

SPED NEWS

Staff Edition



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Guidance and Self-Discipline

by Dr. Cecil Blankenship, ETSU

As a teacher you are one of the most influential people in a student's life. Your attitudes toward guidance and self-discipline will lay the groundwork for a student's attitude, self-concept and emotional feelings. A student's attitude toward challenges and setbacks in life are strongly influenced by your own reactions to life. In order for a student to develop the courage and strength to face challenges in life he/she needs a strong role model with whom to identify. A strong role model such as the teacher assists a student in developing a strong self-identity which includes developing pride in his/her self, family, school and culture. Students also need to learn self-discipline and need to be

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Directors MEMO

Welcome back to school!

This section of the Sevier County Special Education newsletter is devoted to you—the education paraprofessional. If you think about it though, what does the word “paraprofessional” really mean? It is as generic as the word “teacher” in terms of understanding what exactly you’ll be doing in the classroom this year. Some of you will be working with one teacher and one group of students. Others will be working with many teachers but follow the same group of students through their classes. You may work with the same teacher in one subject area, and see different groups of children throughout the day, or you might be involved in combinations of all the above. Lastly, some of you will be primarily assigned to support one student throughout his or her school day. If you fit in this last category, you may see yourself as a “one-to-one aide” or attendant. The rest of this article is devoted to those of you who will be serving as one-to one support for a student for all or part of the school day. In the past few years, we have seen a dramatic increase in this type of service delivery for students, and now have some research findings to provide information and guidance about best practices. One-to-one support can be beneficial for students, but careful planning and consideration is necessary to avoid or minimize associated risk factors. Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, and MacFarland (1997) identified 8 major areas of risk when studying the use of one-to one instructional assistants:

1. *Interference with ownership and responsibility by general educators:* the teacher may feel that the paraprofessional has primary responsibility for the student's education
2. *Separation from classmates:* working separately from the group
3. *Dependence on adults:* too close in proximity, too much prompting, not fading support
4. *Impact on peer interactions:* barrier to natural peer relationships/interactions
5. *Limitations on receiving competent instruction:* paraprofessionals are asked to make educational decisions without adequate training
6. *Loss of personal control:* students may feel discouraged from choice-making or self-advocating
7. *Loss of gender identity:* in cases where paraprofessional and student are of opposite genders, care must be taken to ensure that toileting, PE activities, etc. are based on the student's gender
8. *Interference of Instruction of Other Students:* paraprofessional behaviors may cause other students to be distracted from teacher's lesson

So what can we do to ensure that these identified risk factors are minimized/negated? Freschi (1999) proposes the following principles:

1. Remember that the teacher is the educational leader
2. Communication is essential between the teacher and paraprofessional
3. The paraprofessional, even if hired for one-to-one support, must work with all the children in the classroom for the assignment to be successful



Flexible In-service **Working with Paraprofessionals in Reading and Math Instruction**

Oct 1st 3:45-5:45

Trula Lawson Early Childhood Center
550 Eastgate Road, Sevierville

Teachers be sure your Parents and Paraprofessionals know they are all invited!

Memo continued

4. Training needs for the teacher, paraprofessional, and even students should be identified
5. The one-to-one position should be seen as having a beginning and a planned end, with measurable goals and objectives to assess the efficacy of, and need for, this level of support
6. Fading support should not be done intuitively, but by using criteria and timelines
7. All staff members in the room should know how to use/implement programs, communication supports, behavioral plans, etc., not just the paraprofessional
8. The paraprofessional should work with the student in small groups vs. one-to-one whenever possible, and should be available to all children in the room. This helps with fading support and the use of natural supports
9. The teacher and paraprofessional should switch roles from time to time to reduce dependency on one person, understand new learning needs and possible strategies, and decrease potential for the teacher to abdicate responsibility for the student
10. The paraprofessional should be included in meetings about the student
11. Freschi reiterates that it is important to remember, "the child's success always comes first. That success includes moving away from this level of support, gaining independence, and learning with peers" (p. 45).

Need more information or ideas for your role as a paraprofessional?

Our department has resources on this topic. Access information at www.slc.sevier.org.

You may also want to explore the following websites:

1. Paraeducator Support of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~uapvt/parasupport/>

2. Direct Support Professionals Web Site: <http://rtc.umn.edu/dsp/>

References:

Freschi, D. (1999). Guidelines for working with one-to-one aides. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 31* (4), 42-45.

