

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms

**Increasing Student Learning and Independence
Grades K-12**

PD RESOURCE KIT



Bureau of Education & Research

**Practical Strategies for
Special Education Paraprofessionals
in Inclusive Classrooms**

**Increasing Student Learning
and Independence, Grades K-12**

PD Resource Kit

RESOURCE GUIDE

by Janet Hull and
and Mona Roach, PhD



Bureau of Education & Research

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Thank you for your interest in *Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Increasing Student Learning and Independence, Grades K-12*.

Skilled paraprofessionals play a critically important role in supporting the success of students with special needs in K-12 inclusive classrooms. This program demonstrates an array of strategies that will help special education paraprofessionals promote student learning, foster student independence, and increase positive student engagement in general education classrooms.

This PD Resource Kit contains a comprehensive Resource Guide and DVD with video clips for use in PD sessions. We have designed each PD Resource Kit to be used by:

- PD facilitators to support PD sessions with groups of any size
- Individuals and small groups interested in self-study

The Resource Guide contains suggestions for utilizing the PD Resource Kit and a variety of print resources that may be reproduced for use by participants in their own classrooms.

Sincerely,

Mona Roach, PhD
Media Training Manager

ABOUT THE TRAINER . . .

JANET HULL has over twenty-five years of experience teaching and providing consulting services to students with cognitive, behavioral, communication, and autism spectrum disorders. Janet is also a skilled provider of effective professional development for paraprofessionals and teachers. These experiences have led to a deep understanding of the challenges faced by special education paraprofessionals and of the critical role they play in the lives of students with disabilities by promoting academic achievement, motivating higher levels of student engagement and developing skills of independence.

ABOUT THE BUREAU...

BUREAU OF EDUCATION & RESEARCH is North America's leading provider of PD events and resources for professional educators. Founded in 1976, the Bureau provides national and regional PD programs across the United States and Canada. The Bureau also offers additional high-quality PD resources:

- **PD Resource Kits** contain outstanding video clips and supporting print resources designed for schools and districts to use to conduct their own PD sessions
- **Online PD Courses** contain outstanding video clips and supporting print resources designed for individuals and groups of educators to learn at their own convenience
- **On-Site PD Services** enable schools and districts to bring outstanding BER Trainers to their own sites to facilitate customized professional development
- **National Train-the-Trainer Programs** on cutting-edge topics enable schools and districts to train their own staff members who then conduct site-based professional development sessions

For further information about Bureau PD programs and resources, please contact us: www.ber.org or toll free (800) 735-3503.

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms

**Increasing Student Learning and Independence
Grades K-12**

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PROGRAM GUIDE



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Suggestions for PD Trainers

General Information

This section of the *Resource Guide* is designed for those who will be presenting this material in a workshop format. If you are viewing the program by yourself or with a small group, please turn to page 10 for suggestions appropriate to your needs.

Video can be a powerful medium for demonstrating effective teaching practices and providing opportunities for discussion. This program offers facilitators a variety of options:

Option One: Select PLAY ALL on the main DVD menu. This selection enables you to control the video playback for the entire program, stopping when desired to ask questions, hold a discussion, or use the related print resources. You will also find this option helpful when previewing the program before a staff development session.

Option Two: Select a topic from the TOPIC MENU. The selection will either take you directly to video footage or bring up a more detailed subtopic menu. Selecting PLAY ALL on the subtopic menu will play the entire topic section. You can stop at any point for questions and discussion.

Option Three: Subtopic Menus enable you to select specific segments within a topic. This is an excellent option when you want to review a particular aspect of the topic or wish to focus on just one lesson or concept.

No matter which option you choose, as you guide participants through this program, the most effective strategy is to show a segment, then stop for discussion and/or an opportunity to read the related print resources. At times, you may want to show viewers a particular segment more than once to clarify some finer points of the teaching. We encourage you to tailor your sessions to match the expertise and experience of your participants.

Overview of the Program

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Increasing Student Learning and Independence, Grades K-12 is a program designed to help paraprofessionals increase their repertoire of strategies for working effectively with students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Section One includes a brief introduction to the video program and key concepts for setting up productive paraprofessional experiences with students and teachers.

Total running time: 12:00 minutes

In Section Two, paraprofessionals will see a variety of strategies that promote student independence.

Total running time: 9:00 minutes

Section Three demonstrates a number of techniques that paraprofessionals can use to support student thinking and learning as well as promote productive student engagement.

Total running time: 29:00 minutes

Scheduling Suggestion

This program is not designed to be shown straight through. The program is ideal for a series of short sessions. You may also choose to show the entire program in a single session. In either situation, the most effective approach is to show a section of the video, use the questions in the *Suggestions for Trainers* section of this guide to facilitate a discussion, and provide handouts from the *Training Resources*.

Equipment/Materials Needed

DVD player, monitor

DVD

Handouts for participants

Chart paper or whiteboard, markers

Optional:

- LCD projector

Note-Taking Guide

A *Note-Taking Guide* for the entire program is located on pages 19-25. The divisions and headings match the graphics in the video. The Key Concept of each section is listed at the top of that section of the note-taking guide.

The Sessions

Before Viewing the Program

Distribute the handout *Supporting Student Learning and Independence* on page 27.

Give participants a few minutes to scan the list of responsibilities on the handout and circle those that are part of their current position or have been in the past. Have participants keep the handout to refer to after viewing each section of the program. Encourage them to discuss how the new strategies and techniques in the video will enhance their work with students.

Section One: Set the Stage for Success

Section One includes a brief introduction to the video program. It also highlights four key practices that lead to successful working relationships with teachers and students.

