase your abilities. You will become a valuable asset to your coworkers and students.

A productive team is like a well-designed, well-oiled machine. It operates best when all team members understand what their roles are, how they fit together, communicate appropriately, and each does their piece of the work.

Section 1: Core Competencies

A. Serve as a member of an instructional team

A good instructional team focuses on serving students. You are helping deliver appropriate and high quality instruction. This help can happen many different ways and is directly related to your particular job description.

The first step is to understand your particular role. Your administrator should provide you with a job description. You need to read and understand it. If you are not given one, ask for it. No one can hit a target they can't see. Your job description gives you a target for which to aim.

You should be given training on how to carry out your job description. If you don't understand the job description, it is your responsibility to ask questions until you do understand.

The next step is getting to know who your team members are and what their responsibilities include. You may be a team of two or a team of many.

Examples of instructional teams:

- Classroom teacher and a paraeducator
- Job coach or employment specialist and the Special Education teachers of a particular school
- Paraeducator providing direct services (physical therapy, mobility aide, speech therapist, etc.) and supervising licensed professional
- IEP teacher, personal care assistant, student
- Special Education teacher, general education teacher, school counselor, and a paraeducator
- Special Education teacher with multiple paraeducators under her supervision

You will also work with other people. However, that doesn't make them members of your instructional team. This may include secretaries, custodians, and other teachers.

Administrators are part of instructional teams even though you may not interact with them on a regular basis. They have the ultimate responsibility for what happens in the school or program they supervise. In most schools, administrators are responsible for hiring and firing of school personnel.

It is required by law that you work under the direction, supervision, and authority of licensed personnel. The supervision may be obvious or it may be more subtle depending on your particular role. You should always be a member of an instructional team and taking direction from that team.

It is inappropriate for you to refuse to follow the directions of your supervisor unless you are asked to perform duties for which you have not been trained or are outside of your job description.

The second step of being a member of the instructional team is to know and support the policies and procedures of your school and school district. Ideally, as a new employee, you were given this information when you were hired. If you weren't, it would be wise to search it out. If your supervising professional does not have this information, go to your school administrator. If he doesn't have it, ask your human resource department.

B. Use effective communication skills (written, verbal, nonverbal)

Communication occurs in many different ways. It could be written, nonverbal, or verbal. Whether you realize it or not, the way you communicate provides a role model for the students you serve.

Effective communicators are valued employees in all professions and situations. An effective communicator will:

- Demonstrate professionalism.
    - Use correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.
    - Speak and write clearly.
    - Avoid slang and profanity.
    - Be a positive role model to students in the way you speak and act.
    - Avoid negative talk about other staff members, students, and their families.
- Listen with the intent of understanding the message.
- Ask questions.
    - Paraphrase to check the meaning of the message.
    - Seek clarification and additional information, if necessary.
    - Encourage others to talk and share.
- Have a positive and upbeat attitude.
- Be able to explain a problem or give information in a concise, factual manner.
- Stay calm and cool.
- Share information in a timely manner.
- Focus on the positive aspects of a challenging situation. Good things can come out of difficult situations. However, it takes work to discover and capitalize on them.
- Acknowledge the contributions, knowledge, and expertise of others.

Section 2: Supporting Competencies:

C. Provide relevant feedback and make recommendations regarding learner performance and programming to supervisor

As a paraeducator, you may work directly with students and be more aware of a student's ongoing performance than your supervisor. Examples may include:

- Tutoring a student in reading or math skills while the classroom teacher instructs the majority of the class
- Teaching a student to use mass transit to access a job site or community services
- Providing instructional support in mainstream classrooms while the IEP teacher remains in the special education classroom, and
- Monitoring student behavior in various situations.

You need to give your supervisor all pertinent facts and information - <u>devoid</u> of personal interpretation. You may describe what other people have said by way of reporting their perceptions and conclusions. See the table below for examples of appropriate and inappropriate ways to report information.

Inappropriate :	Appropriate:
This child is a jerk. He just won't sit in his seat and is very rude. His language is filthy and vulgar. None of the kids like him.	This child has no friends and plays by himself during recess. His voice is loud and he talks out at inappropriate times. He uses profanity and shouts insults when upset. He is unable to stay in his seat for more than five minutes at a time.
When I called Joe's employer to find out how he was doing on his job, I found out that he was not showing up for work and doesn't do a good job when he's there. I am very disappointed in him. He is lazy and could do much better. He should be fired.	Joe's employer reported that Joe has not shown up to work all week. He has not called in or given any indication of what is happening. The manager said, "I am going to have to fire Joe. His heart just doesn't seem to be in the job." The manager reported that his performance on the job was poor.
Sophia won't even try to do her class assignments. She just mopes around and is grumpy. She put her head down on the desk and refused to even pick up a pencil! So, I finished the assignment for her.	I spent 20 minutes encouraging Sophia to start the assignment. I was not successful. She was listless and uncooperative. She put her head down on the desk and did not finish the assignment.

Performance feedback is often written on tracking sheets or on a form provided by the teacher. It could also be written or typed on plain paper or given to the teacher verbally. If written, date it using day, month AND year. You should also sign the data sheet with your complete name.

The licensed professional with whom you are working is responsible for the final decision for what happens with students. Because they are licensed, they bear the legal burden of all decisions and actions taken.

D. Participate in instructional team meetings

If invited, it is appropriate for you to attend IEP, instructional team, or departmental meetings. If you are invited, you should attend and contribute, as appropriate. This is considered "work time" and you should be compensated.

> As paraeducators, we are often unaware of all of the factors that go into a decision. It is not our place to question it.

