

# Suggestions For Becoming A More Successful Paraeducator

Learn the names of pupils immediately.

Learn as much about each pupil as quickly as possible.

Lend personal assistance to pupils as quickly as possible.

Consult often with the teacher as to how you can help.

Give encouragement to pupils wherever and whenever you can.

Praise pupil's effort and success.

Be patient in dealing with pupils.

Become familiar with the school building, grounds, and personnel.

Learn the routine of the school day.

Get acquainted immediately with emergency procedures.

Learn the locations and proper use of equipment.

Get acquainted with school policy as it applies to you and your work.

Practice observing in a meaningful way every chance you get.

Inform the teachers with whom you work of any special talents or interests and of special experiences you have had.

Watch carefully how the teacher deals with and directs pupils.

Exchange telephone numbers with your teacher and get phone numbers of school.

Get acquainted with other staff members.

Be mature in your conduct and demonstrate that you are a responsible person.

Ask for clarification when you do not understand an assignment or suggestion.

Be on time and leave at an appropriate time.

Be flexible and creative.

Always conduct yourself as you would if a child's parent were sitting in the room.

Pay close attention to students' mannerisms: how does the student show frustration - watch for and identify signals.

Look for teachable moments.

Learn what you can about the students' disability.

If something is not working, stop and try something else.

## **Curricular Adaptations**

Shorten assignments.

Read lessons aloud.

Tape lessons or text.

Cursive words in print.

Block off sections of work.

Cut worksheets into sections to complete.

Substitute projects for written assignments.

Enlarge copies of print.

Highlight information in book.

Write answers.

Lower level work.

Provide page numbers for locations of answers on worksheets.

Cooperative learning.

Peer support such as peer buddies, class wide peer tutoring, etc.

Read directions orally and have students repeat.

Color code, underline, enlarge or highlight key words.

Student answers orally.

Re-teach, repetition.

Teach test taking strategies.

Change class objectives to be mastered by a student.

Take turns writing.

Reduce stimuli.

List assignments.

Assignment sheets.

Cueing students.

Study guides, flashcards, graphic organizers.

Check every 3 or 4 problems to slow down a rushing student.

Provide fidget items.

## **General Interventions and Modifications**

Carefully select the student's desk placement seating up front, close to teacher providing easy access by para seating among well-focused students away from distractions: pencil sharpener, fish tank, classroom door, etc.

Proximity control.

A Redirecting touch.

Preventive cueing.

Eye contact.

Limiting visual distractions/clutter.

Designing room to accommodate different learning styles.

Use of study carrel.

Turning off or altering lights.

Headphones for blocking noise.

Using music (relaxation, transition times)

Student movement allow students some freedom to move about classroom.

Set realistic goals.

Be consistent.

Teach your rules.

Behavioral contracts.

Appropriate behavior modeling.

**HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR!**

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Paraeducators**

Who plans the instructional program?

A. **The teacher.** The paraeducator's role is to work as a key element of the team of regular education, special education and related services personnel. The formal planning of the instructional program is the responsibility of the professionals with input from the paraeducator. Good planning will more likely evolve if the professional and paraeducator plan together.

Who monitors and reinforces student performance? Who may assume data collection responsibilities, observe students, reinforce discipline and compile information?

A. **Both.** Both the paraeducator and the professional have the responsibility to monitor and reinforce student performance. This also includes discipline. The paraeducator may assume responsibility for data collection and compilation, if trained to do so by the professional.

Who selects diagnostic instruments and is responsible for the interpretation of the results?

A. **The teacher.** The selection of diagnostic tests is a part of the determination of the educational needs of students. The paraeducator **should not** determine what instrument or procedure is to be used. In some cases, a para **may** administer diagnostic tests if special training is not required to administer the test or if special training has been given to the paraeducator to give the test. The administration should be under the supervision/direction of the professional.

Who diagnoses educational needs of students?

A. **The teacher.** The paraeducator has not had the appropriate training to diagnose the educational needs of students. This is the responsibility of the professional.

Who is responsible for the communication between school and the parent?

A. **The teacher.** As educational leader of the classroom, it is the teacher's responsibility for communication with the parents. In most situations, the paraeducator may have lived in the community for many years and could even know the parents of the students on a personal basis. When this occurs, the paraeducator must exercise restraint and be sure all communication regarding the education of students comes from the teacher or other professional school personnel. Confidentiality is critical and paraeducators must be instructed not to discuss students' families or activities with anyone in the community or with anyone at school, especially other paras and teachers.