Total running time: 12:00 minutes

Section One of the video program is divided into four short segments:

- *Knowing Students' Goals* (5:00 minutes)
- *Communication* (4:00 minutes)
- *Being Prepared and Organized* (1:30 minutes)
- *Repertoire of Strategies* (1:30 minutes)

Directions to PD Trainers

You will want to stop the video after each segment and use the questions and prompts that are provided to ensure that paraprofessionals are familiar with all school or district policies that apply to them. It is also an opportune time to share ideas and suggestions for implementing practices that experienced paraprofessionals have found to be effective.

Distribute the *Note-Taking Guide* for Section One, page 19.

Show segment: *Knowing Students' Goals*

Discussion Questions

- ✓ How do paraprofessionals gain access to student information?
- ✓ What student information is appropriate for paraprofessionals to know?
- ✓ What are the school/district guidelines for maintaining confidentiality?

Prompts for exploring confidentiality with paraprofessionals

- You are on bus duty after school and a parent of one of your students asks you how the child is doing in math...
- A teacher across the hall from an inclusive classroom you work in wants to know how one of the students with special needs is getting along with the other students in the class...

Show segment: *Communication*

Discussion Questions

- ✓ When are there opportunities during the day for you to have quick conversations with a classroom teacher?
- ✓ What are some additional ways to communicate with teachers?
(e.g. email, notes, student log)
- ✓ How might you arrange to take part in longer planning sessions with the classroom teacher?
- ✓ What are some ways to encourage communication with teachers who don't see it as a high priority (or never have time)?

- ✓ Why have open lines of communication with teachers? (*Ongoing interactions with teachers keep paraprofessionals informed and enable them to adjust their efforts and provide needed support to students.*)

Show segment: *Being Prepared and Organized*

Discussion Questions

- ✓ What materials would be helpful to have at hand when working with students?
- ✓ What classroom storage options are available to you?
- ✓ If you are in several classrooms supporting students throughout the day, what portable options for transporting materials might work for you?
- ✓ What is the process in your building for securing materials to use with students? (*sticky notes, markers, scissors, etc.*)
- ✓ Why is it so important to be organized and ready with needed materials?

Show segment: *Repertoire of Strategies*

Discussion Questions

- ✓ What are some of the ways that students with disabilities need special support? (*e.g. physical, social, staying on task, clarification of an assignment*)
- ✓ What are some strategies that you currently use or have seen in use that you would consider effective for supporting student learning?
- ✓ What are some of the challenges you encounter when trying to support student learning?

Supporting Print Materials for Section One

Note-Taking Guide (page 19)

Supporting Student Learning and Independence (page 27)

Getting Organized (page 29)

Successful Partnering with Other Adults (pages 31-33)

Special Education Paraprofessionals in the Inclusive Classroom: A Brief Overview (page 35)

References and Resources (page 67)

Section Two: Foster Student Independence

Section Two includes a variety of strategies that will help paraprofessionals increase students' skills of independence.

Total running time: 9:00 minutes

Section Two is divided into three segments:

Encourage Student Participation (2:00 minutes)

Promote Self-Sufficiency (1:30 minutes)

Monitor the Level of Support (5:30 minutes)

Directions to PD Trainers:

Many of the suggested strategies in this portion of the program may be new behaviors for many paraprofessionals. You will want to stop the video after each segment and use the questions and prompts that are provided to help participants process and discuss how to most effectively apply the practices with students. It is also an opportune time to share ideas and suggestions for implementing practices that experienced paraprofessionals have found to be effective.

Distribute the *Note-Taking Guide* for Section Two, page 21.

Show the first two segments of Section Two:

Encourage Student Participation

Promote Self-Sufficient Behavior

Discussion Questions

- ✓ What are the benefits to students of becoming more independent?
- ✓ What are the consequences of staying dependent on others?
- ✓ Consider the students you currently support. How might you adjust your strategies to increase their independence?
- ✓ Not all students will reach the same level of independence. What are reasonable goals for the student or students you currently support?
- ✓ How might you learn some additional successful techniques for helping students become more independent?

Show the last segment of Section Two:

Monitor the Level of Support

Discussion Questions

- ✓ Why is it important to start with less intrusive prompts when you first intervene with students?
- ✓ Think about the students you work with. What prompts might be successful in directing their attention, giving them learning support, or intervening to stop undesirable behavior?
- ✓ Often when a student is doing something inappropriate, our initial reaction may be to say "Stop that!" What makes using the prompts demonstrated in the video a more effective and helpful approach?
- ✓ What are some of the signs that indicate a student may need a higher level of prompt?

- ✓ Why prompt a student and then move away? What message does this technique send to the student?
- ✓ Think about the prompts you use or have observed being used with students. Where would these prompts fit on the prompt hierarchy?
- ✓ What are the school or district guidelines for using physical prompts with students?

Supporting Print Materials for Section Two

Note-Taking Guide (page 21)

Why Build Student Independence? (page 37)

Strategies to Avoid Giving Answers to Students (pages 39-41)

The Prompt Hierarchy (pages 43-45)

Guidelines for Effective Prompting (page 47)

Fading Prompts Across All Settings (page 49)

References and Resources (page 67)

Section Three:

Support Student Learning

Promote Productive Student Engagement

Section Three demonstrates a number of techniques that paraprofessionals can use to support student thinking and learning and promote productive student engagement.

Total running time: 29:00 minutes

Section Three is divided into two segments:

Modify Assignments and Materials (14:00 minutes)

Scaffold Student Thinking and Learning (15:00 minutes)

Directions to PD Trainers:

Many of these strategies help paraprofessionals deepen their support of student learning by encouraging students to read, think, discuss and write. By stopping the video after each segment and using the questions below, you will enable participants to process and discuss how to effectively apply the practices with their students. It is also an opportune time to share ideas and suggestions for implementing practices that experienced paraprofessionals have found to be effective.

