New Teachers and Paraeducators

PowerPoint Slides to be used in conjunction with the Facilitator’s Guide
Recommended citation:

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Session Agenda

• Introduction
• Session Goals and Objectives
• Background on Paraeducators
• Overview of “The Recipe” for the Successful Teacher and Paraeducator Team
• Summary
• Evaluation
Introduction

• Finding the Right Recipe for the Successful Teacher and Paraeducator Team- What does the teacher and paraeducator team look like in your classroom?
Introduction, continued

• Paraeducators are vital team members in educating students with disabilities:
• They are important in both the general and special education classroom.
• New teachers don’t always feel confident about the best ways to work with paraeducators or what roles paraeducators should play in the classroom.
Introduction, continued

• The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction describes the work of a paraeducator (teacher assistant):
  – An employee in this class provides support to the teacher in the instruction of students. A wide variety of tasks are performed to support the teacher in the teaching-learning process for students. The work is directed by specific instructions, precedents and established policy.
Problems are solved through the exercise of judgment in selecting the best course of action to be taken. Errors are expected to be recognized promptly by the supervisor and corrected with little negative consequence. The work is performed under the limited supervision of the teacher and/or principal (p. 99).
Introduction, continued

- This description provides some clarification, but exactly how does the new teacher supervising a paraeducator provide correction “with little negative consequence” or provide instruction and establish policy?
- Can this be done in ways that also ensure an improved learning environment for the students?
Session Goal

- Goal: to describe steps new teachers should consider when working with paraeducators.
- This is one approach to working with paraeducators by creating a teacher and paraeducator team. This framework can create a positive and fun learning and working environment.
Session Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify characteristics of a teacher and paraeducator team;
2. Identify “transformative leadership” and how it can be used in classroom;
3. Recognize why standards and schedules are important for paraeducators;
4. Identify how Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) can be used with paraeducators;
5. Recognize benefits of a successful teacher and paraeducator team.
Background on Paraeducators

• Paraeducators have always been an integral component of educating students with disabilities.
• Duties have changed as a result of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001)
• Duties include personal care of students, behavior management, and assisting in educational responsibilities
Background on Paraeducators, continued

• Though paraeducators are thought to be assistants to the teacher, now more than ever they are providing instructional services to and alongside the students.

• Teachers and related service personnel often have little to no training on exactly how to work with them and create an effective teacher and paraeducator team.

• Many new teachers enter the classroom unprepared for working with paraeducators.
Paraeducator Position Description

• The expectations for paraeducators may vary across school systems.
• A sample description of the role of a paraeducator from one school system includes something like this:

  Report To: Principal and Teacher

  Duties/Responsibilities by Program Area:
  – Assist the teacher with planning and organizing, evaluation, instructional activities, and developing classroom procedures
Paraeducator Position Description

- Prepare necessary materials, equipment, and resources to implement programs
- Provide clerical and technical assistance as need for implementation of programs and other duties in accordance with applicable rules, laws, and regulations
- Follow direction of the teacher in obtaining goals and objectives
- Work with individuals and small groups to reinforce and assist in learning
Paraeducator Position Description

- Monitor students as instructed by the teacher
- Use sound judgment in reconciling minor conflicts and correcting behavior
- Supervise students in the cafeteria, playground, buses, bathrooms, and other areas on and off school property (field trips)
- Keep the teacher informed of any problems on a daily basis
- Exhibit positive behavior toward parent and students
Paraeducator Position Description

– Assist in maintaining a functional clean environment
– Communicate the needs of students and school in a confidential and positive manner
– Carry out duties and responsibilities in a punctual, professional, and positive manner to ensure a safe and healthful environment
– Conduct self as a positive role model
– Maintain bus license and accept bus driver duties as assigned
– Perform other duties as assigned by supervising teacher and building administrator
Activity- Background on Paraeducators

• In groups, share your experiences working with paraeducators.
• Reflect on how many of the duties in the sample job description you expected of the paraeducators you work with.
“The Recipe” for the Successful Teacher and Paraeducator Team