During these meetings, you may be asked to offer feedback or information related to the student's performance. You may be given a new work assignment. Keep in mind, as a student progresses, your duties may be adjusted.

These meetings may be informal. For example, if you are a classroom paraeducator you may meet with the classroom teacher to plan learning activities. Other times, you may be asked to meet formally in a department or staff meeting. These meetings have different purposes such as training, coordination, or discussing student needs.

You may be asked to submit a written report on a student's progress. Work with your supervisor to find out which information is needed.
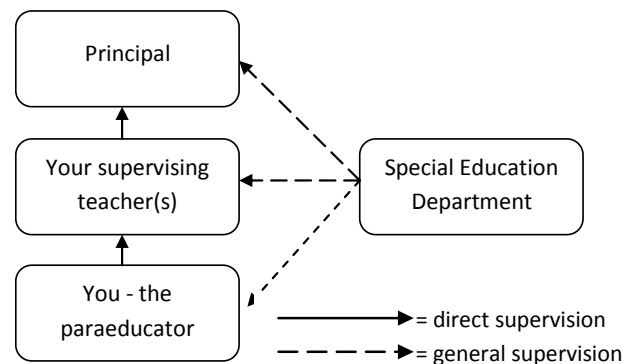
E. Select and use appropriate channels for resolving concerns or conflicts

When we talk about using "appropriate channels" we mean "which process should you follow" to resolve concerns or conflicts. It is also called the "chain of command."

As much as we would like to avoid problems, they occur. Different problems or concerns require different approaches. It is best to figure out how to handle problems BEFORE they happen.

Learn your "chain of command." In other words, when you need information, directions, or help in solving a problem, who should you go to first? If that doesn't work, who is the next person you should approach?

Example of a chain of command for a paraeducator in Special Education

Principal

Your supervising teacher(s)

Special Education Department

You - the paraeducator

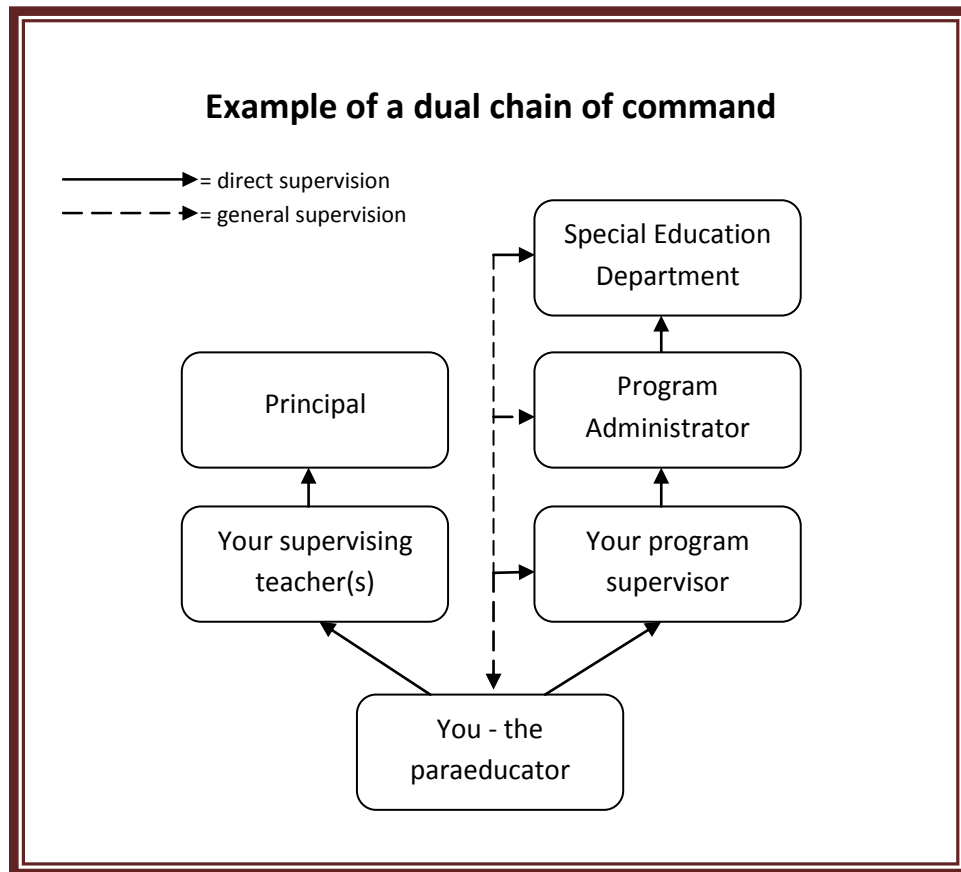→ = direct supervision

⇢ = general supervision

Typically, the chain of command would be:

1. Your immediate supervisor (classroom teacher or licensed professional)
2. Your administrator (principal, assistant principal, or program administrator)
3. District or agency level administrators

That doesn't mean that you can't ask your coworkers questions and request help. The chain of command is used for resolving concerns and addressing important issues.

You may have to resolve problems or conflicts with other school staff. Knowing the procedures ahead of time will simply this process. Obviously, it will be different from addressing concerns with students. Problems may also occur with parents.

In some cases, you may have a dual chain of command. For example, if you are a specialist who provides related services or work in multiple classrooms, you may have more than one supervisor. Your chain of command may not be as clear-cut and should be clarified you.