Distribute the *Note-Taking Guide* for Section Three, pages 23-25.

Show the first segment of Section Three:

Modify Assignments and Materials (14:00 minutes)

Discussion Questions

- ✓ Consider the students you currently support. What modifications or accommodations are you implementing with them?
- ✓ Are these instructional or content modifications?
- ✓ How do these modifications support students' learning or participation in the inclusive classroom?
- ✓ What modifications or accommodations do you feel comfortable developing for the students you support?

Show the last segment of Section Three:

Scaffold Student Thinking and Learning (15:00 minutes)

Discussion Questions

- ✓ What does it mean to scaffold student thinking and learning?
(*Scaffolding student learning means to prompt, probe, or ask questions that encourage students to think in ways they might not be able to on their own.*)
- ✓ How do the paraprofessional interactions with students in this portion of the program differ from the prompts designed to keep students on task and paying attention? (*Focus is on promoting student thinking, not just being on task...*)
- ✓ How do these scaffolding strategies help increase student independence in the inclusive classroom?
- ✓ What strategies in this portion of the program would be effective with students you currently support?

Supporting Print Materials

Note-Taking Guide (pages 23-25)

Managing the Modification and Accommodation Maze (page 51)

When, What and How Much Do I Modify? (page 53)

Accommodations or Modifications Based on Student Needs (pages 55-63)

Scaffolding Student Thinking and Learning (page 65)

References and Resources (page 67)

Closing

Thank participants for their willingness to think about and try new strategies and ideas from the program. Encourage them to choose some of the strategies they observed and use those techniques to enhance students' engagement and learning in inclusive classroom settings.

Suggestions For Self-Study

General Information

This section of the *Resource Guide* is designed for individuals and small groups. If you are responsible for leading a group through this material, please turn back to *Suggestions for Trainers*, page 3.

Video instruction provides a practical and efficient way to observe effective teaching strategies and engage in thoughtful reflection. We encourage you to watch a segment, stop the video, reflect, and take full advantage of the related print resources. You will find suggestions for making the most of your training sessions in this portion of the *Resource Guide*.

Overview of the Program

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Increasing Student Learning and Independence, Grades K-12 is a program designed to help paraprofessionals increase their repertoire of strategies for working effectively with students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Section One includes a brief introduction to the video program and key concepts for setting up productive paraprofessional experiences with students and teachers.

Total running time: 12:00 minutes

Section Two includes a variety of strategies that will help paraprofessionals increase students' independence.

Total running time: 9:00 minutes

Section Three demonstrates a number of techniques that paraprofessionals can use to support student thinking and learning and promote productive student engagement.

Total running time: 29:00 minutes

Scheduling Suggestion

Whether you choose to view the entire program in one session or view sections of the program over two or more study sessions, **this program is not designed to be viewed straight through**. Your learning experience will be much richer if you take the time to stop the video after each section, reflect, and read the additional information contained in this *Resource Guide*.

Equipment/Materials Needed

DVD player, monitor

DVD

Print Resources (pages 19-67)

Reflection Questions

Reflection questions are provided for your sessions. It is recommended that you view the segment and then refer to the questions for thoughtful reflection. Please keep in mind that this guide contains print explanations of the strategies as well as other related material that can inform and enrich your learning.

Note-Taking Guide

A note-taking guide for the entire program is located on pages 19-25. The divisions and headings match the graphics in the video.

Your Training Sessions

Section One: Set the Stage for Success

Section One includes a brief introduction to the video program. It also highlights four key practices that lead to successful working relationships with teachers and students.

Total running time: 12:00 minutes

Section One of the video program is divided into four short segments:

- *Knowing Students' Goals (5:00 minutes)*
- *Communication (4:00 minutes)*
- *Being Prepared and Organized (1:30 minutes)*
- *Repertoire of Strategies (1:30 minutes)*

Turn to the *Note-Taking Guide* for Section One, page 19.

Watch segment: *Knowing Students' Goals*

Reflection Questions

- ✓ How do you gain access to student information?
- ✓ What student information is appropriate for you as a paraprofessional to know?
- ✓ What are the school/district guidelines for maintaining confidentiality?

Prompts for exploring confidentiality with paraprofessionals

- You are on bus duty after school and a parent of one of your students asks you how the child is doing in math...
- A teacher across the hall from an inclusive classroom you work in wants to know how one of the students with special needs is getting along with the other students in the class...

Watch segment: *Communication*

Reflection Questions

- ✓ When are there opportunities during the day for you to have quick conversations with a classroom teacher?
- ✓ What are some additional ways to communicate with teachers? (*e.g. email, notes, student log*)
- ✓ How might you arrange to take part in longer planning sessions with the classroom teacher?
- ✓ What are some ways to encourage communication with teachers who don't see it as a high priority (or never have time)?
- ✓ Why have open lines of communication with teachers? (*Ongoing interactions with teachers keep paraprofessionals informed and enable them to adjust their efforts and provide needed support to students.*)

Watch segment: *Being Prepared and Organized*

Reflection Questions

- ✓ What materials would be helpful to have at hand when working with students?
- ✓ What classroom storage options are available to you?
- ✓ If you are in several classrooms supporting students throughout the day, what portable options for transporting materials might work for you?
- ✓ What is the process in your building for securing materials to use with students? (*sticky notes, markers, scissors, etc.*)
- ✓ Why is it so important to be organized and ready with needed materials?

Watch segment: *Repertoire of Strategies*

Reflection Questions

- ✓ What are some of the ways that students with disabilities need special support? (*e.g. physical, social, staying on task, clarification of an assignment*)
- ✓ What are some strategies that you currently use or have seen in use that you would consider effective for supporting student learning?
- ✓ What are some of the challenges you encounter when trying to support student learning?