• What makes a successful teacher and paraeducator team?
• How can a team work together in the same room or school environment and everyone feel valued?
• This “Recipe” can be used as one way to create the successful teacher and paraeducator team.
• Audio for slides at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/ntp/lib/media/slides01/SlideShow.html.
**recipe:** The Successful Paraeducator

1. Effective Leadership
2. Description and Communication of Personal and Teaching Philosophy
3. Development of a class philosophy
4. Definition of roles
5. Development of a class and paraprofessional schedule
6. Plans and modeling of educational support.
7. Positive behavior intervention & supports
8. Effective communication
9. Training in AAC and Assistive Technology
10. Work hard, play hard  

*(Jeffs, Frank, & Potts, 2009)*

**serves:** Teachers Seeking to Build a Successful Team in the exceptional
Successful Teams, continued

• Using this recipe we can empower the paraeducators to serve the students to the best of their ability.
• We must empower them to ask questions when needed as well.
• Let’s begin by looking at what effective leadership really is.
Successful Teams, continued

Effective Leadership

• With an emphasis on emotions and values, effective leadership is the first step in establishing an effective team.

• This transformative leadership results in power through other people rather than power over them.

• When creating a team, transformative leadership of the teacher will be the basic building block.
Effective Leadership...

1. Let go of things others can do
2. Encourage initiative, ideas, and risk taking
3. Ensure that people have goals and know how they're doing
4. Delegate to challenge, develop, and empower.
5. Coach to ensure success
6. Reinforce good work and good attempts.
7. Share information, knowledge, and skills.
8. Value, trust, and respect each individual.
9. Provide support without taking over.

Adapted from: http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Leadership/over2.htm#char
Successful Teams, continued

• Empowering the paraeducators on your team to set goals is vital to their ongoing success in the classroom.

• Goals can be set for the year or for each quarter/semester. Teachers should set goals for themselves and make sure that paraeducators are setting and completing goals for themselves.

• A goal planning sheet can help paraeducators set goals.
Successful Teams, continued

• Goal monitoring and progression can both empower paraeducators and record how paraeducators are progressing as professionals in the classroom.
• Meet with the paraeducator and review goals routinely
• Share your goals for the classroom as well so the team can work together to meet all established goals.
Successful Teams, continued

Teaching Philosophy

• The paraeducator needs to understand who the person is as a teacher, to understand the methods and philosophies of their supervising teacher.

• A teacher can share his or her “Philosophy of Teaching”.

• A sample written Teacher’s Philosophy is available in the Facilitator’s Guide.
Successful Teams, continued

• Another example of a teaching philosophy is presented via media.

• The audio that accompanies the following slide is available at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/ntp/lib/media/slides03/SlideShow.html.
Reba’s Philosophy....
Successful Teams, continued

• Exploring the “why” behind what a teacher does can be good for the rest of the team.
• Most paraeducators have not had the intensive training that special education teachers have had and need to know why the teacher is doing certain things in the classroom and with the students.
• After your teaching philosophy is created and all the team members are familiar with it, it is time to create a class philosophy.
Successful Teams, continued

Development of a Class Philosophy

• Before the school year begins for students, it is important to develop a class philosophy.

• Each person on the team needs to have an active role in the creation and implementation of this philosophy.

• There are four important aspects of developing that philosophy.
Successful Teams, continued

• A class philosophy should include at least all four components:
  
  – **Team values**: What does the team value? Is it inclusion for their students in the school? Is it high quality education for all of their students? Allow each person to really share what their values are.
  
  – **Team beliefs**: What does your team believe in? Do you believe in inclusion and knowing the collaboration and planning that must take place? Do you believe in your students?
Successful Teams, continued

– How to make your **values and beliefs a true reality**: If you believe in inclusion what are the steps you can take to make it possible?

– **Post your class philosophy** so that everyone can see it and has a constant reminder of why they are there.

