



## WORKING TOGETHER: TEACHER-PARAEDUCATOR COLLABORATION

Effective collaboration between teachers and paraeducators can help all students successfully access the general education curriculum. Working together, teachers and paraeducators can implement research-based strategies and individualize curriculum to improve results for all students. The purpose of this brief is to promote collaboration between teachers and paraeducators by identifying the elements of collaboration, delineating classroom roles, and providing a tool to improve efficiency and communication in the classroom.

### EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

Effective teacher-paraeducator collaboration requires communication and shared classroom expectations. Below are several important elements of collaboration that teams should consider:

- **Define roles** – Ensure that each team member’s role in the classroom is clear to everyone, including the students. Clearly define and articulate the paraeducator’s role in supporting instruction and behavior management. When deciding what the paraeducator’s role will be, teachers should balance their own work style preferences with those of the paraeducator. Teachers should also take into consideration specific skills with which paraeducators feel comfortable (French, 2002).
- **Develop a schedule** – Ensure that both team members have a schedule of all of the activities that will occur during a class period or day. The paraeducator should know his or her role in and the teacher’s expectations of those activities (Table 1).
- **Know instructional methods** – Make sure that both the teacher and paraeducator have a clear understanding of the instructional methods being used. If the paraeducator is expected to provide support in a specific way, the teacher should ensure that the paraeducator is familiar with the method required and is comfortable in its use. Paraeducators may need professional development to effectively carry out their roles. Teachers should be aware of training that paraeducators need and provide them with information about necessary skills and resources (French, 2002).
- **Be aware of student characteristics** – Ensure that both team members are aware of the academic and social needs of the students with whom they work. If students have IEP goals, paraeducators should have access to these goals. Teachers and paraeducators should communicate about student needs on a regular basis, particularly as students progress toward goals and needs change. Paraeducators also must know the confidentiality laws that apply to students with disabilities (French, 2002).
- **Share Classroom Experiences** – Ensure that teachers and paraeducators regularly and consistently share with one another observations and experiences they have had with students during the day or class period.

- **Share Responsibility for Students** – Make sure that both team members are working with all students equally. No students should spend a majority of their time working with only the paraeducator (Giangreco, 2003).

Teachers and paraeducators should set a time to meet on a regular basis (Carroll, 2001). This time can be used to discuss students and classroom activities. Meeting regularly also provides paraeducators with an opportunity to ask questions, state concerns, and clarify issues. If one paraeducator is assigned to several teachers, it is beneficial to meet as a group, particularly if all teachers serve the same students.

## CLASSROOM ROLES

A clear understanding of each team member’s role, coupled with ongoing communication, is vital to effective collaboration. The following chart provides guidance on each team member’s role and the areas of communication involved.

**Table 1: Roles and Responsibilities**

	Teacher Role	Paraeducator Role	Areas of Communication
<b>Instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plan all instruction, including small group activities<sup>1</sup></li> <li>▪ Provide instruction in whole-class settings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with small groups of students on specific tasks, including review or re-teaching of content</li> <li>▪ Work with one student at a time to provide intensive instruction or remediation on a concept or skill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers provide specific content and guidance about curriculum, students, and instructional materials</li> <li>▪ Paraeducators note student progress and give feedback to teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum &amp; Lesson Plan Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop all lesson plans and instructional materials<sup>1</sup></li> <li>▪ Ensure alignment with standards, student needs, and IEPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide assistance in development of classroom activities, retrieval of materials, and coordination of activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mutual review of lesson plan components prior to class</li> <li>▪ Teachers provide guidance about specific instructional methods</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and guide class-wide management plans for behavior and classroom structures</li> <li>▪ Develop and monitor individual behavior management plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist with the implementation of class-wide and individual behavior management plans</li> <li>▪ Monitor hallways, study hall, &amp; other activities outside normal class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers provide guidance about specific behavior management strategies &amp; student characteristics</li> <li>▪ Paraeducators note student progress &amp; activities and give feedback to teachers</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Pickett (1999)

	Teacher Role	Paraeducator Role	Areas of Communication
<b>Accommodations &amp; Modifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Determine (with IEP team) proper accommodations for students with disabilities</li> <li>▪ Incorporate accommodations into all lesson plans</li> <li>▪ Develop modified materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Guided by teacher and IEP, provide appropriate accommodations to material (enlarged print, taking notes, reading material aloud)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teachers guide paraeducators in the use of specific adaptations and ensure that paraeducators are aware of IEP goals and adaptations</li> <li>▪ Paraeducators provide feedback about student progress and success of adaptations</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Determine, create, and administer appropriate formal and informal assessments</li> <li>▪ Determine modifications and accommodations to be used for formal assessments</li> <li>▪ Use assessment results to inform future planning and curriculum development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist in the administration of assessments</li> <li>▪ Implement accommodations for assessment</li> <li>▪ Collect anecdotal student information on a regular basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Teacher provides guidance about the content and implementation of all assessments</li> <li>▪ Paraeducator provides feedback about student progress</li> <li>▪ Mutual conversations about anecdotal information and informal student data collection</li> </ul>

## TEACHER-PARAEDUCATOR PLANNING TOOL

The table on the following page presents a time management tool, which provides a quick and easy way for teacher-paraeducator teams to collaborate in the classroom. The first column of the tool organizes the day by class period. The second column further breaks down the day into specific times or events during each class period. The next five columns are the five days of the week including lines delineating the class period and a specific time during that period. The task key at the bottom provides teachers with an efficient way to assign a specific task during a time or event to a student or group of students by simply entering in the task number and the name(s) of the student(s). Teachers and paraeducators can modify the list of tasks each week.

