

Working with Paraprofessionals

A Resource for Educators of Students with Disabilities



Table of Contents

How to use this Document.....	5
Introduction	6
Roles and Responsibilities	9
General and Special Education Settings	12
General Education.....	13
Sample Instructional Duties.....	13
Administrative Duties	19
Special Education.....	20
Sample Instructional Duties	20
Administrative Duties	24
Non-Traditional Settings.....	25
Sample Instructional Duties	25
Administrative Duties.....	29
Communication	30
Teacher Communication to Paraprofessional	31
Teacher Communication to Student about Paraprofessional.....	32
Teacher Communication to Parents about Paraprofessional.....	33
Confidentiality	34
Documentation.....	35
Professional Development	38
Instruction	39
Conclusion	40
References and Resources	42



How to Use this Document

The intent of this document is to provide information to educators who are assigned a paraprofessional as a resource in assisting students with disabilities access and progress in the general curriculum. The intended audience is classroom teachers—both general and special education. The document is meant to assist in defining and distinguishing the roles and responsibilities of the certified teacher from the paraprofessional and in opening lines of communication on a campus or at a local education agency (LEA) so that paraprofessionals are more effectively utilized in assisting students with disabilities access to and progress in the general curriculum. Each LEA/campus will need to determine exactly what and how the roles, responsibilities, communication, and documentation requirements will look locally. This document was created to open up communication about these vital issues.

The organization of the document is as follows:

- **Roles & Responsibilities** – provides a comparison of examples of tasks which are appropriate for individuals in designated roles to complete within specific educational settings;
- **Communication** – outlines areas in which administration needs to ensure communication takes place in order to ensure all stakeholders understand the role and purpose of the paraprofessional; and
- **Documentation** – lists some areas in which LEAs need to ensure they have guidelines in place to document appropriate supervision of paraprofessionals as well as appropriate implementation of students' individualized education programs (IEPs).

Each section is independent and can be read as a stand-alone section or all sections may be used together.

Introduction

This document was created as a resource for educators, in order to assist in their understanding of how to best utilize a paraprofessional in the classroom. Both general and special education settings are addressed (including non-traditional settings such as in-home or community-based settings). The intent of this guide is for it to be used as a resource, not as a strict set of “rules” that must be followed. However, some non-negotiable pieces that are required by federal and/or state regulations/rules are included and are noted throughout the document.

The intent of this guide is for it to be used as a resource, not as a strict set of “rules” that must be followed.

This resource focuses on the role of paraprofessionals in instructional activities. However, a significant number of paraprofessionals have non-instructional responsibilities, including assisting students with disabilities with physical needs, such as diapering, positioning, feeding, etc. While this resource does not specifically address these tasks or job responsibilities, it is imperative that paraprofessionals receive proper training on how to safely and hygienically conduct these activities in a way that meets the individual student’s needs. These especially important tasks must not be devalued or overlooked; however, how these tasks need to be carried out must be determined locally, based on a specific student’s needs and, thus, cannot be adequately addressed within a general document.

Frequently Used Terms/ Acronyms

LEA - Local Education Agency

IEP - Individualized Education Program

PLAAFP - Present Levels of Academic
Achievement and Functional
Performance

CCC – Case Conference Committee

While no one resource can answer every question an educator may have, this document is designed to serve as a starting point to spark conversations on a campus or within an LEA. Many decisions will have to be made and clearly communicated at the local level. These decisions must be made with the understanding that any supports provided to students who receive special education services will always need to be individualized, and may vary from student to student, setting to setting, and even within a class period, according to the type of instruction being delivered (whole group direct instruction, small group, re-teach, etc.)

Roles & Responsibilities

When there is more than one adult present in a classroom, it is essential that roles and responsibilities be clearly delineated and followed. While this document provides general information, one non-negotiable is that the classroom teacher (or co-teaching team) must always have the role of primary teacher(s) for all students in the classroom.

All students should be involved in all parts of the classroom, including instruction and routines of the classroom.

When students with disabilities are hosted, rather than fully included, in a classroom setting, it can inadvertently send a message to the rest of the class “that some students are more or less worthy of teacher time than are others” (Broer, S.M.; Doyle, M.B.; & Giangreco, M.F. (2007) p. 427).¹

The tasks the paraprofessional performs should supplement, not supplant, the classroom teacher(s)’ duties.²

While paraprofessionals can serve in many different capacities in a classroom, Causton-Theoharis, Giangreco, Doyle & Vadasy point out that “[t]he paraprofessionals’ role is not to plan or design classroom instruction, but rather to make important contributions to classroom instruction by effectively implementing important delegated tasks for which they are specially trained” (p. 56).³

Be aware of the role your paraprofessional is intended to play in the classroom.

It is important to distinguish the roles and responsibilities of a paraprofessional who is assigned to a classroom for support of multiple or even all students from those of a paraprofessional who is assigned to an individual student within the classroom, as required by that student’s IEP. While a classroom paraprofessional is able to assist with general classroom routines and assist all students within a classroom, a paraprofessional who is required to provide 1:1 support for a specific student, as mandated by the student’s IEP, should not have responsibilities outside of working with that individual student.

Support student independence, autonomy, and peer relationships.