Supporting Print Materials for Section One

Note-Taking Guide (page 19)

Supporting Student Learning and Independence (page 27)

Getting Organized (page 29)

Successful Partnering with Other Adults (pages 31-33)

Special Education Paraprofessionals in the Inclusive Classroom: A Brief Overview (page 35)

References and Resources (page 67)

Section Two: Foster Student Independence

Section Two includes a variety of strategies that will help you increase students' skills of independence.

Total running time: 9:00 minutes

Section Two is divided into three segments:

Encourage Student Participation (2:00 minutes)

Promote Self-Sufficiency (1:30 minutes)

Monitor the Level of Support (5:30 minutes)

Many of the suggested strategies in this portion of the program may be new for you. You will want to stop the video after each segment and use the questions to reflect on how to most effectively apply the practices with students.

Turn to the *Note-Taking Guide* for Section Two, page 21.

Watch the first two segments of Section Two:

Encourage Student Participation

Promote Self-Sufficient Behavior

Reflection Questions

- ✓ What are the benefits to students of becoming more independent?
- ✓ What are the consequences of staying dependent on others?
- ✓ Consider the students you currently support. How might you adjust your strategies to increase their independence?
- ✓ Not all students will reach the same level of independence. What are reasonable goals for the student or students you currently support?
- ✓ How might you learn some additional successful techniques for helping students become more independent?

Watch the last segment of Section Two: *Monitor the Level of Support*

Reflection Questions

- ✓ Why is it important to start with less intrusive prompts when you first intervene with students?
- ✓ Think about the students you work with. What prompts might be successful in directing their attention, giving them learning support, or intervening to stop undesirable behavior?

- ✓ Often when a student is doing something inappropriate, our initial reaction may be to say “Stop that!” What makes using the prompts demonstrated in the video a more effective and helpful approach?
- ✓ What are some of the signs that indicate a student may need a higher level of prompt?
- ✓ Why prompt a student and then move away? What message does this technique send to the student?
- ✓ Think about the prompts you use or have observed being used with students. Where would these prompts fit on the prompt hierarchy?
- ✓ What are the school or district guidelines for using physical prompts with students?

Supporting Print Materials for Section Two

Note-Taking Guide (page 21)

Why Build Student Independence? (page 37)

Strategies to Avoid Giving Answers to Students (pages 39-41)

The Prompt Hierarchy (pages 43-45)

Guidelines for Effective Prompting (page 47)

Fading Prompts Across All Settings (page 49)

References and Resources (page 67)

Section Three:

Support Student Learning

Promote Productive Student Engagement

Section Three demonstrates a number of techniques that you can use to support student thinking and learning and promote productive student engagement.

Total running time: 29 minutes

Section Three is divided into two segments:

Modify Assignments and Materials (14:00 minutes)

Scaffold Student Thinking and Learning (15:00 minutes)

Many of these strategies will help you deepen your support of student learning by encouraging students to read, think, discuss and write. You will want to stop the video after each segment and use the questions to reflect on how to most effectively apply the practices with your students.

Turn to the *Note-Taking Guide* for Section Three, pages 23-25.

Watch the first segment of Section Three:

Modify Assignments and Materials (14:00 minutes)

Reflection Questions

- ✓ Consider the students you currently support. What modifications or accommodations are you implementing with them?
- ✓ Are these instructional or content modifications?
- ✓ How do these modifications support students' learning or participation in the inclusive classroom?
- ✓ What modifications or accommodations do you feel comfortable developing for the students you support?

Watch the last segment of Section Three:

Scaffold Student Thinking and Learning (15:00 minutes)

Reflection Questions

- ✓ What does it mean to scaffold student thinking and learning?
(*Scaffolding student learning means to prompt, probe, or ask questions that encourage students to think in ways they might not be able to on their own.*)
- ✓ How do the paraprofessional interactions with students in this portion of the program differ from the prompts designed to keep students on task and paying attention? (*Focus is on promoting student thinking, not just being on task...*)
- ✓ How do these scaffolding strategies help increase student independence in the inclusive classroom?
- ✓ What strategies in this portion of the program would be effective with students you currently support?

Supporting Print Materials

Note-Taking Guide (pages 23-25)

Managing the Modification and Accommodation Maze (page 51)

When, What and How Much Do I Modify? (page 53)

Accommodations or Modifications Based on Student Needs (pages 55-63)

Scaffolding Student Thinking and Learning (page 65)

References and Resources (page 67)

Closing

Thank you for your willingness to think about and try new strategies and ideas. We encourage you to choose some of the strategies you observed and incorporate those techniques with your students. You will see a difference in their engagement and learning in inclusive classrooms.

PRINT RESOURCES



Bureau of Education & Research

Note-Taking Guide

Section One: Set the Stage for Success

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Increasing Student Learning and Independence Grades K-12

Key Concept: Paraprofessionals set the stage for successful classroom experiences by knowing students' behavior and learning goals, communicating with the classroom teacher, being prepared and organized, and developing a repertoire of strategies to deal with a range of student learning needs.

Knowing Students' Goals

Communicating

Being Prepared and Organized

Possessing a Repertoire of Strategies

Note-Taking Guide

Section Two: Foster Student Independence

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Increasing Student Learning and Independence Grades K-12

Key Concept: To foster student independence, paraprofessionals actively encourage student participation, promote self-sufficiency and monitor the level of support they provide.