Example of a dual chain of command

```
———————▶ = direct supervision
- - - - -▶ = general supervision
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		Special Education Department
Principal		Program Administrator
Your supervising teacher(s)		Your program supervisor
	You - the paraeducator	

In most cases, questions, concerns, and problems related to students would be resolved with the student's supervising teacher. Concerns about school issues should begin with your supervising teacher. If the problem is unresolved, present it to your administrator.

May be best address to address a school based "Chain of Command:"	May be best to address through a program based "Chain of Command:"
- question on how to help a particular student - conflict with another staff member - conflict with a student - your responsibilities - question about a school policy or procedure	- occupational therapist assistant needs to learn a procedure for a particular student - job coach who needs a clarification on a labor law issue - paraeducator has a question on how to use a computer program - procedure for providing a specialized service

Every program (Special Ed, Title I, ELL, etc.) has ultimate responsibility for their paraeducators. Every local education program dictates funding, sets policies, decides whom to hire and fire, determines job placement, and is responsible for providing training and support.

Traditional and charter school principals and directors also determine what happens within their school setting. They assess paraeducator job performance and help determine training needs specific to their schools.

F. Participate in conferences with families or primary care givers when requested

As part of the instructional team, you may be asked to attend IEP or other meetings to discuss the educational program of a student you are serving. It is appropriate to attend when invited. For more details, see Supporting Competency D.

G. Foster beneficial relationships between agency/school, families, children/youth, and community

Using ethical practices is your single most effective method of establishing beneficial relationships. A code of ethics describes acceptable practices. Many school districts have developed a code of ethics for educators and paraeducators to follow.

General Guidelines

- *Be honest.* Don't exaggerate or make excuses. Take responsibility for errors and learn from them.
- *Be dependable.* Be where you are supposed to be. Be on time. Follow through with commitments. If you have to miss work, notify the appropriate person as soon as you are able. If you say you will "do it," do it.
- *Be positive.* One of the sad realities of the educational community is faculty gossip. Unfortunately, it damages relationships and can prejudice others against a child, a family, an

agency, a coworker, or a member of the community. Avoid being guilty of gossip. If you are unwilling or unable to address any concerns through established channels, silence is the best option. If you are in a situation where others are gossiping, walk away.

- **Dress professionally.** A clean, neat, well-groomed appearance will give you confidence as well as establish your credibility as an authority figure to students, parents, and colleagues.
  - o Follow your district and school dress policy.
  - o Do not dress provocatively. This means, do not wear low cut, revealing, or tight tops.
  - o Pants should not be tight or low cut. No cleavage – top OR bottom!
  - o While there is nothing wrong with them, jeans, sweat pants and shirts, sports attire, and other casual clothes do not contribute to a professional image.
- **Be respectful at all times to all people** – especially students and colleagues.

Children/Youth Relationships

- **Give equal treatment to all students.** It is easy to serve students who are well behaved and responsive. However, the challenging student needs us the most. There may be things going on in the student's life that makes it hard for them to be easy and loveable.

- **Focus on the positive.** Focus on appropriate student behaviors that are positive and enjoyable. When you do, the student will be more likely to repeat the appropriate behavior. Learn effective methods of behavior management and apply them according to your teacher's management plan.

> Build a positive, respectful relationship with students.

- **Accept students as they are.** Help your students feel that they belong and have something to contribute. Show students through words and actions that you have confidence in them. Let them that you like them. Acknowledge students when you pass them in the halls or see them in classrooms. Smile! Students return the respect shown to them. When they know that you are committed to their success, students are much more likely to comply with your requests.

Parent Relationships

- **Show patience when dealing with "difficult' parents.** Do not take on difficult parents by yourself. You and your teacher should have a plan. Remember, difficult parents are difficult for a reason. It is a human tendency to label others as difficult when they are inconvenient or don't agree with us. Sometimes parents feel the only way they can get appropriate services for their child is to make a lot of noise and be persistent in their demands. Sometimes they are right; sometimes they are wrong. Some demands are unreasonable but many are not. Parents may even be part of the problem that they expect you to solve. Most care deeply about their child.
- **As a paraeducator, it isn't your place or responsibility to "fix" the problem.** It is your place to go out of the way to treat parents with respect, regardless of your personal feelings about them or their actions. By acting in a kind, professional manner, you can facilitate a better working relationship with the parent.
- **Respect the cultural and family traditions of your students.** Do not criticize a student's beliefs or practices. Let parents handle family and holiday traditions the way they choose. Be sensitive to everyone's differences.

- *Avoid close personal involvement with the student and their family.* Respect their privacy. Don't act as a counselor to parents and their problems. See Standard 2.
- *Be sure to clear any phone calls or letters to parents with the supervising teacher.* Make sure the appropriate professional has approved the message beforehand.

Agency/School Relationships

- *You can be a major contributor to a positive learning environment in your school*. Social relationships and appropriate behavior are vitally important in maintaining a healthy work environment. Skills can be learned, but it is hard to teach someone to be "nice." That's a decision you have to make.
- *Help to promote faculty cooperation*. Don't be a complainer. Complaining breeds discontent. It may also influence those around you. If you are in a place where someone is complaining, you have two good options: speak up in a positive way and/or walk away.

Teacher Relationships

- *Recognize the teacher or team you support as your immediate supervisor*. Be willing to share constructive ideas and suggestions. Share appropriate information on student performance, progress, and behavior only with the supervising teacher or administrator and only in the appropriate setting.
- *It is inappropriate for a paraeducator to refuse to serve students when directed by the team.* The role of the paraeducator is to extend and support the school team or teacher.