However, it is important that the student with a 1:1 aide not be isolated physically or socially from the rest of the classroom, as studies have repeatedly shown that in many instances a 1:1 paraprofessional hindered a student’s participation in a general education classroom, and the paraprofessional, rather than peers, became the student’s primary social contact during their school years.¹ Instead of the 1:1 paraprofessional being the student’s primary social contact, the paraprofessional can work to facilitate

1 Broer, S.M., Doyle, M.B., & Giangreco, M.F. (2007). Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional support. *Exceptional Children*, 71(4), 415-430.

2 Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2004). Directing paraprofessional work. In C.H. Kennedy & E.M. Horn (Eds.), *Including students with severe disabilities* (pp. 185-204). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

3 Causton-Theoharis, J.N., Giangreco, M.F., Doyle, M.B., & Vadasy, P.F. (2007, Sept/Oct). Paraprofessionals: The “sous-chefs” of literacy instruction. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 40(1), 56-62.

academic and social interaction between the student with a disability and his/her peers. A study of how paraprofessionals spent their time in the classroom found that:

- nearly 37% [of the paraprofessionals who participated in the study] were concerned that students with disabilities they worked with were unnecessarily dependent on paraprofessionals...
- over 46% of paraprofessionals reported that some of their students with disabilities communicated, via their language or behavior, that they found paraprofessional supports unwanted...
- more than 36% reported that students with disabilities spent more than half of their social time at school (e.g. lunch, playground, free-time) with paraprofessionals"

(Giangreco & Broer, 2005, p. 15-17).⁴

It is important to heed the caution that "[t]here is...a fine line between support that facilitates participation and support that restrains child interaction and the development of autonomy. Too much assistance can result in limited use of the children's skills and potential, and possibly create unnecessary or unhealthy dependencies and helplessness"

(Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009, p. 28).⁵

“It is important to heed the caution that “[t]here is...a fine line between support that facilitates participation and support that restrains child interaction and the development of autonomy.”

Include students in the decisions that affect the supports they need from a paraprofessional.

A study of students with physical disabilities who were assigned a paraprofessional to support them in the general education setting found that the students were often excluded from decision making as to what types of supports they needed from a paraprofessional; the students who were interviewed reported that this exclusion sometimes resulted in them receiving supports they felt they did not need and not receiving supports in areas in which they felt they needed them.⁵

Fade supports appropriately.

Additionally, regardless of whether the individual is a classroom paraprofessional or a student-specific paraprofessional, it is always important to look at the fading of supports and ensure that students' independence is maximized. One study of students with intellectual disabilities who were assigned a paraprofessional during their school years found that, “[W]hen fading of supports was successfully achieved, respondents [students with intellectual disabilities] spoke about the experience with excitement and pride in their voices...”¹

4 Giangreco, M.F., Broer, S.M. (2005, Spring). Questionable utilization of paraprofessionals in inclusive schools: Are we addressing symptoms or causes? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20(1), 10-26.

5 Egilson, S.T., & Traustadottir, R. (2009). Assistance to pupils with physical disabilities in regular schools: promoting inclusion or creating dependency? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 24(1), 21-36

Non-Negotiables

Paraprofessionals **✗ may not** (19 TAC §230.61):

- ✗ Develop lesson plans
- ✗ Introduce new material/content
- ✗ Provide the direct teach portion of the lesson
- ✗ Select materials for implementation of the lesson
- ✗ Assign final grades
- ✗ Be responsible for any IEP-related responsibilities without supervision of a certified special educator
- ✗ Develop IEP goals/objectives
- ✗ Design the classroom management system
- ✗ Be responsible for determining or reporting student progress (general class progress or IEP-goal progress)

When a paraprofessional is providing services required by a student's IEP, he/she must do so under the supervision of a certified special education teacher.



General and Special Education Settings

The following tables represent a comparison of examples of activities which are appropriate for individuals in designated roles to participate. It is imperative that everyone understands that the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional will be very fluid, and will vary across situations. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, nor is it meant to represent what must be a part of a job description. It is meant to spark conversation within an LEA and/or campus as to how to most effectively utilize paraprofessionals within a classroom or non-traditional setting in assisting students with disabilities in accessing and progressing in the general curriculum. It is recommended that each LEA or campus create its own specific list of duties for a paraprofessional; this list should link to the classroom schedule and provide the paraprofessional guidance on what to be doing during particular points in a lesson.

General Education Settings

Sample Instructional Duties

In the general education setting, it is important to delineate the role not just of the certified general education teacher and the paraprofessional, but also to include the role of the special educator, if there is one assigned to the classroom for all or some of the class time. The following tables of sample instructional duties outline possible roles/responsibilities with both instructional and administrative tasks for the general educator, the special educator, the classroom paraprofessional, and the student specific (1:1) paraprofessional. LEAs will need to make final determinations regarding roles and responsibilities using students' IEPs to guide these decisions.

Paraprofessionals should be provided a schedule that links to the classroom schedule, providing them explicit information regarding what task(s) they should implement during specific points in the lesson. For example, while the teacher provides direct whole-class instruction, the paraprofessional may prepare materials or the teacher may direct the paraprofessional to listen to the instruction so that he/she can provide teacher-directed student assistance after the instruction.