Encourage Participation

Promote Self-Sufficiency

Monitor Support

Prompt hierarchy

- Visual prompts
- Verbal prompts
- Physical prompts

Note-Taking Guide

Section Three: Support Student Learning

Promote Productive Student Engagement

Practical Strategies for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Classrooms: Increasing Student Learning and Independence Grades K-12

Key Concept: Skilled paraprofessionals support student learning and promote productive student engagement by modifying assignments and materials and scaffolding student thinking and learning.

Modifying Assignments and Materials

Modify the difficulty of the task

Reduce the amount of work

Divide assignments into manageable segments

Provide alternative means & materials

Read aloud

Choral read

Whisper read

Key Concept: Skilled paraprofessionals support student learning and promote productive student engagement by modifying assignments and materials and scaffolding student thinking and learning.

Scaffolding Student Thinking and Learning

Follow up

Make connections

Wait time

Think, talk, write

Preview, predict

Think, pair, share

Supporting Student Learning and Independence

Paraprofessionals serve in many capacities as they work with students with special needs. The following list focuses on ways that paraprofessionals support student learning and independence in inclusive classrooms.

Take a few minutes to scan the list and circle those responsibilities that are part of your position now or have been in the past. Keep these in mind as you view the video program. You may want to return to this list after viewing each section of the program to discuss how you could apply new strategies to enhance your work as a paraprofessional.

- Provide instructional support to small groups of students under direct supervision from teacher
- Tutor individual students 1:1
- Roam the inclusive classroom to support students
- Increase student independence
- Use a prompt hierarchy
- Assist with implementing goals/objectives from the IEP
- Participate in IEP meetings
- Implement modifications and accommodations
- Develop activities/games to reinforce skills
- Provide support for students during reading/writing activities
- Scribe for students as they dictate their writing
- Support students with technology
- Support/prompt students during specialist times (K-6) and electives (6-12) art, music, media, PE, chorus, orchestra, technology, etc.
- Develop students' organizational skills
- Develop and utilize picture schedules
- Record/check information in student agenda books
- Collect data and chart student progress
- Maintain student portfolio
- Contribute to a communication log between teacher and paraprofessional
- Communicate with teachers using email

Getting Organized

Keeping materials organized and accessible enables paraprofessionals to be prepared and results in less downtime for students. Consider how you might incorporate strategies from the following list of suggestions.

- Use hanging file folders or accordion files
- Color code materials
- Label materials in order of daily use
- Use crates for storing and organizing folders
- Establish work area for storing materials
- Keep materials close at hand
- Arrange work space for easy access to students
- Post schedule in work area
- Keep schedule in notebook/folder
- Obtain extra set of materials for work area
- Maintain agenda book to record student assignments
- Use cart with wheels to keep materials all in one place and portable
- Maintain list of frequently used phone numbers
- Travel with tote bag containing materials
- Maintain needed student supplies close at hand to reduce downtime
- Teach students routines for placing completed paperwork in specific folders
- Locate quiet area for managing paperwork
- Manage paperwork during student transitions
- Manage paperwork while students are engaged in independent activities
- Prioritize paperwork/filing to be completed
- Schedule time of day/week to complete paperwork and data collection responsibilities
- Use early dismissal days to complete paperwork activities
- Schedule time on “work days” to complete paperwork activities
- Use the desk clock to pace yourself (tell yourself that you are going to work for 10-15 minutes)
- Make a to-do list to track specific events and tasks
- Consider maintaining a long-term calendar (yearly/monthly/weekly) to record key events (names/dates/places)

Successful Partnering with Other Adults

Paraprofessionals often find themselves working with multiple adults in a variety of settings. There are five key aspects to successful partnerships:

Communicate effectively

1. Be a good listener
2. Maintain eye contact
3. Don't finish the other person's sentences (Allow them to finish sharing their thoughts)
4. Try not to react defensively to what others might share with you
5. Choose a mutually convenient time to speak with others about your concerns (not during instruction)
6. Prioritize concerns that you wish to discuss
7. Avoid using emotionally charged words when discussing students (refused, uncooperative, defiant, etc.)
8. After holding a discussion restate the outcomes to make sure all parties are clear on the agreement
9. Use "I" statements to express your concerns ("I wanted to talk to you about..." "I have a concern about...")
10. Use friendly, tactful language when communicating in order to maintain a successful working relationship
11. Avoid making the other adult defensive
12. Don't be afraid to share your ideas or ask clarifying questions
13. Use friendly, open body language (avoid crossing your arms, pointing your finger, etc.)

Maintain a successful relationship

1. Avoid talking with other school employees about the teachers you collaborate with and support; this can create a lack of trust between you and the teachers you assist and foster an uncomfortable environment
2. Remember that confidentiality is important to a successful relationship
3. Avoid criticizing a teacher's method of instruction

4. After making a suggestion, give the teacher "wait time" to decide if she will use your idea
5. When making observations about students, be specific in your descriptions
6. Be supportive and understanding of your teacher partners

Implement lesson plans

1. Arrive on time
2. Clarify your role and responsibilities for instruction by asking:
 - a. What modifications will be used?
 - b. What materials will support the modification?
 - c. What are the steps that I will follow?
3. Implement teacher plans as outlined; it is the teacher's responsibility to determine appropriate modifications and content

Use a positive approach to address conflicts

1. Speak privately with the teacher to schedule a time to discuss concerns
2. Schedule a meeting at a time that is mutually convenient
3. Make a prioritized list of concerns to be discussed
4. Use "I" statements to describe your concerns or ideas: "I feel that I have a couple of good ideas for modifying Bill's class work" or "I am concerned about how we're dealing with Carol's behavior."
5. Consider using words such as: I, we, and us when discussing concerns with others
6. Avoid using emotionally charged language: "You never give me any ideas for working with students!" or "You always stop the lesson before my group is finished."