- *As a paraeducator, you should not dictate whom you will or will not serve*. You should not dictate HOW you will serve a student. It <u>is</u> appropriate for you to make the team or teacher aware of time and energy limitations. You have a limited number of hours you are authorized to work. You can only do "so much." Compromises must often be made by the team in setting priorities.
- *Once a decision is made, accept it and follow through*. The licensed professional is ultimately responsible for the student's education.
- *Ask if you don't understand.* You may be asked to do something that you haven't done before. Before you begin, make sure that it is clearly explained to you. Make sure you understand the explanation. If you get into the task and realize you didn't understand, ask for help or clarification. Don't just "try to figure it out." You have the right to be trained correctly so that you can be successful. It is your responsibility to seek training.
- *Demonstrate a solid work ethic* by doing your fair share and doing it well. Accept responsibility for learning new skills. Be proactive in staying busy with work. Show initiative. For example, when you've completed your work, instead of asking what to do next, suggest a task. "I've finished entering the data. Would you like me to help Johnny with his math?"
- *If you are unable to work effectively with a teacher*, try to discuss the problem and brainstorm solutions with that teacher before moving up the chain of command.

Community Relationships

Depending on your job description or role, you may have contact with the community. This <u>may</u> include:
- Employers
- Classroom speakers
- Outside agencies such as:
    - Vocational Rehabilitation
    - Boys and Girls Club
    - Job Corp
    - Big Brothers Big Sisters
    - Vocational Training Centers (inside and outside of your school district)
      Social Security Income (SSI)
    - Medicaid (federal health insurance program)
    - Americorp
    - Vocational training programs, etc.

You can gain support for the educational program of students by having a positive relationship with community.

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Appendix

Terminology

504   Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 defines disabilities for educational purposes. Having a disability does not automatically qualify a student for Special Education services.

If they can perform (with accommodations) at a level consistent with their abilities, they will probably not qualify as a Special Education student.

For example, a student who uses a wheelchair may be able to function well academically without special help – therefore, that student would not need Special Education classes.

We often call these students "504 Students." They may need some modification of their school program. In some cases, Physical Education may not be a required class. In another situations, a student may be allowed extra time to complete school assignments or to receive instruction at home or in a health care setting.

ADA   Americans with Disabilities Act - The intent of this legislation was to "level the playing field" so that people with disabilities could access public buildings, obtain employment, and participate in society.

BIP   Behavior Intervention Plan - A plan developed by a licensed professional (usually a Special Education teacher) to assist a student with behavior problems to develop appropriate behavior.

Charter Schools   Public schools organized by members of the community to address perceived needs of students which may not be addressed in the traditional schools.

CD   Communication Disorder – Special Education category for students with a speech and language impairment (such as stuttering) and is severe enough to affect their education.

ED or BD   Emotional Disturbance or Behavior Disturbance – Special Education category for students with behaviors which disrupt their education. This can include depression or phobias in addition to "acting out" inappropriately. The "Behavior Disorder" label has been replaced with the "Emotional Disturbance" label. Educators who have been around a while often use the term "BD" instead of the current term of "ED" or "Emotional Disturbance."

ELL   English Language Learner - a person who's first spoken language is NOT English and is in the process of learning English

ESY   Extended School Year - Education provided outside of the regular school year program.

FAPE   Free Appropriate Public Education - This term refers to the right for each person (with or without a disability) to obtain a free education according to their needs.

FERPA   Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) – a Federal law which protects the privacy of student educational records. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level.

File Holder   The Special Ed teacher who in is charge of a particular students educational program and has responsibility for documenting her progress and keeping important information in her file.

FUBA   Functional Behavior Analysis – a problem solving process for defining events in the environment that reliably predict and maintain a student's problem behaviors

ID   Intellectual Disability – Special Education category for students with below average IQ and ability to adapt

IDEA   Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – The law which regulates services that should be provided to students, defines who qualifies for Special Education, record keeping and training requirements for all persons who provide services to Special Education services, and many other aspects of Special Education.

IEP   Individualized Education Program - Each Special Education student is required to have this document that outlines their goals and educational objectives. It should be reviewed and updated yearly.

Inclusion	Regular education classes combined with special education services so the special education student is included in the typical school experience for at least one-half of the school day.
Instructional Team	Educators who work together to teach a specific group of students. An example of an instructional team could be a classroom teacher, paraeducator(s), and the school administrators. More than one teacher can be on an instructional team. Typically, regular education teachers are not part of a Special Educational instructional team since they do not attend the team meetings in the Special Education Department.
Instructor	A teacher, paraeducator, intern, classroom volunteer, etc. who is responsible for delivering a lesson or demonstration. They should use effective teaching practices.
LD	Learning Disability – correctly, it should be Specific Learning Disability. – Special Education category for students with a disability involving reading, writing, math, and sometimes speech.
LEA	Local Education Agency – For example, a school (public or charter) or a school district.
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment - The idea is for Special Education students to be with their peers as much as possible.
Mainstreaming	Students with special needs are educated with their typically developing peers in the "regular" classroom setting for part of the school day.
Medicaid	Health insurance available to low income individuals with disabilities.
OCR	Office of Civil Rights - the federal agency charged with protecting the civil rights of all American residents.