Paraprofessionals should spend the majority of the time on instructional duties, not on administrative duties.



IEP Development

General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information regarding student's abilities, including strengths and weaknesses, for CCC (Case Conference Committee) to use in development of PLAAFP (Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance) and IEP goals/objectives. Provide information regarding content standards for his/her assigned course/class for CCC committee to use in development of PLAAFP and IEP goals/objectives. Attend CCC meeting, when invited. Give input into development of IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide current information regarding student's abilities, including strengths and weaknesses, for CCC committee to use in development of PLAAFP and IEP goals/objectives. Provide information regarding specially designed instruction for CCC committee to use in development of PLAAFP and IEP goals/objectives. Attend CCC meeting, when invited. Give input into development of IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/ administrator(s) for development of the IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/ administrator(s) for development of the IEP.

Lesson Planning

General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design lesson plans. Include any required accommodations and or modifications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist as needed/ required in designing lesson plans. Ensure general educator is aware of any individual student IEP-directed accommodations and/or modifications, including goals/objectives related to the content/course. Assist in developing IEP-required accommodations and/or modifications into lesson plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in preparation of teacher designed materials that are designated as needed in the lesson plan (i.e. prepare centers for the classroom, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in preparation of IEP-required materials needed for lesson (i.e. prepare accommodated materials for the student, etc.)

Lesson Implementation

General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct teach portion of lesson to entire class. • Direct classroom paraprofessional in his/her role during the direct teach portion of the lesson. • Design necessary re-teach pieces. • Re-teach as necessary and/or provide direction to classroom paraprofessional on who/what/how to re-teach. • Assist students as needed with individual work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist with direct teach portion of lesson. • Implement IEP goals/objectives, including specially designed instruction required by IEP. • Oversee/supervise implementation of IEP goals/objectives by a paraprofessional, including specially designed instruction required by IEP. • May re-teach small groups. • May assist students as needed with individual work. • Pull individual students out of general education classroom only if required by IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement supports directed by teacher(s) during the direct teach portion of the lesson. • Work with small group for re-teach, as directed by teacher(s). • Assist individual students, as directed by teacher(s). • Pull individual students out of general education classroom only if required by IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement IEP-required supports during all portions of the lesson as directed by teacher. • Pull student out of general education classroom only if required by IEP.

Evaluation of Student Learning			
General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for final grade determination for both assignments and overall course/class. Partner with special educator to determine mastery for students who receive special education services, as directed by IEP. Report on all students' progress/grades in class periodically, as directed by local policy. Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if concerns/questions exist regarding student's IEP and/or any lack of expected progress. Responsible for data collection on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in final grade determination for both assignments and overall course/class, as determined by student's IEPs. Design process/forms for collection of data on student progress on IEP goals/objectives. Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if concerns regarding the lack of the expected progress toward the annual goals/objectives. Responsible for data collection on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in grading objective assignments/tests (i.e. multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.) May assist in clerical recording of grades (Note: Some LEAs allow only the classroom teacher to enter grades in a grade book/online grading system.) May assist in collection of data on student mastery of material using criteria/checklist developed by special educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in collection of data on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator.

Behavior Management

General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design classroom management system for all students in the class/course. • Implement classroom management system for all students in the class/course. • Implement individual student's Behavior Improvement Plans (BIP), as required by IEP. • Responsible for data collection on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives. • Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if student is not making adequate progress on behavior-related IEP goals/objectives and/or if BIP is not effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist in design of classroom management system for all students in the class/course. • May assist in implementation of classroom management system for all students in the class/course. • Ensure general educator is aware of any individual student IEP goals/objectives related to behavior and/or individual student's BIP. • Provide and/or supervise any specially designed instruction related to behavior. • Responsible for data collection on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives. • Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if student is not making adequate progress on behavior-related IEP goals/objectives and/or if BIP is not effective. • Reports on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives periodically, as required by IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist teacher(s) in implementation of the classroom management system, including established classroom routines, as directed by teacher(s). • Assist in the implementation of the BIP. • May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist teacher(s) in implementation of the classroom management system with individual student, including reinforcing/re-teaching established classroom routines, as directed by teacher(s). • May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator.

Fading of Supports			
General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate.• Assist paraprofessionals with understanding how/when to fade supports to students, as appropriate.• Document fading of supports per student's IEP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate.• Assist paraprofessionals with understanding how/when to fade supports to students, as appropriate.• Document fading of supports per student's IEP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate.• Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate.• Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s).

General Education Settings

Administrative Duties

Paraprofessionals should spend the majority of the time on instructional duties, not on administrative duties.

Classroom Duties			
General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for reporting accurate attendance information. Responsible for ensuring accurate reporting of grades. Reports on individual student mastery of IEP goals/objectives periodically, as required by IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist with reporting attendance information. May assist with reporting of grades. Reports on individual student mastery of IEP goals/objectives periodically, as required by IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in collecting and recording attendance information. May assist in clerical recording of grades (Note: Some LEAs allow only the classroom teacher to enter grades in a grade book/online grading system.) May assist with other clerical duties in classroom (i.e. organization of materials, making copies, etc.) as directed by teacher(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because this paraprofessional is required by a student's IEP, he/she should not have duties that take him/her away from providing the services dictated by the student's IEP.