• A new philosophy should be created each year. Include other members of the classroom such as related service staff, regular education teachers, adapted PE teachers, and media coordinators.
Activity- Developing a Class Philosophy

• In small groups, outline your teaching philosophy.
• Talk about how you could present it to your paraeducators.
• Present your philosophies to the group; other members should listen for the first three components: team values, beliefs, plan for making values and beliefs a reality.
Successful Teams, continued

Definition of Roles

• Paraeducators need to know and understand their roles and responsibilities.
• Teachers must clearly define the roles each paraeducator will have, and expectations in each environment should be described in detail.
Successful Teams, continued

• Example of a simple explanation of roles:
  – A teacher is the leader of the instructional team. She or he can be seen as the conductor who orchestrates the activity in a self-contained environment. The teacher must supervise all paraeducators, write and implement IEP goals, teach the Standard Course of Study (extensions), and create a fun and positive learning environment.
Successful Teams, continued

– The paraeducator is an essential person on the instructional team that works with children with disabilities. They provide educational, functional, and communication instruction; and they provide personal care assistance to students in the classroom. Paraeducators work under the supervision of the special education teacher. A paraeducator should be a motivated and positive person who can assist the teacher as a part of the instructional team.
Successful Teams, continued

Schedules

• Schedules may become the most beneficial component of this process.

• After an overall daily schedule is generated, a paraeducator schedule is easy to create. This schedule includes specific duties of the paraeducator at each time of the day.

• Sharing of a teacher schedule with the paraeducator is important for establishing teamwork.
Successful Teams, continued

• Schedules should:
  – specifically mandate what is expected at each time of the day;
  – be visible and posted;
  – guide a substitute when a member of the team is absent so those filling in for them know exactly what is expected and when.

• Sample schedules can be found at the end of the Facilitator’s Guide and at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/ntp/lib/documents/Doc04_schedule.pdf
Successful Teams, continued

• When creating schedules, consider:
  – what you expect to see with your team each day;
  – how you can show them what is expected;
  – what each student needs in order to be successful;
  – what the paraeducator can do to assist both the students and you;
  – the teacher’s schedule so that the paraeducators know what you will be doing and know the expectations of the teacher.
Successful Teams, continued

Activity- Schedules

• Use copies of your own class schedule (or a class schedule of a teacher whom they have worked with).

• In pairs, review your class schedule and discuss how it could be made clearer and leave no grey areas.

• Refer to the Special Education Paraeducator Support Checklist as you consider and make changes to their schedules.
Successful Teams, continued

Planning and Modeling of Educational Support

• Teachers on the team must model and plan for educational support.

• Students with disabilities need educational support and paraeducators should be taught, and shown through modeling, what specific kind of educational support each student needs.
Successful Teams, continued

- Information about supports should be included on classroom plans to be certain that all paraeducators and personnel know the supports to be provided for each student.
- For some teachers, assigning paraeducators to specific students or to specific subject areas can be beneficial
Successful Teams, continued

• If a paraeducator can become “an expert” on a certain student or a certain subject area they might teach in a small group, they will feel valued and empowered.

• Teachers must model and plan for this so they can give the paraeducators these opportunities for leadership and growth.
Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

- PBIS is being adopted schoolwide in many different schools across our country.
  - Defined as “decision making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students” (PBIS Center, 2009)
Successful Teams, continued

• PBIS:
  – focuses on positive aspects of behaviors by rewarding the positive behaviors as much as possible while having specific and consistent consequences for any negative behaviors.
  – focuses on providing supports that students need in order to increase positive behaviors.
  – Though created for students, PBIS can be used in a classroom with paraeducators as well.
Successful Teams, continued

• First, positive consequences - do not forget rewards!
• Teachers and paraeducators need to be given rewards in the form of praise, special recognition, and any other motivating incentive.
• Paraeducators will appreciate the recognition.
• Following graphic shows important elements that can be incorporated within the classroom.
Positiv Behavior Supports

- Pizza Parties
- Give them YOUR time
- Find each Para Special Talent and USE IT!
- Make feel important
- Socials our of school
- Special Breakfasts
- Nominate for Awards and good things
- Music
- show appreciation
- Give important responsibilites

Jeffs, Frank and Potts 2009 (using Kidspiration software)
Successful Teams, continued

• Some examples of what teachers can do to reward and support the paraeducators in their classrooms:
  – having special pizza parties or breakfasts;
  – giving praise on a daily basis;
  – whenever possible, nominate your paraeducators for awards and good things;
  – give each paraeducator your time.
Successful Teams, continued

