



ISRC Pin - Up



Effective Utilization of Paraprofessionals / Classroom Aides

Effective use of paraprofessionals can free teachers to provide increased instructional services.

No matter the title, paraprofessionals are integral members of instructional teams.

- ✓ Paraprofessional
- ✓ Paraeducator
- ✓ Teacher Assistant
- ✓ Teacher Aide
- ✓ Para

Major Responsibilities of Teachers in Supervising Paraprofessionals

- Plan the tasks that paras will perform
- Develop schedules for paras
- Appropriately delegate responsibilities to paras
- Provide clear instructions and complete information
- Assign and delegate tasks
- Discuss curriculum and instruction
- Discuss student behavior
- Provide feedback and recognition

Major Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals in the Classroom

- Implement instructions and instructional material prepared by the teacher
- Supervise students in groups or individually
- Provide behavioral supports, including data collection, prompting, and reinforcements
- Provide support for individual students with transitions and accessing the curriculum
- Facilitate communication and social interactions using assistive technology or other supports
- Provide support with hygiene and personal care skills

Tips For Teachers Who Work With Paraprofessionals:

- Introduce the paraprofessional as a co-worker rather than as an aide. This demonstrates a level of respect, and can have an impact on the relationship.
- Treat the paraprofessional as an equal member of the team.
- Empower the paraprofessional to monitor and enforce behavioral expectations in the classroom. When the adult is seen as having equal vs. less authority, students will respond appropriately.
- Establish clear and consistent communication, including regular meeting times and written correspondence.
- Develop scripts to use when responding to students, to ensure consistency of adult responses.
- The paraprofessional is not the parent. Watch for emotional responses to the student from the aide. If these are seen, have a discussion about why there was an emotional response. If a paraprofessional is angry with a student's behavior, review appropriate responses.

Sample Activities for Paraprofessionals

1. Facilitate student work at stations – When students rotate through stations, there is an increased opportunity for differentiation of material. Paraprofessionals can supervise groups of students as they move through a learning station, providing the teacher with time to work directly with other small groups of students.
2. Collect data – Data collection for both academics and behavior is typically necessary for an Individual Education Plan. Paraprofessionals can use data collection forms or checklists developed by the teacher to track student progress. In some cases, it is beneficial for both the teacher and the paraprofessional to collect the data, and then compare for inter-rater reliability.
3. Material preparation – Paraprofessionals can assist in putting together materials for small group or individual instruction. They can prepare centers and perform other functions related to materials that are needed for a lesson plan.
4. Implement classroom routines – Paraprofessionals can support the implementation of classroom routines with prompting, ranging from hand over hand support to visual or verbal cues.
5. Implement behavioral expectations – Paraprofessionals can assist teachers in implementing positive behavior expectations in the classroom by recognizing appropriate student behavior, prompting students to adhere to the expectations, and by teaching/re-teaching the expected behaviors to individual students.

What Do Paras Need From Teachers?

1. Communication – Clear communication about expectations can enhance a paraprofessional’s ability to effectively work with students. The communication can be at a daily meeting, through a written communication notebook, via e-mail, or any format that ensures frequent and consistent contact about students, academics, behavior, classroom routines, and other vital information.
2. Respect – Paraprofessionals should be treated as an equal and valuable member of the educational team. The language used by teachers in describing paraprofessionals can indicate their beliefs about the para’s role. For example, “my aide” indicates a belief that the aide is in a subordinate role, whereas “our classroom paraprofessional” indicates a higher level of respect. This use of respectful language can have an impact on the relationship with the paraprofessional, which can impact effectiveness in the classroom. Additionally, treating the paraprofessional as an equal member of the team communicates to the students that this adult is equally “in charge.” This empowers the paraprofessional to support classroom management, even if a different teacher is present.
3. Collaboration – Engage in planning together with the paraprofessional. Participation in planning is closely connected to communication and respect. Working together to identify goals, work activities, behavioral approaches, and classroom activities will provide the paraprofessional with a better understanding and can increase the effectiveness of implementation.
4. Modeling – Demonstrate the routines and strategies that the paraprofessional is expected to implement with students and in the classroom. When paraprofessionals can observe the way teachers expect things to be done, this increases the likelihood that things will be done in the way that the teacher expects.

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