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs.
Resource	A part of Special Education – typically refers to student with mild to moderate disabilities. Most of the time, a "Resource Student" will have mainstream classes with their peers for most of the school day, along with their Special Education classes.
RTI	Response to Intervention – a multi-tiered approach to providing services and interventions to struggling students at increasing levels of intensity.

SID	Severe Intellectual Disability - Special Education category for students with significant IQ deficits and ability to adapt
Special Education	Instruction delivered by specially trained teachers to help students with disabilities reach their maximum potential. Often, this term is used to refer to students who are "self contained" - meaning they spend most of their school day in a Special Education classroom.
SPED/LEP	Special Education and Limited English Proficiency - Students with Special Education needs AND for whom English is their second language. Often, their English is limited.
SSI	Social Security Income – paid to individuals with disabilities significant enough to prevent them from becoming employed at a subsistence level. It provides them with means to sustain themselves. Parents can receive SSI on behalf of their disabled children.
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury – Special Education category for students with an acquired injury to the brain, which affects the student's ability to learn.
Title I	The full title is "Title I — Improving The Academic Achievement Of The Disadvantaged" and is part of NCLB (No Child Left Behind) legislation. Its purpose is to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach their full academic potential.
Transition	In Special Education, this refers to the ongoing process of preparing students for a successful life after they leave the school system. In addition to the traditional academic skills, students need to learn social, everyday living, and vocational skills.
USOE	Utah State Office of Education - A state agency with the responsibility of overseeing the education system in the state of Utah.
Vocational Rehabilitation	A state agency with the mandated goal to help people with disabilities to become employable. They can provide support to qualified individuals (after they leave school) to reach their employment goals. It is often referred to as "Voc Rehab." They are may be invited to IEP meetings as part of a student's transition process.

Qualifying Students for Special Education

For the legal definitions of the Special Education categories, go to the Utah State Office of Education Website at http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/inforesource/disabilities.htm.

For a student to receive services in Special Education, they must

- Have a qualifying disability <u>AND</u>
- Need Special Education services to reach their potential

At times, this can be very confusing. A student may (for example) have a severe health problem such as Muscular Dystrophy. If the student is able to succeed in the traditional school setting, they won't qualify for Special Education services. However, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, they may qualify for accommodations to their school program - such as having a personal aide. A student with a temporary disability (like a broken leg) would temporarily be a "504 student" and could have his or her class requirements modified for a time.

There is a process to decide if a student qualifies for Special Education services. Usually, it starts with a variety of assessments. A team of professionals will review the results and consider other aspects of a student's background. As a group, they will decide on a plan for the student. The plan should include RTI considerations, placements, additional services, and supports. Based on student performance over time, the team may decide the student will benefit from services in Special Education.

The IDEA Special Education categories are:

1. Autism
2. Deaf/blindness
3. Developmental Delay
4. Emotional Disturbance
5. Hearing Impairment/Deafness
6. Intellectual Disability
7. Multiple Disabilities
8. Orthopedic Impairment
9. Other Health Impaired
10. Specific Learning Disability
11. Speech-Language Impairment
12. Traumatic Brain Injury
13. Visual Impairment

Sometimes students have more than one disability. For example, a student may have a learning disability and use a wheelchair. If that is the case, the question becomes, "Which disability affects the student's education the most?" Their classification is determined by the answer. Of course, the student will receive appropriate services for any disability regardless of his classification.

Each category or classification is very broad. The classification isn't very useful in understanding the needs of the INDIVIDUAL student. For example, one student with the label of "Specific Learning Disability" could have problems with reading and writing but the student may be good in math and have strong social skills. A different student with the same label could be socially awkward, impulsive, and have poor writing skills but have strong reading and vocational skills.

That said, here is some information on the categories/classifications that are commonly encountered. If you work with students who are in categories not listed, you should ask your supervisor for help in understanding your students and meeting their needs.

Specific Learning Disability

This is the most commonly identified disability. These students have average or above average IQs but have problems

- understanding or using language (written or oral)
- reading (decoding and comprehension),
- writing,
- spelling,
- listening, and
- mathematics.

They may described as having dyslexia, perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, and so on. Their problems are NOT a result of lack of education, a disadvantaged background, poor hearing or eyesight, or emotional disturbance.

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- short attention span
- easily distracted
- difficulty decoding written language
- poor reading comprehension
- organizational difficulties
- poor coordination

- poor handwriting
- impulsive
- immature for their chronological age
- inconsistent performance
- slow completing tasks
- easily frustrated – doesn't persevere

Ideas for supporting these students

- Use variety.
- Avoid distractions (background noises, foot traffic, etc.).
- Offer choices of ways to accomplish a task or assignment when possible.
- Use lots of gestures and body language.
- Give specific, honest praise to help students realize their strengths.
- Provide extra time and space while they process information.
- Demonstrate (don't just explain) tasks.
- Give clear, concise directions – don't use too many words.
- Use visual progress charts.
- Use peer tutors when possible.
- Use concrete examples whenever possible. Abstract ideas are often confusing to them.
- Present new information in small doses – Let them master it before presenting more information.
- Don't give "busy work" – make sure all written work is meaningful.
- Teach learning and organizational techniques when possible.

Intellectual Disability

These students have IQs that are significantly below average as well as problems with adaptive behavior. They will have this disability for their whole life. They will most likely struggle with self care and independent living skills (cooking, shopping, finding and keeping employment, transportation, etc.).