Duties Outside of Classroom			
General Educator	Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific (1:1) Paraprofessional (Required by Student's IEP)
Supervise hallways, play areas, etc. as directed by administration.	Supervise hallways, play areas, etc. as directed by administration.	Supervise hallways, play areas, etc. as directed by administration.	Supervise/Assist individual student in hallways, play areas, etc. as required by IEP.

Special Education Setting

Sample Instructional Duties

The following tables represent possible instructional and administrative tasks/roles/responsibilities of the special education teacher and the paraprofessional(s) – both classroom and student-specific (1:1) paraprofessionals – within a “traditional” special education setting. This might be a resource setting, a content mastery setting, a self-contained setting, or any other special education “classroom” setting.

IEP Development		
Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide student-specific information for development of IEP, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Current abilities (strengths and weaknesses);- Modifications and/or accommodations (including use and effectiveness); and- Specially designed instruction.• Attend CCC meeting as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/administrator(s) for development of the IEP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/administrator(s) for development of the IEP.



Lesson Planning

Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design lesson plans. • Integrate IEP-required accommodations and/or modifications into lesson plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in preparation of teacher designed materials that are designated as needed in the lesson plan (i.e. prepare centers, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in preparation of IEP-required materials needed for lesson (i.e. prepare accommodated materials for the student, etc.)

Lesson Implementation

Special Educator (per 19 TAC §230.61)	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide direct teach portion of lesson to entire class • Direct classroom paraprofessional and/or student specific paraprofessional in his/her role during the direct teach portion of the lesson. • Implement and/or oversee implementation of IEP goals/objectives, including specially designed instruction required by IEP. • Design necessary re-teach pieces. • Re-teach as necessary and/or provide direction to classroom paraprofessional on who/what/how to re-teach. • Assist students as needed with individual work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with small group for re-teach, as directed by teacher(s). • Implement supports directed by teacher(s) during the direct teach portion of the lesson. • Assist individual student(s), as directed by teacher(s). <p style="text-align: center;">*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement IEP-required supports during all portions of the lesson as directed by teacher(s).

Evaluation of Student Learning		
Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for final grade determination for both assignments and overall course/class. Report on all students' progress/grades periodically, as directed by local policy. Design process/forms for collection of data on student progress on IEP goals/objectives. Responsible for data collection on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives. Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if concerns/questions exist regarding student's IEP and/or any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general education curriculum, where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in grading objective assignments/tests (i.e. multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.) May assist in clerical recording of grades (Note: Some LEAs allow only the classroom teacher to enter grades in a grade book/online grading system.) May assist in collection of data on student mastery of material using criteria/checklist developed by special educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in collection of data on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator.

Behavior Management

Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design classroom management system for all students in the class/course. • Implement classroom management system for all students in the class/course. • Implement individual student's BIP, as required by IEP. • Provide and/or supervise any specially designed instruction related to behavior. • Responsible for data collection and reporting on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist teacher(s) in implementation of the classroom management system, including established classroom routines, as directed by teacher(s). • May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist teacher(s) in implementation of the classroom management system and/or BIPs with individual student, including reinforcing/re-teaching established classroom routines, as directed by teacher(s). • May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator.

Fading of Supports

Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate. • Assist paraprofessionals with understanding how/when to fade supports to students, as appropriate. • Document fading of supports per student's IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fade supports to individual students, as directed by teacher(s). • Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fade supports to individual students, as directed by teacher(s). • Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s).

Special Education

Administrative Duties

Paraprofessionals should spend the majority of the time on instructional duties, not on administrative duties.

Classroom Duties		
Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for reporting accurate attendance information. Responsible for ensuring accurate reporting of course/assignment grades. Report on individual student mastery of IEP goals/objectives periodically, as required by IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist in collecting and recording attendance information. May assist in clerical recording of grades. May assist with other clerical duties in classroom (i.e. organization of materials, making copies, etc.) as directed by teacher(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because this paraprofessional is required by a student's IEP, he/she should not have duties that take him/her away from providing the services dictated by the student's IEP.
Duties Outside of Classroom		
Special Educator	Classroom Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
Supervise hallways, play areas, etc. as directed by administration.	Supervise hallways, play areas, etc. as directed by administration.	Supervise/Assist individual student in hallways, play areas, etc. as required by IEP.

Non-Traditional Setting

(i.e. In-Home, Community-Based, etc.)

Sample Instructional Duties

The following tables represent some possible roles/responsibilities of the special education teacher and the paraprofessional (either a “classroom” paraprofessional – not assigned to a specific student and/or a student-specific 1:1 paraprofessional). While these tables take into account some of the more common non-traditional (non-classroom based) settings, such as in-home training and community based settings, there may be IEP-specific settings that are not considered here. Therefore, roles/responsibilities here may vary greatly, based on settings.