Who may be responsible for maintenance of records?

A. **The paraeducator.** A paraeducator may be responsible for maintaining records under the supervision of the professional.

Who supports and follows through with the classroom management plan established by the teacher?

A. **The paraeducator.** The key words are "support and follow through." Role problems may occur if the para is not aware of the management plan and instructed by the professional in their chosen techniques and procedures of classroom management. If the para is also a certified teacher, the role is still secondary to that of the designated lead professional in the room.

Who is required to attain a minimum of twenty (20) hours of in-service each school year?

A. **The paraeducator.** As determined by K.A.R.91-12-61, a para must complete 20 clock hours of in-service each year. Failure to complete this requirement may result in a reduction of funding to the local district. A para may also take college credit hours which would also be counted and credited toward the professional. One credit hour is the equivalent to 20 in-service hours.

Who monitors student progress in instructional programs and relates findings to the lead teacher.

A. **The paraeducator.** It is suggested that a formal feedback procedure be established. This could be scheduled daily or weekly meeting time with the teacher, a written "check system," or a combination of both. Planning time is a critical element of a successful team.

Who checks and scores students' work?

A. **Both.** This is an appropriate role for the paraeducator if supervised by the teacher. The teacher may also wish to score and review students' work.

Who is responsible for evaluation and revision of the student's instructional programs?

A. **The teacher.** The supervising professional has the responsibility to evaluate and revise the instruction program, if it is not meeting the needs of the student. Paraeducators working with the student should provide input.

Who constructs materials designed by the supervising teacher or teachers?

A. **Both.** The para may construct materials for the classroom. The creativity of paras should also be encouraged. Teachers and paras may work together to help.

Who is responsible for assigning grades?

A. **The teacher.** Assigning grades is the sole responsibility of the teacher. The teacher **may** elicit the assistance of the para in recording grades and **may** ask for input from the para regarding his/her opinion of progress made by the student.

Who is responsible for introducing new concepts and skills?

A. **The teacher.** The introduction of new concepts is the responsibility of the teacher. Paraeducators may follow up with reinforcement activities, individual help and group assistance after the concept is presented.

Who assists students with disabilities in an inclusive regular education classroom?

A. **Both.** This is an appropriate role for the special education paraeducator and the teacher, as determined by the Individual Education Plan and under the supervision of the lead teacher.

Who assists with the planning process; copies, transcribes, types, files, etc?

A. **The paraeducator.** The role of the para is to assist in the educational process of the special education student. A portion of the para's day may be filled with some clerical duties.

Who is responsible for communication with teachers of students placed in regular classrooms?

A. **Both.** The teacher is the educational leader and it is the teacher's responsibility to handle communication with regular education teachers who share in the education of any student placed in the inclusive setting. The para should not be put in the situation of a relay between the two teachers, nor should they assume this role on their own. Working together is the key.

Who is responsible for the development of the Individual Education Plan?

A. **Both.** The development of the Individual Education Plan is the responsibility of the special education team/special education teacher, and para, the parent, the students, administrator, school

psychologist, regular education personnel and others deemed appropriate by the persons present. The paraeducators may, however, be responsible for maintaining records, etc.

Who is responsible for the supervision of students in the lunchroom?

A. **Both.** Paraeducators can **share** lunchroom duty. Professionals must keep in mind this is a duty that can be shared and perhaps it could be set up on an alternating schedule. Having a professional in the lunchroom at all times could help avoid liability in case of an accident.

Who may serve as a playground supervisor?

A. **Both.** It is recommended that paraeducators not be solely responsible for students on the playground. Paras can share this responsibility with certified staff members. Procedures concerning first aid and school policies should be learned before assuming this duty.

Who is responsible for the students participating in community-based instructional programs?

A. **Both.** Paras may accompany students to community learning sites and remain as the supervisor. In this case, paraeducators will be assigned to a designated on-site person for supervision. Other times, the professional may choose to accompany the student and leave the paraeducator in the classroom. In this instance, the para would need to be assigned to a certified staff member in the school building for supervision. Possible temporary groupings of students to provide adequate instructional supervision may be necessary.