Giangreco, M., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T., & Macfarland, S. (1997). Helping or hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 64* (1), 7-18.

Sevier County Paraeducators Checklist

It's a new school year, which means it's time to start thinking about all the information and resources you'll need to be successful in the classroom. To help you get organized, here's a short checklist of items you should begin taking action on immediately. (The checklist is compliments of Paraprofessionals: Training for the Classroom, written by Carolyn S. Houk and Robert McKenzie.)

- Exchange telephone numbers with the teacher.
- Learn emergency procedures in case of fire or other emergencies.
- Become familiar with the daily classroom schedule.
- Make sure you completely understand your job description.
- Figure out how best to divide your time among tasks.
- Learn the teacher's discipline methods.
- Find out how the teacher wants you to assist in student discipline.
- Know what student records you're supposed to keep and where to file them.
- Find out what outside-the-classroom activities (i.e., lunchtime or recess) you're responsible for.
- Know where supplies are kept.
- Know where to obtain equipment.
- Know how to operate all classroom equipment.
- Become familiar with school policy concerning the release of a child to a parent (or other adult).
- Become familiar with school policy regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Blankenship continued

encouraged to stick to a task until it is complete. Two of the most important ingredients for success in life are: (1) a good attitude toward self, others and work, and (2) the willingness to stick with a job until it is complete.

A teacher can help instill pride and self-discipline in a student by encouraging him/her to take on new challenges in life with the fullest intent of succeeding. If however, he/she fails, help the student understand that most failures are only temporary and that tomorrow is a new day and the sun will rise once again with a new opportunity for success.

Website

Our Sevier County Special Education Website www.slc.sevier.org contains lots of information including a section for Aides/ Assistants and a newsletter link including more Paraeducator information in Parallel, Fall 2002.

Spanish Language Forms

Some of the forms we regularly use are available in Spanish translation on the SPED website. www.slc.sevier.org

Newsletter

Contributions for the newsletter can be submitted to Nancy Wohl by email: nwohl@yahoo.com] by the first Friday of the month.

Patience and
perseverance have a
magical effect before
which difficulties
disappear and
obstacles vanish.

John Quincy Adams

To laugh often and much;
 to win the respect of intelligent people and affection of children;
 to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;
 to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;
 to leave the world a little bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;
 to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived...
 this is to have succeeded.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson-

Paraprofessionals and The Title 1 Reauthorization

Our school system and Department of Special Education have finally received word on the completion of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Various Titles within the Act have specific references to paraprofessionals. One section of it that directly impacts paraprofessionals is the main section of Title I, Sec. 1119 (Qualifications of Teachers and Paraprofessionals), which I will address in the remainder of this article, and I hope that we will be able to provide guidance as soon as possible. Although I think it is important that everyone have the opportunity to see this document (available online), understand that the state interpretation and guidance for each section is still in the process of being determined. I have been working in public schools under the ESEA for approximately 30 years. Throughout the years there have been changes that have emphasized various pieces of this legislation and its impact on children in our school systems. In the last four to five years of the past reauthorization, there have been intense efforts in all states to establish high content standards for our children, and even greater efforts to establish more accountability related to student performance and program performance. The emphasis on high standards and accountability for student performance naturally impacts teachers and all others responsible for the education of our children. Thus, we now see incredible pressure for changes in qualifications of teachers and paraprofessionals, and more emphasis on establishing measurable objectives for accountability of overall student performance. All of the public schools accepting Title I funds must provide evidence of student performance at grades 3 and 5, in reading and mathematics, to assure *adequate yearly progress*. The new legislation is mandating even more measurement of student performance and system accountability. Teachers, paraprofessionals and others responsible for direct instruction are specifically required to demonstrate higher qualifications and measurable objectives. In preparation for this new legislation, Sevier County paraprofessionals should build a professional portfolio. In their portfolios, I believe they should include include:

a) the last 10 years of education experience;

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- b) a copy of a written job description for their current position;
- c) a thorough assessment of their current knowledge and skills in teaching reading and mathematics;
- d) results from a sample test of the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade tests;
- e) a copy of a functional resume for the last ten years of employment;
- f) a list of all staff development activities (especially training leading to a certificate); and
- g) copies of all personal recommendations or commendations during their employment.