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- limited problem solving skills
- low academic skills (reading, writing math, etc.)
- needs extensive practice to learn new skills – forgets easily
- may "parrot" back information without understanding what she is saying
- may tell you he understands when he doesn't
- tends to mimic behaviors she doesn't comprehend
- demonstrates few pre-vocational or vocational skills
- has fewer work experiences (babysitting, lawn mowing, etc.) typical for their age group

- below average motors skills
- slower rate of speed
- needs immediate positive feedback
- limited vocabulary
- inability to put her thoughts into words
- low frustration level
- poor concentration
- unable to generalize new concepts – for example, he can count change at school but doesn't know how to use that skill on a job
- doesn't understand abstract ideas
- doesn't comprehend amounts (time, space, numbers, etc.)
- immature social skills and emotional reactions

Ideas for supporting these students

- Teach new skills in smaller steps – one step at a time.
  - o Make sure they master each step before moving on.
  - o Review often.
  - o Give lots of practice.
  - o Demonstrate (don't just explain) tasks.
  - o Give multiple opportunities to practice a new skill. She may forget it easily.
- Use positive reinforcement often.
- Provide extra time to process information – don't rush her.
- Use concrete examples whenever possible.
- A student may tell you that he understands, even when he doesn't. If he can tell you the idea in his own words, he probably understands it.
- Avoid distractions.

Emotional Disturbance

These students have emotional or behavior problems that last over a long period of time. These behaviors are not a result of a crisis such as a divorce of parents or a death. These problems have an adverse influence on their education. In Utah, this category used to be called "Behavior Disorder." We often still hear this term or its shortened version "BD."

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- poor self control
- have problems associating their behavior with consequences
- negative self concept or lack of confidence
- impulsive, overactive, and restless
- frequently disruptive
- uncooperative and defiant
- severely depressed

- destructive to themselves and others
- aggressive
- easily distracted
- short attention span
- inhibited and withdrawn or will not communicate with others
- imagines "the whole world is against me"

Ideas for supporting these students

- Establish clear, concise expectations.
- Provide immediate feedback.
- Use high rates of specific praise.
- Provide specific instructions.
- Provide a work area free of distractions.
- Separate students that provoke each other.
- Break large tasks into smaller ones so that it is less overwhelming.
- When disciplining or discussing problems, don't do it in front of an "audience."
  - Calmly discuss the problem.
  - Explain when a behavior is inappropriate.
  - Keep voice low and soft.
  - Let the student calm down.
- Allow student to explain his point of view.
- Once the student has had an opportunity to discuss any problem, you should work together to plan some solutions.

Hearing Impairment/Deafness

These students have problems hearing but may not be deaf.

Ideas for supporting these students

- Remember, students who are totally deaf and do not read lips will not be communicating in their first language. English is a second language for them. Therefore, misunderstandings and miscommunications easily occur. Abstract concepts are often difficult to share.
- Use an interpreter if a student needs it.
- If student reads lips, have good lighting (no backlighting).
- Use body language to supplement the spoken word.
- Face the student while you are talking them.

Autism

Autism significantly affects a person's ability to communicate (verbally and/or nonverbally) and to interact socially in a typical manner. It is a spectrum disability that covers a wide range of abilities. Some people will be able to function fairly well, especially with appropriate training and support. Others seem to be in a world of their own.

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- social deficits
  - hard time relating to others
  - socially awkward
  - little or no empathy for others
  - severe problems in transitioning from one activity (or location) to another
  - developmentally behind peers and may learn skills out of typical sequence
  - has a hard time making and maintaining friendships
- communication problems
  - significant problems with communication (speech)
  - peculiar speech patterns
  - very literal in understanding speech and doesn't understand idioms, humor, sarcasm, word plays, etc.
- bizarre and/or repetitive behavior
  - may be unusually sensitive or insensitive to sensory stimuli
  - rocking, flapping, head banging, etc.

Ideas for supporting these students

- Prepare students for upcoming changes. Give them time to make a mental transition before starting new activities or going to a new location.
- Provide a work area free of distractions.
- Provide social skills training.
- Provide training in practical areas (in addition to academics) - work experience, accessing public transportation, independent living skills, etc.
- Avoid slang, jokes, and idioms.
- For more information, a useful website is www.nimh.nih.gov and search for "autism"

Speech-Language Impairment

This classification used to be called "Communication Disordered." This disorder includes things such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or voice impairment.

Ideas for supporting these students
- Allow students time to process information or give information
- Provide follow up to verbal instructions
- Provide written outlines for lectures or notes of lectures so they can concentrate on what is being said
- Demonstrate and/or give examples of what you talk about
- Realize that these students often have a hard time finding the right words to express themselves and/or in organizing their thoughts

Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) means an injury to the brain (such as from an accident, surgery, etc.) and adversely affects a child's educational performance. It may be a temporary or permanent disability.

The effects of the injury vary from person to person. Generally, people with TBI improve over time. Recovery may take many years. It is impossible to predict the amount of improvement, or how long it will continue.

The effects of the injury can show up in areas such as:

- Cognition
- Attention
- Judgment
- Perception
- Language
- Reasoning
- Problem solving
- Speech
- Memory (especially short term)
- Abstract thinking
- Sensory
- Personality change

Other Disabilities

There are other conditions people think of as being a disability but are **not** a federal Special Education category. The conditions may result in the student receiving a Special Education classification.

ADHD (Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disorder)

This is a condition that describes a student with "developmentally inappropriate" degrees of inattention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity." ADHD may not be identified until the student enters school and they begin to stand out. Boys seem to be affected more often than girls.

There are three types of ADHD:
- Predominantly Inattentive