Remember you are a valuable member of the team

You are an essential member of the student's instructional team and without your support teachers would not be able to meet the needs of all learners

Special Education Paraprofessionals in the Inclusive Classroom: A Brief Overview

Paraprofessionals play a vital and varied role in inclusive classrooms. They support both teachers and students as they help implement educational programs designed for a range of diverse learners with varying needs.

1. Be organized

- Use hanging file folders or accordion files to organize paperwork
- Color code materials
- Label materials in order of daily use
- Use crates, other containers or rolling carts for storing and organizing materials
- Keep materials close at hand
- Include pertinent student information, class or subject notes
- Keep a list of important phone numbers

2. Maintain a daily schedule

- Include the names, room numbers and class schedules of students who are assigned to you
- Communicate with teachers, special education supervisors and other paraprofessionals about any schedule changes

3. Assist targeted students

- It is the paraprofessional's responsibility to support assigned students with special needs. However, sometimes it is appropriate for the paraprofessional to interact with other students as well. Check with the classroom teacher to make sure it is appropriate prior to providing assistance (answering questions, redirecting back to task, etc.)

4. Maintain confidentiality

- Respect the privacy of students you support
- Only share information with clearly identified individuals
- Don't draw attention to children by pointing them out
- Do not use student names when discussing your job
- Direct questions about your student to the case manager
- Do not make jokes about your students

Why Build Student Independence?

Reasons for building student independence:

- Allows students with disabilities access to rigorous curriculum
- Allows students with disabilities access to least restrictive environment
- Builds student self-confidence
- Enhances student self-esteem
- Motivates students to achieve academically and socially
- Creates an empowered learner despite learning differences
- Allows staff and students to focus on instruction
- Increases student confidence to ask clarifying questions when dealing with challenging curriculum
- Gives students a sense of purpose
- Increases social acceptance of students with special needs
- Increases students' ability to manage social situations with confidence
- Reduces stereotypic labels of students with disabilities
- Provides a "bridge" for bringing regular education and special education together
- For older students, eases transitions into community or place of employment
- Improves quality of life of students with disabilities

Strategies to Avoid Giving Answers to Students

Teachers in K-12 classrooms encourage students to find answers to their questions and solve problems with increased independence. They want students to engage in thinking that leads them to their own answers, now and for the rest of their lives. Paraprofessionals play a key role in helping students with disabilities reach their full potential as thinkers and problem solvers. One way to accomplish this is to avoid giving students answers.

Here are tips for helping students with special needs figure out problems and find answers on their own:

- Encourage students to feel comfortable with having lots of questions and not knowing all the answers
- Encourage students to move away from listening passively by using leading questions and prompts
- Support students when they take the risk to ask questions (questions mean interest, and interest means an engaged learner)
- Teach students how to use reference materials to assist with answering questions and solving problems (dictionary, thesaurus, personal word lists, Google)
- Assist students with developing and maintaining a personal "word list" binder for locating correct spellings and definitions of words
- Encourage students to use reference materials with increased independence
- Assist students with developing computer skills that will allow them to efficiently locate information on the internet in order to facilitate learning new information and completing classroom assignments (with supervision from paraprofessional and adhering to school system policies)
- Create vocabulary cards with definitions and pictures for reference and study
- For assignments that require reading and answering questions:
 - a. Have student read questions prior to reading in the text
 - b. Point out to students that textbook questions often follow the sequence of the text
 - c. Model how to mark pages (with sticky notes or bookmarks) where answers can be found later
- Teach note-taking strategies to help students identify main concepts and supporting details

- Develop peer-tutoring groups to assist students in learning how to share and to help others
- Even if you know the answer, catch yourself and say, "You need to try to figure it out first. When you think you have the answer, raise your hand and I'll come back."
- Teach students how to frame questions that they can test. "If I gave that answer, how would I know it was right?" You can adapt this by giving students three possible answers. Then students can determine which one is correct and support their response.

The Prompt Hierarchy

Least to Most Intrusive

- Natural teacher cue
- Modeling
- Visual prompt
- Verbal prompt
- Partial physical
- Full physical

Natural teacher cue/prompt: Refers to the use of normal, everyday cues that a classroom teacher would use with other students who do not require additional assistance. Natural teacher cues or prompts are usually an established part of classroom routines. Keep in mind it is essential for students to be given the opportunity to first respond to a natural cue/prompt from the teacher prior to receiving an additional prompt from a paraprofessional. Natural teacher cues/prompts include:

- Lights on/lights off
- Beginning-of-class assignment on the overhead or blackboard
- Use of schedule book/agenda
- Class bell
- Announcements
- Peer supports (orchestrated by teacher)
- Written schedule on board
- Picture schedule
- Posted outcomes for the day
- Posted classroom rules
- Hall/bathroom passes
- Pre-arranged private signals

Modeling/Demonstrating: Refers to an adult demonstrating a correct response or skill for a student. The following are just a few ways to use this powerful teaching strategy:

- Teacher demonstrates with another adult how to greet another person
- Teacher “thinks aloud” while solving a math problem on the overhead or demonstrates a science experiment that the class will be expected to perform in cooperative groups later
- Para shows a student how to tie a shoe

- Para demonstrates how to use a picture schedule
- Para models how to organize materials for easier access

Visual Prompting: Involves pointing/gesturing to a general area or to a specific object. May be an agreed-upon signal or hand gesture; could also include picture cues:

- If a student does not remember to use his/her hand to anchor a paper before writing, para points to the spot where student has been directed to place his/her hand on previous occasions
- A teacher uses a gesture or sign language to redirect a student's attention – "Look at me."
- Students have individual schedules to refer to throughout the day
- Paras use sets of cue cards with pictures of desired behaviors to avoid overloading students with spoken directions

Verbal Prompting: Includes statements or questions made to the student to assist them in performing a task/activity after an initial cue or prompt:

- "What do you need to do next?"
- "What do you need to do now?"