Following the sample tool is a blank tool which can be easily printed out or copied to another document for use in the classroom. Teams may want to consider printing out the tool, laminating it, and implementing it with an erasable pen so it can be easily modified and re-used each week. Further, rows and columns can be easily adapted and customized to meet the specific needs of teacher-paraeducator teams.

**Table 2: Sample Teacher-Paraeducator Planning Tool**

Teacher: John Doe

Class: History

Paraeducator: Mary Smith

Week: February 8-11, 2005

Time	Assigned Student(s) & Task				
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Prior to 8 am class	All - 4, 3		All - 4		(group work) All - 4
8-8:15	(group work) J. Doe, B. Roy, J. Port & C. John - 1		(ind. work) D. Close - 6,		R. Clark, J. Doe, P. Brown - 5
8:15-8:30	(pair work) J. Porter & C. John - 1		(lecture) C. John - 2		(ind. work) C. John - 7
8:30-8:45	(ind. work) All - 5		(lecture) C. John - 2		(ind. work) All - 5
8:45-9	P. Rich & M. Barnes - 6		All - 5		A. Smith, D. Jones, & L. Lee - 6
7:55 - 8 am		All - 4, 3			
8-8:30		(group work) D. Clort - 1			
8:30-45		(lecture) C. James - 2			
8:45-9		(ind. work) All - 5			
<b>Period 1/History 200</b>					
<b>Period 4/History 1</b>					
<b>Period 6</b>					

**Task Key**

- 1 - Work with student(s) to re-teach longitude/latitude, use text p.54-55
- 2 - During lecture, provide note-taking support for student

- 3 - Enlarge print on longitude/latitude worksheet - make 5 copies
- 4 - Positive reinforcements (stamp notebooks) for students entering and beginning warmup

- 5 - Monitor student(s) - provide help/answer questions as needed
- 6 - Supervise student work on Excel spreadsheet project
- 7 - Sit with student, assist on ind. work



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## Resources

Gerlach, K. (2001). *Let's Team Up! A Checklist for Paraeducators, Teachers, and Principals*. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Northeast Regional Resource Center ([www.wested.org/nerrc/paraprofessionals.htm](http://www.wested.org/nerrc/paraprofessionals.htm))

National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals ([www.nrcpara.org](http://www.nrcpara.org))

The Para Center at the University of Colorado at Denver ([www.paracenter.org](http://www.paracenter.org))

Email: [info@paracenter.org](mailto:info@paracenter.org) Phone: 303.556.6464

*Paraeducator Support* (<http://www.uvm.edu/%7Ecdci/parasupport/>) and *Paraeducator Training at the University of Vermont* (<http://www.uvm.edu/%7Ecdci/paraprep/>) are companion projects designed to develop, implement and evaluate a model for effective use of paraeducators and improvement of training through model preservice and inservice programs.

*A Resource Guide for Integrating Teacher Aides into Lesson Plans*

(<http://www.spannj.org/information/teacheraideslessons-ResourceGuide.doc>)

developed by Newark Public Schools provides a detailed overview of the requirements of NCLB, integrated lesson plans, behavior management plans, and collaboration tips.

## References

Caroll, D. (2001). Considering paraeducator training, roles, and responsibilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34(2), 60-64.

French, N. (2003). *Managing paraeducators in your school*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

French, N.K. (2002). Maximize paraprofessional services for students with learning disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 38(1), 50-55.

Giangreco, M. F. (2001). A guide to schoolwide planning for paraeducator supports. *Center on Disability and Community Inclusion: University of Vermont*. Retrieved Feb. 7, 2005 from [http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport/download\\_ds/guide.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport/download_ds/guide.pdf).

Giangreco, M.F. (2003). Working with paraprofessionals. *Educational Leadership*, 61(2), 50-53.

Montana Office of Public Instruction. (2004). Paraprofessional orientation guide. Retrieved Feb 14, 2005 from <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/PDF/CSPD/ParaOrientMan.pdf>.

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (1999). Learning disabilities: Use of paraprofessionals. *Asha* 41. Retrieved 2/7/05 from <http://www.ldonline.org/njclcd/paraprof298.html>.

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Pickett, A.L. (1999). *Strengthening and Supporting Teacher/Provider-Paraeducator Teams: Guidelines for Paraeducator Roles, Supervision, and Preparation.*