IEP Development		
Special Educator	“Classroom” Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information regarding student’s abilities, including strengths and weaknesses, for CCC committee to use in development of the PLAAFP and IEP goals/objectives. • Provide information regarding specially designed instruction for CCC committee to use in development of PLAAFP and IEP goals/objectives. • Attend CCC meetings. • Give input into development of IEP, as appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/administrator(s) for development of the IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide any information requested by teacher(s)/administrator(s) for development of the IEP.

Lesson Planning

Special Educator	“Classroom” Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design lesson plans. Integrate IEP-required accommodations and/or modifications into lesson plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in preparation of materials that are designated as needed in the lesson plans (i.e. prepare centers, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in preparation of IEP-required materials needed for lesson plans (i.e. prepare accommodated materials for the student, etc.)

Lesson Implementation

Special Educator	“Classroom” Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide direct teach portion of lesson to entire class. Direct classroom paraprofessional in his/her role during the direct teach portion of the lesson. Implement and/or oversees implementation of IEP goals/objectives, including specially designed instruction required by IEP. Design necessary re-teach pieces. Re-teach as necessary and/or provide direction to paraprofessional on who/what/how to re-teach. Assist student(s) as needed with individual work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement supports directed by teacher(s) during the direct teach portion of the lesson. Work with small group for re-teach, as directed by teacher(s). Assist individual student(s), as directed by teacher(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement IEP-required supports during all portions of the lesson.

Evaluation of Student Learning

Special Educator	"Classroom" Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for final grade determination for both assignments and overall course/class. • Report on all students' progress/grades periodically, as directed by local policy. • Design process/forms for collection of data on student progress on IEP goals/objectives. • Responsible for data collection on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives. • Responsible for asking for a review of IEP if concerns/questions exist regarding student's IEP and/or any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general education curriculum, where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist in grading objective assignments/tests (i.e. multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.) • May assist in clerical recording of grades (Note: Some LEAs allow only the classroom teacher to enter grades in a grade book/online grading system.) • May assist in collection of data on student mastery of material using criteria/checklist developed by special educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May assist in collection of data on student mastery of IEP goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator.

Behavior Management

Special Educator	"Classroom" Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design behavior management system for all students. Implement behavior management system for all students. Implement individual student's BIPs, as required by IEP. Provide and/or supervise any specially designed instruction related to behavior. Responsible for data collection on student mastery of behavior-related IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist teacher(s) in implementation of the classroom management system and/or BIPs*, including established classroom routines, as directed by teacher(s). May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May assist teacher(s) in implementation of the behavior management system with individual student, including reinforcing/re-teaching established routines, as directed by teacher(s). May assist in collection of data on student mastery of behavior-related IEP goals/objectives using criteria/checklist developed by special educator.

Fading of Supports

Special Educator	"Classroom" Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist paraprofessionals with understanding how/when to fade supports to students, as appropriate. Fade supports to individual students, as appropriate. Document fading of supports per student's IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fade supports to individual students, as directed by teacher(s). Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fade supports to individual students, as directed by teacher(s). Document fading of supports per student's IEP, as directed by teacher(s).

Special Education

Administrative Duties

Paraprofessionals should spend the majority of the time on instructional duties, not on administrative duties.

Classroom Duties		
Special Educator	“Classroom” Paraprofessional (Not assigned to a specific student)	Student-Specific Paraprofessional (IEP-Required)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for reporting accurate attendance information.• Responsible for ensuring accurate reporting of course/assignment grades.• Report on individual student mastery of IEP goals/objectives periodically, as required by IEP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May assist in collecting and recording attendance information.• May assist in clerical recording of grades.• May assist with other clerical duties in classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because this paraprofessional is required by a student’s IEP, he/she should not have duties that take him/her away from providing the services dictated by the student’s IEP.



Communication

In addition to clearly defining and distinguishing the roles and responsibilities for teachers and paraprofessionals, it is imperative that everyone on the teaching team be clear about what is communicated to whom regarding how the teaching team will work together. It is also helpful to define specific responsibilities related to communication. The certified teacher should always be the primary communicator to the parent regarding a student's academic and behavioral progress. Additionally, anytime student-specific information is communicated, whether verbally or in writing, confidentiality must be maintained.

The certified teacher should always be the primary communicator to the parent regarding a student's academic and behavioral progress.

It is imperative that the paraprofessional have both general information about his/her duties and specific information about the student(s) with whom he/she will be working. If he/she is to work with any portion of the child's IEP, not only must he/she be directly supervised by a certified special educator, he/she must also have or have access to the portion of the IEP he/she is responsible for following. While ultimate responsibility for implementation of the IEP will rest with the certified educator, the paraprofessional should be included and have access to student specific information if he/she is responsible for following it. The teacher will need to explain what the IEP means and what the paraprofessional's role is in assisting with its implementation.

All adults in the classroom must be "on the same page" in order for students to receive a consistent message. Expectations must not vary from person to person. This needs to be clear in communication to both the students and to parents. Students are able to easily tell when there is a lack of communication between two (or more) adults in the classroom. Recognizing the limited time that exists within the school day for structured communication, LEAs or campuses may consider alternate strategies for allowing for communication between the teacher(s) and paraprofessional(s), especially when a new student is introduced, IEPs are updated, and/or roles/responsibilities change for any other reason.

As with all communication, whether verbal or written, confidentiality of student information must always be maintained.