Partial physical prompts: refers to giving a student some amount of physical guidance through parts of a task/activity:

- Guiding the student's hand toward a beaker used in a science experiment
- Assisting the student in putting a coat on
- Starting the zipper on a student's jacket
- Placing a hand briefly on the student's shoulder to redirect him/her back to task
- Shadowing a student's hand through an activity
- Pointing to keyboard letters to help a student type a response

Full Physical Prompt: Involves physically guiding the student through an entire task/activity. This type of prompting should never lead to the student experiencing discomfort, anxiety or embarrassment:

- Continually guiding the student's hands during hand washing
- Using hand-over-hand to assist the student with writing their name. For example, with one hand the assistant or teacher shows the student how to anchor the paper, and with the other hand, the assistant moves the student's hand as they go through the motions of writing the student's name.
- Holding a student's hand as he/she ascends/descends the stairs
- Placing both hands on the student's shoulder to turn his/her body to face the teacher during instruction

Guidelines for Effective Prompting

- Only provide a prompt for a skill that a student is unable to perform independently
- Gain student attention before giving a prompt
- Use the least intrusive effective prompt
- Prompt from behind when using full physical prompts
- Use verbal prompts effectively
 - Establish eye contact with student prior to giving prompt
 - Use vocabulary that is familiar to student
 - Use simple and relatively short sentences when prompting
 - Adjust your rate of speaking when giving a verbal prompt
 - Give “wait time” after the prompt
 - Repeat prompt if needed
- Follow successful prompts with reinforcement
 - Reinforce the correct response
 - Use positive “I” statements: “I like the way you got started quickly.”
 - Reinforce with sincerity
- After a student masters a skill, discontinue using prompts for that skill
- All prompts need to be faded over time to avoid prompt dependency

Fading Prompts Across All Settings

FADING PROMPTS – Working with students to move from responding to instructional prompts to responding to natural cues in the environment is an important step towards independence for students with disabilities. Fading prompts is reducing the intensity or magnitude of a particular type of prompt over time while maintaining some level of positive reinforcement of appropriate student behavior.

Prompts can be faded by:

- Intensity
- Location

FADING PROMPT INTENSITY:

- Provide verbal prompts more quietly (in a whisper)
- Say less (“Take out your paper” becomes “Paper”)
- Use fewer visual prompts
- Move from hand-over-hand physical prompt to shadowing (without touching the student’s hand)
- Reduce the number of prompts given during a period of time

FADING PROMPT LOCATION: This refers to adjusting your proximity to students, moving from close to farther away.

- Move from full physical hand-over-hand, to hand on wrist, hand on elbow, hand on shoulder, to standing next to the student, to 3 ft. away, to 5 ft. away, etc.
- Changing classes:
 - Next to student transitioning in halls
 - Within line of vision transitioning between classes
 - Meeting the student at class
- Monitoring classwork:
 - Seated next to student in class
 - Moving about the class/going to student only when needed
 - Present for only part of class
- Using visual/verbal cues:
 - Using visual/verbal cues near student
 - Using visual cues from other areas of room (verbal cues are best when used in close proximity to the student)

Managing the Modification and Accommodation Maze

Appropriate, reasonable accommodations and modifications foster and enhance the learning of all students in mixed ability classes.

NATURALLY OCCURRING MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

Remember, it is not always necessary to modify class work beyond what the regular education teacher would normally do for general education students. There will be times when class activities are appropriate and students with special needs are able to complete them without additional modifications.

INSTRUCTIONAL MODIFICATIONS

Students can:

- Complete the same tasks/activities as their peers in the same way
- Complete the same tasks/assignments as their peers with some degree of support
- Complete the same tasks/activities as their peers with modifications

CONTENT MODIFICATIONS

Students can:

- Complete some of the task – partial completion
- Focus on essential content information
- Perform a task/activity that is similar to the task that peers are completing
- Complete a different task/alternate activity

When, What and How Much Do I Modify?

WHEN DO I MODIFY?

- When you have been asked to do so by the teacher/s
- When it is needed during instructional and classroom activities
- When the student/s appear to be struggling or frustrated with an activity

WHAT DO I MODIFY?

- Specific materials identified on the IEP
- Materials/activities that require skills the student does not have or is less than proficient in
- Activities/materials that fall into categories of modifications on the IEP
- Curriculum or classroom standards as needed

HOW MUCH DO I MODIFY?

- Balance support with some challenges
- Use trial and error
- Monitor the student
- Keep trying until the student gets it or does it
- Watch the student's frustration level
- "Too easy" can be fixed faster than "too hard"

Accommodations or Modifications Based on Student Needs

MODIFICATIONS TO INCREASE ON-TASK BEHAVIOR AND WORK COMPLETION

- Alternate activities between less preferred and more preferred
- Reinforce on-task student behavior
- Reinforce for initiating an assignment
- Use a timer to break work time into small segments
- Provide alternate areas for working quietly
- Pair student with productive peer
- Use self-correcting materials
- Encourage use of manipulatives
- Provide access to computer/Alpha smart/assistive technology
- Provide extra set of materials to use at home
- Maintain extra set of books and pencils in class
- Allow students to choose between tasks
- Contract for the amount of work to be completed
- Provide periodic breaks between activities
- Provide scheduled breaks for some students
- Develop checklists for students to aid in self-monitoring skills: locating materials and remembering to bring needed materials to class
- Provide verbal reminders for bringing materials to class
- Post assignments on board as a reminder
- Reward for having needed materials and assignments
- Maintain an agenda book for recording assignments
- Use sticky notes for marking pages to read/tasks to complete
- Periodically collect and assign points or grades to notebooks
- Check notebooks as part of daily routine
- Color code folders
- For easy access to materials use a crate for folders, notebooks and other materials
- Have student put materials in appropriate folders after completing work

