Systematic, Comprehensive and Sustainable Model for Training and Supervision of Paraeducators

Ritu Chopra, Ph.D.

The Paraprofessional Research and Resource Center
(The PAR*A Center)
University of Colorado Denver
http://www.paracenter.org

Overview of the Session
- Discuss issues related to paraeducators use in schools
- Discuss need for policies with regards to paraeducators in schools
- Clarify and differentiate ethical and legal roles and responsibilities of the paraeducators and teachers
- Learn about research-based supervisory functions of teachers in the context of guiding and directing the work of the paraeducator
- Research-based paraeducator training curriculum and resources that would enhance paraeducator skills
- Develop understanding about the administrator role in supporting collaboration among the team members and establishing effective training and supervision systems for paraeducators.

Most commonly used titles
- Paraprofessional
- Instructional Assistant
- Educational Assistant
- Teaching Assistant
- Instructional Aide
- Aide
- Paraeducator
- Educational Support Professionals
- Early Intervention Paraprofessionals
Definitions

Para... means “along side of”

A Paraprofessional provides instructional services to students and works under the supervision or direction of a certified or licensed professional who is ultimately responsible for the students and the program.

Paraeducators: Who are they?

- Turn to the person next to you
- Think about the paraeducators in your district/building.
  - How old are they?
  - How much money do they make?
  - What are their educational backgrounds?
  - What preparation or training they have for their role?
  - What other characteristics are true of them?
  - Where did they come from? How were they hired?
- What implications do these characteristics have for teachers to direct their work?
- What are the current practices regarding paraeducator training and supervision in your district?
- How effective are these current practices?

Top 10 Reasons for Employing Educational Assistants

1. Complex student population
2. Need for instructional support
3. Cost effectiveness
4. Instructional effectiveness
5. Community connections
6. Individualized support
7. Need to provide related services
8. Improved teacher-student ratio
9. Shortages of fully-qualified professionals
10. Legislation allows / requires it

IDEA: Requirements for Paraprofessionals

- The State educational agency establishes and maintains standards to ensure that paraprofessionals and assistants are appropriately and adequately trained and supervised.
Gaps between Law and Reality

• Laws provide vague and limited descriptions of what paraprofessional supervision and training entails
• By and large - no clear policies or guidelines at state level around supervision and training
• Despite guidance from professional organization, teacher preparation programs do not address paraprofessional supervision to the extent it needs attention.
• As a result, teachers remain reluctant to supervise paraprofessionals, and are unprepared to work effectively with them.

Systemic Challenges / Issues

Paraeducator:
- Employed in greater numbers
- Work away from teachers and have little supervision
- Hold increasing amounts of responsibility for instruction
- Roles overlap with teachers, are poorly defined
- Have little training
- Have little information about student goals or needs
- Poorly paid, few benefits, little job security, treated poorly
- YET! - Are important PR people in the community
- Teachers are often unclear about their roles & responsibilities
- Teachers perceive a lack of administrative support regarding their role in supervising or directing the work of educational assistants

Potential Problems When Paraeducator work in Special Education

The Paraeducator:
- Assumes too much responsibility
- Becomes the primary service provider
- Lacks specific training
- Lacks good supervision and guidance from teachers
- Develops “ownership” of the child, loses perspective, ‘mothers’ or overprotects, fosters over-dependence, creates “learned helplessness,” or gives student the “answers.”
- Communicates directly with families, leaving teacher out
- Fails to provide specific behavioral or academic data to professionals who should make program decisions based on data
- Relieves general ed. teachers of responsibility for included student
- Creates social barriers between students, causing isolation

Challenges with Use of Paraeducators
Challenges with Use of Paraeducators in Special Education

Liability

- What are the potential liability issues associated with employing paraeducators?
  - Particularly with regard to the issues already discussed
Managing Risk Proactively

Developing policies to guide teachers and administrators with regards to effective use of paraeducators

- Policy categories
  1. Roles & Responsibilities
  2. Supervision of Paraeducators
  3. Training of Paraeducators
  4. Collaboration among team members
  5. Hiring and Allocation Policy Components

Role Clarification

**Teacher/Professional Roles**

- Overall Program Planning (overseeing, IEP goals and objectives, addressing standards, lesson planning, prescribing, managing the instructional environment)
- Instruction (based on unit plans, lesson plans, IEPs, remedial literacy plans, 504 plans, other individualized plans)
- Assessment (Collecting, coordinating, and interpreting information about the student including current levels of functioning, determination of disability, reporting student progress)
- Collaborating (consulting with other professional personnel, meeting coordinating, communication)
- Managing Paraeducators (seven components – which are the focus of this course)

**Paraeducator Roles**

- Implement instruction in various environments, based on lesson plans provided by the teacher
- Reinforce learning with individuals or small groups
- Assist individual students- personal care, mobility
- Assist with observations/data recording/charting
- Assist with ongoing behavior management
- Participate in building level duties as assigned by building administrator
- Score tests/papers & assist in data collection
- Perform clerical tasks
- Prepare, produce & maintain instructional materials
- Maintain and operate instructional equipment
- Help develop schedules
- Team participation

1. **Roles & Responsibilities Policy Component**

- List and define the range of appropriate responsibilities that should be a part of each role - teachers, paraeducators, related service providers….