Teacher Communication to Paraprofessional

In All Education Settings

Roles

- Clearly define roles and responsibilities of paraprofessional (see p.8). The local education agency determines roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals as long as the assigned duties fall within scope of their certification level.
- The paraprofessional needs to know when and how his/her responsibilities will be communicated to him/her and by whom.

Communication

- Describe and clarify all areas/implications of confidentiality. (Paraprofessional may not discuss other students with parents.)
- The teacher will be the primary communicator with the parent regarding student progress, behavior, etc.
- Explain to the paraprofessional how to redirect a parent to contact the teacher – by e-mail, phone, parent meeting, etc.

Rapport

- Describe how the paraprofessional is there as a support in the classroom but should receive the same respect as the teacher.
- Describe how the paraprofessional is an important part of the learning community and is here to help with student success.
- Identify where materials or supplies are located that he/she may need for instructional purposes.

IEPs

- Explain the legal obligations of the IEP as they relate to the paraprofessional's role with the student, including: confidentiality, necessary accommodations and modifications, time (frequency/duration/location of IEP-required services), data collection, and documentation requirements.

Grades/Progress

- Teachers have ultimate responsibility for communicating progress and/or concerns.
- Paraprofessionals should discuss the student's grades, relationships to other students, and/or discipline

with the appropriate teacher(s).

- Paraprofessionals should direct all questions to the general/special education teacher(s).
- The teacher will be the one to share specific results of student's academic/behavioral progress, where the paraprofessional may impart more general information and refer parents to the teacher for specifics.
- Information about the student's performance should be objective, not personal opinions.

Classroom Management

- Clarify how the paraprofessional will assist with general classroom management as determined by the classroom teacher.
- Describe and explain the paraprofessional's role with expectations of the students. Both the paraprofessional and teacher share the same expectations of students, as well as the same consequences, whether positive or negative.

Academic Assistance

- Explain that the paraprofessional is in the classroom to assist the student's completion of work independently. (Instructional Aide 2 and 3)
- Explain that the paraprofessional is there primarily to support the student receiving special education services. However, he/she may assist general education students (i.e. inclusive classrooms where both special education and general education students are present).

Training

- Describe what training is available (both in district/on campus and externally) and how to request training to the paraprofessional.

Planning

- Describe how the paraprofessional will be included in the planning process.

Teacher Communication to Student about Paraprofessional

In All Education Settings



Roles

- Clearly define the role of the paraprofessional to the students.

Communication

- Explain that paraprofessionals cannot discuss other students.
- Describe to student how the teacher and paraprofessional will work together to communicate with their parents.

Rapport

- Explain that the paraprofessional is there as a support, and needs to be respected as a teacher.
- Explain that the paraprofessional is an important part of the learning community and describe how he/she is here to help the student be successful.

IEPs

- Explain age appropriate information regarding his/her IEP and describe the necessary supports the paraprofessional will provide as outlined in his/her IEP.

- The student should provide feedback as to the efficacy of current supports and the recommendation of the addition or elimination of supports provided by the paraprofessional.

Classroom Management

- Explain that the paraprofessional will assist with general classroom management.
- Describe how the paraprofessional's role regarding expectations and consequences will mirror those of the classroom teacher.

Academic Assistance

- Explain that the paraprofessional is there to assist with work completion but the student should strive to do so as independently as possible.

Training

- Describe the training the paraprofessional may receive in order to assist the student in the classroom.

Teacher Communication to Parents about Paraprofessional

In All Education Settings



Roles

- Clearly define the role of the paraprofessional to the parents.

Communication

- Explain that paraprofessionals cannot discuss any student's progress, behavior, etc.
- The teacher must explain to the parent that all communication must come from the teacher. If the parent has questions, those are directed to the teacher.
- Explain to the parent how to contact the teacher by e-mail, phone call, or parent meeting.

Rapport

- Explain that the paraprofessional is there to support students in the classroom and should be respected.
- Explain that the paraprofessional is an important part of the learning community and describe how he/she is here to help with student success.

IEPs

- Explain the legal obligations of the IEP and all the components of the IEP and subsequent documentation.

Classroom Management

- Explain that the paraprofessional will be in classroom (and other areas per the student's IEP) to assist students and, if appropriate, can implement classroom management strategies, etc.
- Explain the paraprofessional's role regarding student expectations and consequences will mirror those of the classroom teacher.

Academic Assistance

- Clarify that the paraprofessional is there primarily to support the student receiving special education services. In addition, if his/her role permits, the paraprofessional may assist all students in the classroom.

Training

- Clarify to parents that the paraprofessionals may receive training to assist the students in the classroom.

Confidentiality

All LEA staff should complete confidentiality training and understand laws regarding how to protect confidential student information. It is important that paraprofessionals have an understanding that communication norms exist in order to ensure that confidentiality of student information is protected and that any communication outside of the LEA-established norms could violate student confidentiality laws.

The following tips on confidentiality, from Giangreco and Doyle (2004, p. 192), might be helpful to share with the paraprofessional¹:

Tip 1. Never discuss a student's educational plans **in public places** (e.g., faculty room, playground, hallway, community park, grocery store).