- Predominantly Hyperactive – Impulsive
- Combined

Primary Characteristics:

- Inattention - unable to stay on task; easily distracted
- Impulsivity - acts without thinking
- Overactive - "much too busy" often showing up as fidgeting and squirming

Associated Characteristics:

- noncompliant - unable or resistive to compliance with adult requests
- poor self control - difficulty in delaying gratification, "governed" by the closest attractive thing or by what they want in their environment
- academic deficits especially with basic academic subjects
- social skills deficits - trouble interacting with peers and adults, often described as easily frustrated, "bossy," uncooperative, or able to maintain long lasting friendships

Students can learn to manage their behaviors. ADHD lasts beyond childhood. It is seen in a wide variety of situations but is noticed at school because students have to pay attention, sit in his seat, and have appropriate behavior. Students with ADHD may be served by Special Education or a "504" plan.

NOTE: According to federal legislation, school personnel should **not** recommend medication.

Ideas for supporting these students
- Give assignments in small chunks.
- Present material using as many different senses as possible.
- Reward student when she is paying attention.

- Teach organizational skills.
- Allow extra time for tasks.
- Strive for quality rather than quantity during tasks.
- Make expectations clear.
- Use natural consequences whenever possible.

Cerebral Palsy

This condition is due to damage to the brain. It occurs in the womb or soon after birth. It can be a minor impairment or it can be very involved.

Typical impairments:
- abnormal muscle tone (their muscles will be too loose or too tight)
- abnormal reflexes
- poor control of movement (arms flaying, muscles uncooperative, etc.)
- poor posture and balance
- sensory deficits.

Other possible impairments:
- low IQ
- poor social skills
- seizures
- sensory impairments
- easily distractible
- poor endurance.

Ideas for supporting these students
- Modify work to enhance independent.
- Have a work area free from distractions.
- Give extra time.
- Break tasks into smaller chunks.

People First Language

The idea of "People First Language" is not based on political correctness. It is based on the idea that people are not their disability. They are simply people who have a disability. The disadvantage of this practice is that it can get awkward at times. Like many other good ideas, it can be taken to an extreme.

Some groups who represent people with disabilities reject the idea of People First Language. They feel that the disability is an important part of their identity.

Regardless, it is always important to focus on the individual instead of their disability.

Examples of People First Language:

Instead of:	Try:
1. Park the "wheelchairs" over there. OR Put the wheelchair kids over there.	1. Put the students in wheelchairs over there
2. We will invite the LD kids and the ID kids to the activity.	2. We will invite the kids in the ID classes and LD classes to the activity.
3. "Normal" or "regular" students	3. Student is without disabilities OR "typical" students
4. Deaf students or blind students	4. Students who are deaf/blind
5. Non-verbal student	5. This student communicates with his eyes/a device/etc.
6. A classroom with a door labeled "Special Education" or "Autism"	6. A classroom with a door labeled with the teacher's name – like other classrooms.

We also need to avoid derogatory slang that is related to Special Education terms:

- That's "retarded."
- "Hey, you retard."
- Well, aren't you "special?"

Responsibilities Matrix for Paraeducator and Teacher Teams

	Paraeducator	Teacher
Lesson Plans	Assists in the implementation of student's plans. May include instruction, material preparations, teacher support, etc.	Creates and implements daily lesson plans. Supervises paraeducators implementation of lesson plan.
Classroom Management Plans	Assists in implementing student behavior and classroom management plans.	Creates and implements student behavior and classroom management plans. Supervises paraeducators implementation of management plans.
IEP	Attends IEP meetings when invited. Provides information regarding a student's progress. Supports the delivery of services as assigned.	Develops and may conduct IEP meetings, implements and monitors IEP services.
File maintenance	When part of the job description, accesses or maintains files after being trained. Keeps file information confidential.	Maintains student files and records. Keeps file information confidential.
Communication with parents	When assigned, may contact parents to obtain or present information. Should NOT make recommendations or express personal opinions without direct assignment by the teacher.	Communicates with parents about student progress. Reviews ALL letters and other communications sent home to parents.
Assessments	When trained, administers assessments as assigned by the teacher.	Determines and administers appropriate assessments. Summarizes results and takes appropriate action.
Progress monitoring	Collects and records data as assigned by the teacher.	Reviews and monitors the academic and behavioral progress of all students and makes data based decisions. Trains paraeducators in data collection procedures.
Confidentiality	Discusses student issues only with the teacher and other people only when authorized by the teacher.	Discusses student issues only with authorized individuals. Reviews the requirement of maintaining confidentiality with paraeducators, volunteers, and peer tutors.
Conflict resolution	Learns and follows the "Chain of Command" appropriately. Takes responsibility for resolving conflicts constructively.	Effectively communicates expectations. Follows the "Chain of Command" appropriately. Resolves conflicts using appropriate problem solving strategies.

Teacher's Self Evaluation Checklist

Teacher: Ask yourself........	Rate yourself: 1= Needs work 2=Okay, but not great 3=Great	List your ideas for improvement or note the things that you do especially well.
Do I have clearly defined roles for my paraeducator(s)?		
Have I checked to see that my paraeducator(s) understands these roles?		
Do I know the school, district, and state standards for paraeducators?		
Does my paraeducator(s) know the standards concerning paraeducator roles?		
Does my paraeducator(s) know those roles that are strictly teacher roles (e.g., writing lesson plans, designing curriculum changes, etc.)?		
Have I identified the responsibilities which I can appropriately delegate?		
Have I clearly communicated my priorities for student learning to my paraeducator(s)?		
Do I communicate clearly and problem solve with my paraeducator(s)?		
Do I clearly share my vision and take steps to ensure effective teamwork?		
Do I meet regularly with my paraeducator(s) to plan and discuss student progress?		
Do I monitor my paraeducator(s) performance on a daily basis?		
Do I provide ongoing constructive feedback through coaching and modeling?		
Do we celebrate student learning and other accomplishments of our goals?		

Adapted from Ashbaker & Morgan (2006)

Supervisor/Administrator's Self Evaluation Checklist

Principal or Supervisor Rate yourself on the following:	Rate yourself: 1= Needs work 2=Okay, but not great 3=Great	List your ideas for improvement or note the things that you do especially well.