- Clarify the amount of and lines of authority for each position and role

- Clarify the levels and types of support available for each position and role
Executive Functions of Paraeducator Supervision

AND Supervision is different from Evaluation!

1. Providing Orientation
2. Planning for Paraeducator
3. Scheduling
4. Delegating
5. Promoting Paraeducator Growth and Development
6. Monitoring Performance
7. Managing the Workplace

Supervision Policy Components

- Establish supervision as a legitimate part of the teacher’s position
- Differentiate between supervision and evaluation
- Create support systems for teachers who have not been trained to supervise
  - Determine the logistics of training teachers to supervise (what, when, where)
- Identify how administrators provide coaching and support to teachers who supervise educational assistants
- Plan how you will monitor the quality of supervision as part of the teacher’s role

Research-based training for supervisors is available – More information to follow shortly!!

What do teachers need to know as supervisors of paraeducators?

- Legal, liability, and ethical issues associated with hiring, training, supervising paraeducators
- Appropriate / Inappropriate Roles
- Professional Team Member Skills
- How to Provide Orientation to educational assistants
- How to create specific job description for each hired paraeducator
- How to (Why) Delegate Tasks
- How to Plan for Self and Others
- Managing schedules for multiple people
- How to Provide On-the-Job Training specific to assigned duties
- How to Monitor Performance
- How to Manage the Work Environment

Research-based training for paraeducator is available – More information to follow shortly!!
4. Collaboration Among Team Members
Policy Components

- Ensure general and special education teachers must work together – both responsible for the education of the student and supervision of the paraeducator and programming for the student.
- Allow planning time/meetings with paraeducator
- Ensure regularly scheduled meetings take place among team members including service providers
- Make possible professional development for school based teams on collaboration, problem solving, conflict management etc. along with content specific training suited to each role.
- Create a culture of collaboration - common understanding that collaboration is not one more thing to do but it is the way to do everything more effectively!

5: Hiring and Allocation Policy Components

- Including the teachers/licensed professionals, that the paraeducators are supposed to work with, in the selection process
- Establish systems for identifying student and program support needs
  - Include consideration of logistics (where, when, how much, how long)
  - Explore support possibilities to avoid overreliance on paraeducators

CO-TOP: A Systematic, Sustainable and Comprehensive Paraeducator Training and Supervision Model

Enhances the capacity of the districts/schools to control and deliver paraeducator training and supervision

Train the Train Model

Train the Trainer (TOT) model for paraeducator training - teachers, administrators and other licensed professionals are trained to deliver research based curriculum to paraeducators
- 2 to 4 day format available depending upon number of participants
- Consist of two parts
  - Part I – Paraeducator supervision Academy (PSA)
  - Part II – Trainer of Training Academy (TOPA)
Paraeducator Supervision Training

Provides core knowledge and skills to licensed professionals (teachers, related service providers) in:

- Role Clarification – Supervisors vs. Paraeducators
- Collaboration and working relationships
- Assessing personal supervisory skills
- Developing understanding of the seven functions as supervisors of paraeducators

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AND Supervision is different from Evaluation!

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Training of Paraeducators (TOPA)

- Additional training for those who have attended the PSA
- The training provides:
  - knowledge about how to train adult learners
  - knowledge and resources for planning and developing effective presentations
  - time and support to examine, prepare, and adapt the CO-TOP Curriculum Materials (trainer manual) to be delivered to the paraeducators
    - Trainer manuals include script, PowerPoints, videos, handouts...

CO-TOP CURRICULUM

ACADEMY TITLES - Outlines Available

Each contains modules

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<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Instructional Framework</th>
<th>XII</th>
<th>Significant Health Support Needs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Orientation to Special Education</td>
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<td>III</td>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
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<td>IV</td>
<td>Personal Growth and Development</td>
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<td>VI</td>
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<td>VII</td>
<td>Behavior Management</td>
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<td>VIII</td>
<td>Instructional Technology</td>
<td>XIX</td>
<td>Grades K-4 Mathematics</td>
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<td>IX</td>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>XX</td>
<td>Number Theory &amp; Rationale for Math &amp; Measurement</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Significant Communication Support Needs</td>
<td>XXI</td>
<td>Algebraic Concepts &amp; Spatial Reasoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Significant Supports for Challenging Behavior</td>
<td>XXII</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorders Academy</td>
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Salient Outcomes of CO-TOP Training

- Improved job performance
- Teachers have greater confidence in paraeducators’ work.
- Paraeducators report greater confidence in their own effectiveness with students
- School professionals report greater confidence in their ability to supervise paraeducators
- Administrators report greater confidence that students are being served by qualified personnel
- Paraeducator pay raises have been implemented in places where there is CO-TOP training
- Lower turnover
- Teachers report improved teamwork
- Becoming a trainer has been a powerful professional growth experience for teachers

Based on what you have heard in this session, what further questions you have regarding the CO-TOP paraeducator training model?

Would you be interested in adopting or adapting it? What information do you need from the PAR²A Center?

Contact Information

For more information on resources and trainings for teachers and paraeducators and for establishing systematic paraeducator training and supervision system, contact ritu.chopra@ucdenver.edu

Helpful Resources

- [http://www.paracenter.org](http://www.paracenter.org)
- [http://www.paracenter.org/PARACenter/library/](http://www.paracenter.org/PARACenter/library/)