Tip 2. When meeting to discuss a student's educational plan, **only discuss information** that is directly relevant to the issues at hand.

Tip 3. If someone approaches you and begins to breach the confidentiality of a student, **provide a kind but clear response**. For example, "I'm not on that student's educational team, so I don't think it is appropriate for me to be involved in discussing his educational program."

Tip 4. When you or the paraprofessional are no longer on the student's team, you must continue to **maintain confidentiality** about any information that you have learned about the student and/or family.

Tip 5. When in doubt, **put yourself in the shoes of the parent or student** and ask yourself: "Would it be okay for people to be talking about me or my family in this manner, in this same location, and for the same purpose?"

¹ Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2004). Directing paraprofessional work. In C.H. Kennedy & E.M. Horn (Eds.), *Including students with severe disabilities* (pp. 185-204). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Documentation

Paraprofessionals require ongoing supervision and regular performance evaluations which are based on their job descriptions and clearly defined LEA processes and procedures. While the teacher may not be responsible for the “formal” performance evaluations of the paraprofessional, the teacher(s) is responsible for supervision of the day-to-day working of the paraprofessional. Both federal regulations (34 CFR §200.59(c)(2)) of the Title I Regulations) and state rules require that paraprofessionals must be directly supervised by a certified teacher. Supervision should be by a certified special educator when the paraprofessional is responsible for IEP implementation. The LEA will need to determine what documentation to keep in regard to supervision, possibly including notes from observations or meetings, locally-developed forms, or other documentation as determined locally.

Note: The following tables do not provide comprehensive lists, but are intended as a guide to stimulate conversations.

Documenting Communication

While the previous section of this document spoke about communication, these tables specify what may need to be documented in regard to communication.

Administrator

- **Create systems of communication** between teachers and paraprofessionals that allow information to be exchanged in a manner that ensures student information remains confidential.
- **Schedule adequate** planning and communication time on a regular basis.
- **Determine a campus-wide monitoring process** of staff to meet the individual needs of the campus and the population it serves.
- **Monitor and provide feedback** on the working relationship between staff members.
- **Establish a “chain of command”** so the supervising teacher and paraprofessional know who to contact when issues or situations arise.
- **Provide mediation** between staff if conflicts arise.

General & Special Education Teacher

- **Identify when, where, and how often the paraprofessional(s) and teacher(s) will formally and informally communicate**, in a manner that ensures student information remains confidential. This might include: email, phone calls, messages, notes, and/or teacher and beginning and/or ending the school day together with the paraprofessional.

- **Document meetings** which discuss the student's characteristics, needs, and educational goals, such as: team meetings; discussions and decisions; daily check-in; and team logbook.
- **Provide the paraprofessional a schedule** to outline duties each day, week, grading period, or semester; to include: grade level/content area meetings and planning time.
- **Communicate that schedule and/or duties may change** based upon students' needs, ARD committee decisions, and/or administrative decisions.
- **Create norms and expectations for formal meetings**, such as: read reports in advance; follow an agenda; take turns – ensure both parties have time to talk and time to listen; maintain timelines; review data associated with students' IEPs; and/or discuss students' IEP before and after the CCC committee meeting.
- **Communicate the “chain of command”** so the paraprofessional knows who to contact when issues or situations arise.
- **Provide constructive and corrective feedback** on instructional and non-instructional activities in a timely manner.
- **Maintain written communications/notes** in a manner that ensures confidentiality.

Paraprofessional

- **Provide input for when, where, and how often** the paraprofessional and teacher(s) will formally and informally communicate, in a manner that ensures student information remains confidential. This might include: email, phone calls, messages, notes; and beginning and/or ending the school day together.
- **Keep notes from meetings to refer to as needed** which discuss the student's characteristics, needs, and educational goals, such as: team meetings; discussions and decisions; daily check-in; and team logbook.
- **Follow the duty schedule.**
- **Collaborate with the teacher to establish norms and expectations** for formal meetings, which include: read reports in advance; follow an agenda; take turns – ensure both parties have time to talk and time to listen; maintain timelines; review data associated with students' IEPs; and/or discuss students' IEP before and after the CCC committee meeting.
- **Follow the “chain of command” and document discussions and decisions** when issues or situations arise.
- **Provide feedback** on students' progress and supports in a variety of settings.
- **Maintain written communications/notes** in a manner that ensures confidentiality.

Professional Development

While teachers may not have the authority to send a paraprofessional to professional development, if a teacher has the capacity, he/she could make suggestions or help the paraprofessional find appropriate training opportunities so that the paraprofessional can develop skills specific to the responsibilities he/she is responsible for implementing. Additionally, the certified educator is responsible for ensuring the paraprofessional has a working knowledge of the student(s) with whom he/she is assigned to work. Specifically, the teacher must ensure that the paraprofessional knows what he/she is responsible for implementing with the assigned student(s) and what documentation must be kept of this implementation. When specific special education duties are assigned, those portions must be supervised by a certified special educator.

