

The Role of the Paraprofessional in the Inclusive Class



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“We are willing and ready to connect with other kids, and adults must quietly step into the background, camouflaging their help as a tiger who may hide in full view. It’s the needed disguise of the adult who smoothes the way for friendship, then stands back in the shadows, observing the complicated dance of steps taking you to the feeling of confidence.”

Jamie Burke- student

Inclusive Education

In Principle, inclusive education means:

...the valuing of diversity within the human community. When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become “normal” in order to contribute to the world... We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community, and in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging (pp. 38-39). *

In Practice, inclusive education means:

A Classroom Model in which students with and without disabilities are based in a regular structure and benefit from the shared ownership of general and special educators.

A Student-centered Approach Beginning with Profiles that help educators appreciate the strengths and challenges of learners with and without disabilities and the individualized accomplishments that can be attained.

A Schedule that accounts for the full range of needs in the class—where no student engages in “pull out” or alternative activities to the extent that disruptions in the daily schedule and in peer relationships do not occur.

A Curriculum that is rich and accommodating for all students—and when further individualized to meet the needs of a particular learner.

A Teaming Process in which support staff work in flexible, coordinated ways to strengthen the collaborative relationships among special and regular educators, parents and educators, and educators and the community.

A Classroom Climate that embraces diversity, fosters a sense of social responsibility, and supports positive peer relationships.



*Kunc, N. (1992). The need to belong. Rediscovering Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

Strategies for Presuming Competence

- **Examine your attitude**—practice saying, “How can this work?”, “How can this child be successful?”
- **Question your stereotypes**—how someone looks, walks, or talks does not tell you about how they think and feel.
- **Use age appropriate talk**—examine your tone of voice and topic.
- **Support communication.**
- **Listen openly**—work to shed judgments.
- **Teach peers and others** how to interpret potentially confusing behavior.
- **Do not speak in front of someone** as if they were not there.
- In conversation, refer to the person in a way that **includes them in the conversation.**
- **Ask permission** to share information with others.
- **Be humble.**
- If possible, always let the person explain for himself or herself and **do not speak for them.**
- Assume that **every student will benefit** from learning age appropriate academic curriculum.
- Look for **evidence of understanding.**
- Support students to **show understanding using their strengths.**
- Design adaptations and accommodations to **support access to academics.**
- Be sure to **acknowledge the presence of a person with a disability in the same way** you would acknowledge others.

“If you want to see competence, it helps if you look for it.”

–Douglas Biklen

Gardner's Eight Intelligences



Visual/Spatial

Images, graphics, drawings, sketches, maps, charts, doodles, pictures, spatial orientation, puzzles, designs, looks, appeal, mind's eye, imagination, visualization, dreams, nightmares, films, and videos.



Logical/Mathematical

Reasoning, deductive and inductive logic, facts, data, information, spreadsheets, databases, sequencing, ranking, organizing, analyzing, proofs, conclusions, judging, evaluations, and assessments.



Verbal/Linguistic

Words, wordsmiths, speaking, writing, listening, reading, papers, essays, poems, plays, narratives, lyrics, spelling, grammar, foreign languages, memos, bulletins, newsletters, newspapers, E-mail, FAXes, speeches, talks, dialogues, and debates.



Musical/Rhythmic

Music, rhythm, beat, melody, tunes, allegro, pacing, timbre, tenor, soprano, opera, baritone, symphony, choir, chorus, madrigals, rap, rock, rhythm, and blues, jazz, classical, folk, ads and jingles.



Bodily/Kinesthetic

Art, activity, action, experiential, hands-on, experiments, try, do, perform, play, drama, sports, throw, toss, catch, jump, twist, twirl, assemble, disassemble, form, re-form, manipulate, touch, feel, immerse, and participate.



Interpersonal/Social

Interact, communicate, converse, share, understand, emphasize, sympathize, reach out, care, talk, whisper, laugh, cry, shudder, socialize, meet, greet, lead, follow, gangs, clubs, charisma, crowds, gatherings, and twosomes.



Intrapersonal/Introspective

Self, solitude, think, create, brood, reflect, envision, journal, self-assess, set goals, plot, plan, dream, write, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, affirmations, lyrics, songs, screenplays, commentaries, introspection, and inspection.



Naturalist

Nature, naturalism, environment, listen, watch, observe, classify, categorize, discern patterns, appreciate, hike, climb, fish, hunt, snorkel, dive, photograph, trees, leaves, animals, living things, flora, fauna, ecosystem, sky, grass, mountains, lakes, and rivers.



The Velcro Phenomenon

When is it absolutely necessary to be physically next to a student when providing support?

What are alternatives to sitting next to or being physically close to a student?

