

Ten Tips for Paraeducators

Classroom aides can support teaching, foster student independence, and discourage learned helplessness.



Let students make mistakes and take risks.

Everyone learns from mistakes. Let natural consequences be part of the classroom experience.

Watch your voice and volume.



Discussions with other adults or students during lecture disrupt the class. Save important discussions for the hallway.



Maintain student dignity.

Be discreet about the student's physical needs. Refrain from making comments aloud. Schedule tube feedings, splint changes, stretching and toileting in between classes.

Communicate and consult with caregivers.



Listen to families and keep them informed. Some strategies that work at home, can work at school.



Facilitate peer relationships.

Remind others to communicate directly with the student. Seat the student with other students in the classroom and cafeteria. Give students the space and freedom to socialize and develop friendships.

Help the classroom teacher.



Use class lectures as an opportunity to program a student's communication device, make copies for the teacher or plan for next week. Time away from the student's side promotes independence.

Ask for help.



You are not alone. Ask for direction in the classroom. Request assistance with disciplinary issues. Leave content decisions and curriculum modifications or adaptations as the teachers' responsibility.

Give as few prompts as possible.



Foster independence. Limit hand over hand assistance. Give hand over hand assistance to teach a task, not to complete a task. Resist the temptation to give verbal directions for every aspect of a task.

Help students to create authentic work.



Students learn when they actively participate in assignments. Avoid completing assignments, taking tests or answering questions for students. Show caregivers their child's genuine work and progress.

Enable students to make choices.



Give students the ability to control their lives and interact with the environment. Offer choices to the student, no matter how insignificant they may seem.