Administrator

- **Provide professional development to supervising teachers** on how to effectively supervise paraprofessionals, including:
 - Regularly scheduled planning time and communication with paraprofessional;
 - Managing paraprofessionals' schedules;
 - Delegating tasks and responsibilities;
 - Orientation of a new paraprofessional;
 - Informing the paraprofessional of professional development opportunities;
 - Modeling academic and functional activities, instructional supports, skill sets, and fading supports;
 - Evaluating paraprofessionals' job performance;
 - Managing the work environment;
 - Maintaining student confidentiality; and
 - Providing constructive and corrective feedback based on objective rather than subjective evidence of instructional and non-instructional activities.
- **Schedule continuous professional development opportunities** that align to the paraprofessionals' job descriptions and tasks they will perform in the educational setting, (i.e., webinars, trainings, etc.)
- Ensure all **staff receive training in maintaining confidentiality.**

General & Special Educator

- **Provide ongoing on-the-job training**, such as:
 - Orient a new paraprofessional to a new LEA, educational setting, or situation such as one-on-one assistance;
 - Refreshers/continuous professional development on providing supports in academic and functional settings, confidentiality, skill sets, and fading supports; and
 - Implementing students' IEP goals and, where appropriate, objectives/benchmarks.
- **Train, coach, and model** academic and functional activities, instructional supports, skill sets, and fading supports.
- **Maintain confidentiality.**

Paraprofessional

- **Request professional development, coaching, or modeling** of academic and functional activities, instructional supports, skill sets, and fading supports.
- **Maintain confidentiality.**



Instruction

Regarding instruction, the teacher will always have the primary responsibility for instruction of all students. The teacher will delegate appropriate instructional tasks to paraprofessionals, and document the paraprofessional's implementation of these tasks.

Administrator

- **Develop ways to evaluate paraprofessional services** to individual students, classrooms, and staff.

General & Special Education Teacher

- **Evaluate the impact of paraprofessional services** on students in a variety of academic and functional activities, settings, and skills sets in accordance with the students' IEPs.
- **Develop written plans that provide the content and level of information** required for the paraprofessionals to effectively carry out a plan devised by a general or special education teacher.
- **Create a plan/evaluation in writing, based on the student's IEP, to fade to fade paraprofessional-student supports** by increasing student independence or replacing with more naturally occurring supports (e.g., classroom and visual cues, written directions, and/or peers).
- **Scaffold the learning process** for the paraprofessional.

Paraprofessional

- **Document student progress** as a result of implementing academic and functional strategies and skills aligned with the student's IEP in a variety of settings per the teacher directive.
- **Follow the direction of the teacher(s)/administrator(s)** to fade paraprofessional-student supports by increasing student independence or replacing with more naturally occurring supports (e.g., classroom and visual cues, written directions, and/or peers).
- **Follow scaffolding of the learning processes.**
- **Adhere to written plans** that provide the content and level of information required to effectively carry out a plan devised by a general or special education teacher.

Conclusion

The certified teacher is always responsible for effective, meaningful instruction for all students in his/her class, whether or not they are students with disabilities and regardless of the paraprofessional supports provided for them. It is the teacher's responsibility to remain actively involved with the paraprofessional; in delegating/assigning tasks to him/her, monitoring his/her implementation of those tasks, and providing timely feedback on their implementation of those tasks. It is critical that the certified teacher ensures that the paraprofessional's roles and responsibilities, including those related to communication, are clearly delineated and that the paraprofessional has an understanding of how to implement the tasks assigned to him/her.

McGrath and Johns offer an acronym for helping teachers remember their responsibilities when it comes to paraprofessionals (2010, p. 6):¹

- P**repare the paraprofessional from the beginning on his or her role
- A**ssert your expectations in a helpful manner
- R**evue frequently how things are going
- A**gree to work out any problems and support each other
- P**lan carefully the activities you wish the paraprofessional to conduct
- R**einforce the paraprofessional for his or her contributions and successes
- O**bserve the paraprofessional frequently to ensure all is going well and that your plans are being implemented and give constructive feedback based on your observation

Giangreco and Doyle summarize it very well when they state, "It is the responsibility of the teacher and special educator to assess students' educational needs and progress; make decisions about curriculum; develop lesson plans that reflect individually determined adaptations, instructional methods, and data collection systems; and to be the primary liaison with the family. These are responsibilities that many paraprofessionals are not trained in or qualified to undertake. In cases where they are qualified (e.g., a certified teacher hired in a paraprofessional role), they are not compensated to do teacher-level work and as a paraprofessional are not accountable for the educational program in the same way as you are as an educator" (2004, p. 195).²

1 McGrath, M.Z., Johns, B.H., & Mathur, S.R., (2010, Winter). Empowered or overpowered? Strategies for working effectively with paraprofessionals. *Beyond Behavior*, 2-6.

2 Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2004). Directing paraprofessional work. In C.H. Kennedy & E.M. Horn (Eds.), *Including students with severe disabilities* (pp. 185-204). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.



“How will you know if you have been successful as an educator in directing the work of a paraprofessional? There are four primary indicators of your success in this area. First, gauge the job satisfaction of the paraprofessional...Second, as an educator, do you feel satisfied with the work of the paraprofessional? Third, you will know that you have been effective in directing the work of the paraprofessional when you can link it to positive student outcomes. Finally, consider the perspectives of your students with disabilities regarding paraprofessional supports.”

Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2004)

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