IEP at a Glance

Student _____ Grade _____ Age _____

Date Completed _____

Goal _____

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Important Student Information

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A Recipe For Life

The ABC's of school...Acceptance, Belonging, Community
School is a building with 4 walls, with tomorrow inside.
The first step is always the hardest.
Person first-disability second.
All the resources we need are in the mind.
A mind stretched by a new idea never retracts to the same place.
Instead of putting others in their place, put yourself in their place.
Be brave enough to accept the help of others.
You will never win if you never begin.
All glory comes from daring to begin.
Don't wait for your ship to come in, swim out to it.
We don't make mistakes, we make learning.
Don't make judgment, where you have no compassion.
Don't be afraid to go out on a limb- that's where the fruit is.
Don't quit 5 minutes before the miracle happens.
Always look for the good in people.
When your work speaks for itself, don't interrupt.
What isn't tried - won't work.
The harder to work, the luckier you get.
Your work is a portrait of yourself.
We cannot direct the winds- but we can adjust the sails.
What we see depends mainly on what we look for.
Change comes slowly.
It does not matter how slowly you go, as long as you do not stop.
If you get up one more time than you fall, you will make it through.
The time is always right to do what is right.
To disagree, one does not have to be disagreeable.
Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say.
Well done is better than well said.
Troubles are like babies- they grow bigger if you nurse them.
Laughter translate into any language.
A friend is someone who makes you feel totally acceptable.
The greatest thing is to feel needed.
Optimism is a necessary ingredient for success.
To handle yourself use your head, to handle others use your heart.
In the race for quality, there is no finish line.
There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.
Choose your thoughts with care; and let your words be kind.
To teach is to learn twice.
Tell me - I forget, teach me - I remember, involve me I learn.
Love is a gentle courtesy.
To err is human, but try to not over do it.
Do what you can with what you have, right where you are.
Anger is a cry from within to belong.
It takes an entire village to raise a child.
Celebrate diversity.
Together we are better.
Build an inclusive community. Embrace inclusive education.
Written and Produced by Patty Waletzko



Table 4.1. Ideas for providing engaged support

If the teacher is doing this:	You can be doing this:
Lecturing	Modeling note taking on the board, drawing the ideas on the board, or taking notes on the overhead
Taking attendance	Collecting and reviewing homework
Giving directions	Writing the directions on the board so all students have a place to look for the visual cues
Providing large-group instruction	Collecting data on student behavior or engagement, or making modifications for an upcoming lesson
Giving a test	Reading the test to students who prefer to have the test read to them
Facilitating stations or small groups	Also facilitating stations or groups
Facilitating sustained, silent reading	Reading aloud quietly with a small group
Teaching a new concept	Providing visuals or models to enhance the whole group's understanding
Reteaching or preteaching with a small group	Monitoring the large group as they work independently

Source: Murawski and Dieker (2004).

Cosupport

Another common type of support is called *cosupport*. While the teacher is leading the large group, you can ask clarifying questions or provide examples. Table 4.1 shows some types of cosupport you might provide in different situations, as suggested by Murawski and Dieker (2004).

WHAT IF CONFLICT ARISES?

The kids aren't the hard part of my job. It is working with other adults that I find challenging.

—Pam (paraprofessional)

Ideal team functioning is like a well-oiled machine in which each cog runs continually and smoothly, each harmoniously performing an individual function for the good



Continually ask yourself what the next step is that will enable a student to become more independent and less dependent on adult support. If a student will still need assistance, consider having interdependence (or successfully completing the task with other students) be the goal. By the end of the year, sometimes Andrea's friend Will would carry her drink. Therefore, she would get to the table without any adult support and, instead, have the support of a friend.

5. *Fade your cues.*

One of the simplest, yet most effective ways to increase interaction for students is to fade the assistance of paraprofessionals. Fading assistance means actually reducing the type and level of support given to a student in a systematic way. Reducing support promotes independence, interdependence, and interaction with peers. Take a look at the cuing structure list shown in Table 6.1. The goal with this structure is always to

Table 6.1. Types of support

Type of support (listed from most intrusive to least)	Definition	Example
Full physical	Direct and physical assistance used to support a student	Hand-over-hand assistance while a student writes his or her name
Partial physical	Physical assistance provided for some of the total movement required for the activity	Put a zipper into the bottom portion and begin to pull up; the student then pulls the zipper up the rest of the way.
Modeling	A demonstration of what the student is to do	The paraprofessional does an art project; the student uses the art project as a model.
Direct verbal	Verbal information provided directly to the student	"Josh, stand up now."
Indirect verbal	A verbal reminder that prompts the student to attend to or think about what is expected	"Josh, what should happen next?"
Gestural	A physical movement to communicate or accentuate a cue (e.g., head nod, thumbs up, pointing)	Paraprofessional points to the agenda written on the board.
Natural	Providing no cue; allowing the ordinary cues that exist in the environment help the student know what to do	The bell rings for class. The teacher asks students to move to the rug. A message on the chalk board reads, "Turn to page 74."

Source: Doyle (2008).