MODIFY MATERIALS

- Computer software for written work
- Use of assistive technology (as appropriate)
- Use of computer/keyboarding skills
- Pencil grips/short pencils
- Slant board/slanted surface
- Adapted paper (color coded, etc.)
- Graph paper for organizing math problems
- Appropriate size chair/desk
- Enlarged print
- Audio-taped text
- Provide manipulatives: calculators, base ten blocks, multiplication/division charts, fraction pieces, etc.
- Highlighted text
- Sensory fidgets
- Graphic organizers
- Laminated materials to write on

MODIFY ASSIGNMENTS

- Reduce the number of assignments
- Reduce the number of problems to solve or number of vocabulary terms to define
- Highlight problems to be completed
- Negotiate/contract for when assignments/projects will be due
- Provide student with only one portion of assignment at a time
- Have students complete odd or even items
- Reduce visual clutter on pages using note cards or cover-up file folders
- Reduce length of writing assignment
- Reduce reading requirements
- Provide additional time for work completion
- Provide key concepts to student in advance
- Break assignments/tasks into more manageable parts

- Utilize color coding as a cue
- Sequence test items from easiest to most difficult
- Simplify wording on tests/quizzes/class work
- Enlarge materials
- Tape record assignments

MODIFY INSTRUCTION

- Provide instructions one or two steps at a time
- Repeat/rephrase instructions
- Have student repeat/paraphrase instructions
- Pre-teach vocabulary or key concepts
- Provide personal word banks for reference
- Allow use of manipulatives across the curriculum
- Include hands-on, multi-sensory activities
- Provide visual instructions (as appropriate)
- Provide student with written instructions (as appropriate)
- Provide hard copy of notes from the board
- Model a mental process by verbalizing your thoughts while you complete a problem or start an assignment
- Provide opportunities to prepare for tests/quizzes
- Provide study guides
- Revise formats of tests/quizzes (fill-in-the-blank, spacing, highlighting, etc.)
- Use graphic organizers
- Use spelling devices
- Use flexible grouping
- Have student work with a peer/cooperative work group
- Provide daily/weekly assignment sheets
- Post daily schedule
- Provide picture schedule (if appropriate)
- Teach mnemonic devices
- Provide a hard copy of teacher/peer notes

- Provide a partial outline for student to complete
- Teach note-taking strategies (Cornell Method, etc.)
- Provide list of key concepts/vocabulary
- Tape record the lecture

MODIFY STUDENT RESPONSES

- Extra time to respond orally
- Extra time to respond in writing
- Allow student to use manuscript writing
- Have student highlight answers
- Provide desk models of letter formation
- Provide proofreading checklists
- Provide page numbers for locating information in texts
- Model test-taking strategies
- Encourage peer or cooperative group work
- Reformat lists of matching items into small groups
- Reduce the number of choices in multiple choice problems
- Allow students to dictate responses (as appropriate)
- Provide word banks for quizzes/tests
- Provide outline for student to take notes
- Tape record student's responses
- Allow student to use pictures to respond
- Allow student to use illustrations to assess understanding (as appropriate)

MODIFY CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

- Limit auditory and visual distractions
- Conference with student to check for understanding
- Give frequent/immediate feedback
- Use peer tutoring
- Read instructional materials to student
- Read tests/quizzes to student

- Limit choices for verbal response
- Repeat/rephrase questions
- Reduce your rate of speaking
- Use known vocabulary when asking questions
- Use less complex sentences when asking questions
- Give advance notice to student that you will be calling on them
- Allow breaks (scheduled/unscheduled)

MODIFY USE OF READING MATERIALS

- Activate prior knowledge – ask what they already know about the topic
- Read text aloud to students
- Have students whisper read or choral read
- Allow students to “Partner Read” with another student
- Provide study guides/outlines
- Provide preview questions prior to reading text
- Introduce important vocabulary prior to reading
- Use guided reading: asking questions before, during and after reading
- Use scan and read programs to allow students to hear text read aloud
- Highlight essential material

Scaffolding Student Thinking and Learning

FOLLOW UP: This strategy is especially effective in lecture style formats. As the teacher is lecturing, using an overhead or other learning tool, the paraprofessional roams the classroom, touching base with students to make sure they are following the main points. The para can check to make sure students are taking accurate notes and locating main ideas. These brief interactions also enable the paraprofessional to clarify information or extend student's thinking by posing questions or making connections.

MAKE CONNECTIONS: Connecting the unfamiliar to familiar is a crucial aspect of learning. Helping students make connections between a current topic of study and previous topics or even events in their own lives will strengthen their understanding of concepts and ideas.

WAIT TIME: Providing a few moments for students who need additional time to process information or form ideas is one way that paraprofessionals can enhance students' thinking and learning. After asking a question or giving a prompt, try giving students 3-4 seconds before prompting them again. It will be worth the wait.

THINK, TALK, WRITE: Giving students a chance to think and talk about their ideas before having them write will increase the quality and amount of their writing. This strategy helps deal with the "blank page" syndrome that overwhelms some students and may keep them from even getting started.

PREVIEW, PREDICT: When students take a few minutes to preview a book or written assignment and then make predictions, they create a framework for understanding the material. Asking students to share their predictions enables the paraprofessional to assess students' understanding and make any needed adjustments in lesson content or pacing.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE: After taking a few moments to think individually, students pair up with a partner to talk about their ideas. Receiving support and feedback from a peer often gives students the confidence they need to share their ideas with the larger group or whole class.

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