I have a clearly informed the paraeducators under my supervision of their roles?		
I have checked to see that all paraeducators understand the difference between their roles and the roles of teachers.		
I include teachers in the hiring process for the paraeducators assigned to them?		
I have informed our paraeducators of employment expectations and pay issues.		
I have informed the paraeducators of their "Chain of Command" and whom to go if they have complaints or employment issues.		
I have shared the school, district, and state guidelines for paraeducators with each of them.		
I have made certain my school has an infrastructure to provide support to paraeducators.		
I have made certain paraeducators can directly receive important information such as district communications, conferences, and workshops via phone calls, email and direct mailings.		
I have identified ways to include paraeducators as part of the school's instructional team?		
Do I have a performance based evaluation system for paraeducators, and a way to provide feedback to the paraeducator(s)?		
Do I include teachers in the evaluation process for their paraeducators?		
Do I meet regularly with my paraeducators and teachers to plan and discuss student progress?		
Have I found ways to recognize paraeducators for their achievements? The State of Utah has declared one week in November as Paraeducator Week.		
Do we celebrate student learning with the instructional team?		

Resources

National Organizations

- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCP)   www.nrcpara.org/
- Project Para: Paraeducator Self-Study Program http://para.unl.edu/
- AFT Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel   www.aft.org/psrp/
- National Clearinghouse for Paraeducator Resources
  www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html
- CEC Standards for Paraeducators   ww.cec.sped.org/ps/parastds.html
- NEA: National Education Association Homepage www.nea.org/index.html
- NEA: Education Support Professionals   www.nea.org/esphome
- NEA: Academy   www.nea.org
- National Clearinghouse for Careers in Special Education, CEC
  http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html
- CEC Profiles for Paraeducators
  www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Job_Profiles&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2086
- Schools and Staffing Survey, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)
  www.nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/
- Standards for a Professional, American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
  www.aft.org/psrp/index.htm
- Office of Civil Rights. http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/

Utah Resources

- Utah State Resources www.nichcy.org/stateshe/ut.htm
- Utah School Employees Association (USEA) www.useautah.org/
- The Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC) www. updc.org/
- Utah Education Association (UEA) www.utea.org/
- Utah Education Network (UEN) www.uen.org/
- Utah Paraeducators www.utahparas.org

Other States/Districts/University Projects
- Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project www.ritap.org/
- Grant Wood AEA Paraeducator Page www.aea10.k12.ia.us/prof/paras/index.html
- Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium http://ici2.umn.edu/para/
- Washington Education Association Paraeducator Issues
  www.washingtonea.org/support_professionals.html
- Paraeducator Support - University of Vermont www.uvm.edu/%7Ecdci/parasupport/
- Project Para Website, University of Nebraska http://para.unl.edu/
- Washington State's website for paraprofessionals www.paraeducator.com/
- Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE) www.spense.org/results.html

- Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE) www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse
- Roles of Educational Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools, U.S. Department of Education www.ed.gov/pubs/paraprofessionals/
- Washington State Skill Standards www.wa-skills.com/paraeducators.html
- Paraeducator Resources Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory www.nwrac.org/links/paraed.html

Training Products

- National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse www.rnt.org/channels/clearinghouse/audience/paraeducators/default.htm
- TRI-SPED Staff Training Solutions www.trisped.org/
- LRC Paraeducator Training Modules www.lrconsulting.com/LRCParaeducator_Training.html

Publications

- Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools (1997) www.ed.gov/pubs/Paraprofessionals/index.html
- Paraeducator Resources www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/CareerCenter/

Paraeducator Links Pages
- The Paraeducator Learning Network   www.paraeducator.net/
- Paraeducator Support of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms University of Vermont www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport/
- Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs, National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse www.recruitingteachers.org/become/paraprograms.html
- National Clearinghouse for Paraeducators Resources, Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/cmmrhomepage.html
- Paraeducator.com www.paraeducator.com/
- Personnel Improvement Center www.personnelcenter.org/para_edu.cfm

General Disability Links

- ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education http://www.eric.ed.gov/
- Center for Persons with Disabilities   www.cpd.usu.org/
- No Child Left Behind www.ed.gov/nclb/

101 Ways to Praise a Child

1. Wow
2. Way to go
3. Super
4. That's it!
5. Outstanding
6. Excellent
7. Great
8. Good
9. Neat
10. Well done
11. Extraordinary
12. I knew you could do it
13. I'm proud of you
14. Fantastic
15. Super star
16. Nice work
17. Looking good
18. You're on top of it
19. Beautiful
20. Now you're flying
21. You're catching on
22. Now you've got it
23. You're incredible
24. Bravo
25. You're fantastic
26. Hurray for you
27. You're on target
28. You're on your way
29. It's everything   I hoped for
30. How smart
31. Good job
32. That's incredible
33. Hot dog
34. Dynamite
35. Thumbs up
36. You're unique
37. Nothing can stop you now
38. Good for you
39. Congratulations
40. Remarkable job
41. Beautiful work
42. Spectacular
43. Out of sight
44. Keep up the good work
45. You're precious
46. Great discovery
47. You've discovered the secret
48. You figured it out
49. Fantastic job
50. Hip, hip, hurray
51. Bingo
52. Magnificent
53. Marvelous
54. Terrific
55. You are important
56. The time you put in really shows
57. Sensational
58. Super work
59. Creative job
60. Terrific job
61. Fantastic job
62. Exceptional performance
63. You're a real trooper
64. You are responsible
65. You rock!
66. You are exciting
67. You learned it right
68. What an imagination
69. What a good listener
70. Fabulous
71. You're growing up
72. You tried hard
73. You care and it shows
74. Beautiful sharing
75. What a performance!
76. You're a good student
77. I trust you
78. Take a bow
79. You mean a lot to me
80. You make me happy
81. Right on!
82. You made it happen
83. Brilliant
84. Class act
85. I respect you
86. Nice going
87. That's correct
88. You should be proud
89. Phenomenal
90. You are a real trooper
91. Great answer
92. What a great idea
93. Awesome
94. A+ job
95. Top notch
96. You made my day
97. That's the best
98. You've made progress
99. You've got what it takes
100. I knew you had it in you
101. You've outdone yourself