- PBIS looks at the functions of behaviors-
  - explore the “why” behind the behaviors of each member of your team;
  - looking at the antecedent (why the behavior happened), the behavior (what the person did), and the consequences (what happened due to the behavior);
  - functionally analyze the behaviors of each member of your team, learn about them as people and what encourages and motivates them.
Successful Teams, continued

• PBIS has shown great results for changing student behavior. The same can be done for the paraeducators on your team.
  – First, it cannot be assumed the paraeducators know what is expected of them. Teaching them what is expected through schedules, modeling and support, and constant re-teaching is vital.
Successful Teams, continued

– Second, paraeducators need to understand the consequences of not following the standards set in place for them. Teachers need to explain standards that must be followed and that, if they do not follow standards, an action plan will occur.

– Teachers and administrators both need to be consistent on the implementation of consequences and action plans for paraeducators.
Successful Teams, continued

• Following slides provide examples of evaluations and action plans that can be used if guidelines are not followed by each paraeducator. These can be truly effective at changing negative behaviors of paraeducators.
Evaluation

If any of the paraprofessional standards criteria are not met the following will occur:

1. Teacher will give verbal directions, assistance, and/or instruction to the paraprofessional. Teacher will explain the desired result using paraprofessional standards and individual paraprofessional schedule.

2. A conference with the teacher and paraprofessional will be held to discuss concerns, issues and desired outcomes.

3. An action plan will be created by teacher and administration) as a final chance to eliminate concerns.

4. Concern/issue will be referred to proper administration.
Successful Teams, continued

• Evaluation is very important and paraeducators should be reminded of it often. It is important he or she understands that they are held to high standards and that you will strictly abide by the evaluation steps and report problems to administration if they arise.

• Examples of a possible Action Plan form and a completed Action Plan follow.
# Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Actions</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluator(s)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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Specific Concern(s):

Verbal Warnings: Date ___________ Date: ___________
Conference Date: _________ Outcome:______________

Potts 2010
# Action Plan – Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Actions</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Evaluator(s)</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must tell teacher each time when leaving and where they are going</td>
<td>4/15/2010</td>
<td>Teacher data sheet</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>Teacher prefers bathroom and breaks be taken during non-academic time when possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific Concern(s): leaving classroom for long amounts of time

Verbal Warnings:  Date ________________  Date: ________________
Conference Date: __________  Outcome:________________________
Successful Teams, continued

• Now we will focus on how to have effective communication with your teacher and paraeducator team, which is important in decreasing the number of instances when Action Plans may be needed.
Effective Communication

Group Meetings

Individual Meetings and Trainings

Paraprofessional learning style, experience, preference

(Jeffs, Frank, & Potts, 2009)
Successful Teams, continued

• In relationships, whether personal or professional, communication is key. This is true in teacher and paraeducator teams as well. Communication needs to be open and constant.

• One strategy for effective communication between members of the teacher and paraeducator team is meetings.
Successful Teams, continued

• Weekly group meetings are best, if possible. Meetings should be an open forum to discuss students, schedules changes and additions, and any problems that are occurring.

• Individual meetings when a member of your team is struggling in some way.
  – One example was a paraeducator in a classroom who normally completed all tasks, who suddenly was not doing so anymore.
Successful Teams, continued

– Taking the paraeducator aside and talking to her provided the opportunity for the paraeducator to let the teacher know that she was not feeling well and not feeling like herself after a traffic accident.

– The teacher and paraeducator worked together to temporarily change her schedule and daily tasks. This temporary change resulted in the paraeducator returning to her previous capacity and giving 110%. Taking the time to communicate showed the teacher valued her as a paraeducator and a person.
Successful Teams, continued

• As special educators, we are trained to adapt to the learning style of each of our students.
• We must also consider adult learning styles.
• Never assume a paraeducator knows what you want them to do. Teach them using their specific learning preferences.
Successful Teams, continued

• One example was a paraeducator who learned through hands-on experience. The teacher could tell him how repeatedly but until he practiced the routine every day for about two weeks with supervision he was not successful.

• Communicating with each person on the team and making each person feel very valuable is crucial for effective teacher and paraeducator teams.
Activity- Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

• In small groups, create a chart together of more ideas that teachers can use to positively reward their paraeducators.