For those paraprofessionals who begin using the portfolios, I believe you will find it to be a useful strategy in preparation for the following sections of legislation

(b) NEW PARAPROFESSIONALS —

(1) IN GENERAL. — Each local educational agency receiving assistance under this part shall ensure that all paraprofessionals hired after the date of enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and working in a program supported with funds under this part shall have —

(A) completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education;

(B) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or

(C) met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment —

(i) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics;

or

(ii) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

(2) CLARIFICATION. — The receipt of a secondary school diploma (or its recognized equivalent) shall be necessary but not sufficient to satisfy the requirements of paragraph (1)(C).

[Author's note: The exception is for those paraprofessionals responsible for translation and parental involvement activities.]

(c) EXISTING PARAPROFESSIONALS —

— Each local educational agency receiving assistance under this part shall ensure that all paraprofessionals hired before the date of enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and working in a program supported with funds under this part shall, not later than 4 years after the date of enactment satisfy the requirements of subsection (b).

There are different options for new and existing paraprofessionals to meet. We must provide clarity and meaningful guidance on this piece of legislation. I have found that many paraprofessionals do not have a written job description to begin the personal assessment process. Most staff do not have a resume, do not have higher education beyond high school, do not have a paraprofessional procedures manual for employment, have not had training in Tennessee Graduation Standards, do not have knowledge of the way Standards are embedded in curricula and do not have first-

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hand knowledge of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program tests (TCAP) or the 8th grade Basic Skills Test. Also, many paraprofessionals have only received limited staff training in basic comprehension and teaching strategies for reading, mathematics and writing. Please be advised that our first flexible inservice this year deals with working with paraprofessionals to assist in reading and math instruction. Although this is a voluntary inservice, I believe it would be of great benefit to any paraprofessional who intends to work in an instructional role.

In conclusion, I would like to say in all of the contacts I have had, from rural to urban schools, I am extremely proud and honored to have met so many dedicated, professional and very caring paraprofessionals already performing exemplary work.

Dr. John Enloe

Director of Special Education

Sevier County Board of Education

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Web Sites and Paraphenalia

No Child Left Behind: www.ed.gov/nclb/

Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE) Fact Sheets: www.spense.org/Results.html

Paraprofessionals In the Education Workforce, National Education Association (NEA) www.nea.org/esp/resource/parawork.htm
Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE): www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/

Paraeducator Support of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms, University of Vermont: www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport/

Roles of Educational Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools, U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov/pubs/Paraprofessionals/

National Clearinghouse for Careers in Special Education, CEC: www.special-ed-careers.org/research_library/paraeducators.html

Schools and Staffing Survey, National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES): nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/

Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs, National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse: www.recruitingteachers.org/become/paraprograms.html

IDEA Practices Home Page: www.ideapractices.org

National Clearinghouse for Paraeducators Resources, Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research: www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities: www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport

Building Strong Partnerships

Communication and cooperation are essential for successful teacher-paraprofessional partnerships. The following tips from the American Guidance Service can help you develop successful working relationships in any classroom

Paraprofessionals

-- Become familiar with the teacher's instructional methods for individual and group activities.

-- Make your own careful observations of student behavior, particularly watching for changes, and share your observations with the teacher.

-- Be a self-starter. When you're reasonably certain of what the teacher wants done, don't wait to be told.

-- Take on new responsibilities with a positive attitude.

Teachers

-- If the paraprofessional is new to the job, gradually phase her or him into the job's full responsibilities, and offer a lot of encouragement.

-- Discuss with the paraprofessional the procedures and discipline techniques you use in your classroom.

-- When you are absent, let the substitute teacher know what the paraprofessional's responsibilities are.

-- Encourage initiative and recognize the paraprofessional's skills, keeping them in mind when assigning tasks.

In-Service Opportunities

**Teachers, Parents and Paraprofessionals,
Administrators are all invited**

October 1st

**Working with Paraprofessionals in
Reading and Math Instruction**

Kendra Davis, Denise O'Bryant and Kathy Newman

January 16th 2003

Functional Behavior Assessments

Behavior Improvement Plans

Jeff Moore, Kelly Perkins and Don Zong

March 18th

**Determining the Need for Extended School Year
A Guide for Policies and Procedures Based on
Case Precedent and Current Law**

John Enloe, SPED Director

All In-service programs are held at the
Trula Lawson Early Childhood Center
550 Eastgate Road, Sevierville, TN
865-453-1036 or 865-453-1037