• Incorporate aspects of effective communication into the reward structure you chart.
Successful Teams, continued

Training in AT and AAC

• We are teaching 21st century learners; technology should be infused into everything that we do as special educators.

• Assistive technology (AT) is any technology, low or high tech, that will assist someone who has a disability. Examples:
  – computer software programs, interactive whiteboards, picture cards, and even post-it notes.
Successful Teams, continued

- Augmentative communication devices (AAC) - devices used for voice output for students that are non-verbal or who have limited voice usage.
- Examples of AAC are Go Talks, BigMacks and TANGO!
- The following slides feature some AT and AAC tools. Audio for the slides is available at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/ntp/lib/media/slides06/SlideShow.html.
Successful Teams, continued

- The following slide shows an example of an interactive whiteboard. Students can use this as a large touch screen computer. It promotes both access and interests for students with disabilities.
Successful Teams, continued

• The following is an example of picture cards. Students who are non-verbal can use these to communicate wants, needs, answers to questions, etc.
Successful Teams, continued

• Post-it notes seem like a common tool, which they are, but they are still considered an assistive technology tool. Students with disabilities can use these in studying, marking pages, keeping up with materials and due dates, etc.
Successful Teams, continued

• The following slide shows some examples of Augmentative Communication devices. Each of these devices can be used for students with limited or no verbal communication. Messages can be recorded or programmed in so that students can activate themselves for communication.
Successful Teams, continued

• Paraeducators need to be trained on any computer software, AT or AAC devices that students will use in the classroom.
• This can be done through professional development and onsite technical assistance for paraeducators.
• Tutorials and “How-to’s” posted in the room can be of benefit to independence with AT and AAC.
Successful Teams, continued

• Creating a fun and safe environment is beneficial for both students and adults who work in the classroom.

• During academic time, strive to work hard and teach every member of the team that working hard pays off and student learning will occur.
Successful Teams, continued

• But also, play hard. Have fun together! Have fun with the students. Use humor and music to motivate and create an environment of which every person in your building will want to be a part.

• Play the “Creating a fun and safe environment” video at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/ntp/lib/media/video1_Para.html.
Summary

• Building teacher and paraeducator teams is key to a positive work environment and a superior learning environment for students.
• Teams can be built in self-contained classrooms or in inclusion settings.
• Using the recipe will certainly create a cohesive team to which everyone will want to contribute and many will try to join.
• Paraeducators are essential; make sure they feel that way on a daily basis.
Session Evaluation

• A form for participants to evaluate the session is available in the Facilitator’s Guide.
Focus and Reflection Questions

1. What experiences have you had with paraeducators?

2. Why do you think it is important to clearly define roles in a classroom?

3. Do you think using PBIS with Paraeducators is important? Do you think it will work in your classrooms?
Focus and Reflection Questions, continued

4. Why do you think communication is important to have with a teacher and paraeducator team? How do you currently communicate with your paraeducators?

5. Have you ever heard of transformative leadership? Can you give any good examples of transformative leadership either in or out of the school system?
Focus and Reflection Questions, continued

6. Do you think that having an action plan for paraeducators is important?

7. Will you use the paraeducator goals and have each paraeducator create goals for themselves?

8. Which “ingredient” of the paraeducator recipe do you think is the most important?
Focus and Reflection Questions, continued

9. Do you think following this recipe will be effective to create and teacher and paraeducator team?

10. Will you use this recipe in its entirety or will you take bits and pieces for your own classrooms? Why?
Application & Extension activities

1. Plans and Modeling of Support: Create a T Chart about “What Paraeducators Need to Learn” on one side and “How we can Teach Them?” on the other.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Paraeducators Need to Learn:</th>
<th>How We Can Teach Them:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Boardmaker</td>
<td>1. Provide one-on-one training during lunch of Boardmaker Software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How to do hand-under-hand (vs. hand-over-hand)</td>
<td>2. Show modeling of hand-under-hand, correct when hand-over-hand is not done, give research and background about why hand-under-hand is better than hand-over-hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Assessment

• A self-assessment with response feedback is available at http://mast.ecu.edu/modules/ntp/quiz/. Participants may take this assessment online to evaluate their learning about content presented in this module.