

# Tips for Special Education Paraprofessionals



Office of Special Services  
Huron School District



## **Making a Difference**



*An old man walked up a shore littered with thousands of starfish,  
beached and dying after a storm.  
A young man was picking them up and flinging them back into the ocean.  
"Why do you bother?" the old man scoffed.  
"You are not saving enough to make a difference."  
The young man picked up another starfish and sent it spinning back to the water.  
"Made a difference to that one," he said.*

Dear Paraprofessionals,

Thank you for your commitment to being a vital part of the special education team who supports and provides services to students with disabilities attending Huron School District.

This guide was designed to be a guide and resource to you. Hopefully, it will answer some of your questions about your role and how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. It is a general overview of your roles and responsibilities, special education, characteristics of disabilities, instructional and behavioral strategies, and resources for paraprofessionals. Information specific to the students you work with, and further direction will come from the administrators and teachers in your building. Continued professional development will assist you in refining your skills and knowledge related to academic and behavior strategies specific to the students you are supporting.

Our goal is to assist students in becoming as independent as possible and to prepare them for a bright future! We value your work and desire to serve our students and thank you for your dedication and professionalism. Please let us know how we may support you in your endeavor to grow professionally and be a valuable member of our team!

Office of Special Services

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# Professionalism



- Present yourself as a positive role model for students.
- Represent the Huron School District in a positive manner.
- Be punctual and attend work regularly.
- Follow your schedule consistently.
- Share relevant information with supervising teacher to facilitate problem solving, program planning, and student progress.
- If you have questions, seek answers and/or input.
- Discuss a student's progress or educational program only with the teachers who are responsible for that student's instruction.
- Discuss confidential school and student issues only with appropriate school personnel.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Refrain from talking about a student in the community.
- Understand and follow school policies and procedures.
- Maintain appropriate dress as advised by your administration. Be mindful of wearing safe shoes to perform duties. ( i.e. – for lifting students, supporting in physical education class)
- Communication with parents is the teacher's responsibility. Refer parent inquiries regarding student progress to the student's teacher.
- Maintain student dignity by being discreet about students' physical needs.
- Refrain from discussing information about students in front of students.
- Maintain a professional relationship with students at all times.
- Be flexible and willing to assist when and where needed.
- Seek opportunities for professional growth such as reading journal articles, attending available training sessions, and/or participating in staff development.
- Focus on what a student "CAN do", rather than what he/she cannot do.

## **Roles of Teachers and Paraprofessionals**

### **I. Instruction**

| <b><i>Teacher's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b><i>Paraprofessional's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>*Determines appropriate objectives for groups and individual students.</p> <p>*Develops and implements student Individual Education Plans (IEP) goals, accommodations and modifications.</p> <p>*Plans weekly schedules, lessons, room arrangement, learning centers, and activities for the entire class, as well as modifications and accommodations for students with IEP's.</p> <p>*Teaches lessons to the entire class, small groups, and individual students.</p> <p>*Administers and scores assessments.</p> <p>*Determine the appropriate use of assistive technology to meet the needs of students.</p> <p>*Develops data collection tools and collects data on student progress.</p> | <p>*Follow schedule and implement plans designed by teacher.</p> <p>*Implements student IEP goals, accommodations and modifications as directed by the teacher.</p> <p>*Provides direct, individual assistance to student(s) so that they can participate, as independently as possible, in the least restrictive environment.</p> <p>*Implements student IEP goals, accommodations and modifications as directed by the teacher.</p> <p>*Administers informal assessments under the direction of the teacher.</p> <p>*Facilitates the use of assistive technology.</p> <p>*Collects data on student progress as designated by the teacher.</p> | <p>*Provides assistance to individual students on completing follow-up or reinforcement activities.</p> <p>*Supports a student or small group of students during instruction.</p> |

## II. Behavior and Social Support

| <b><i>Teacher's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b><i>Paraprofessional's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Observes behavior, plans and implements behavior intervention plans and strategies for the entire class and for individual students.</li><li>*Facilitates appropriate social interactions between students.</li><li>*Develops data collection tools and collects data on student behavior.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Implements and supports behavior plans and strategies under teacher direction.</li><li>*Facilitates appropriate social interactions between students.</li><li>*Collects data on classroom behavior as designated by the teacher.</li></ul> |

## III. Communication

| <b><i>Teacher's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b><i>Paraprofessional's Role</i></b>                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Communicates with administrators, related service providers, general educators, para's, and appropriate staff regarding student progress.</li><li>*Communicates with parents regarding student progress.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Communicates with case manager or teacher regarding student progress.</li></ul> |

#### **IV. Personal Care**

| <b><i>Teacher's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                        | <b><i>Paraprofessional's Role</i></b>                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| *Provide personal assistance to students, as needed, to address mobility, positioning, personal care, daily activities, and utilizing the restroom. | *Provide personal assistance to students, as needed, to address mobility, positioning, personal care, daily activities, and utilizing the restroom. |

#### **V. Clerical**

| <b><i>Teacher's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                    | <b><i>Paraprofessional's Role</i></b>                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| *Develop, model, and/or provide detailed instruction on preparing instructional materials.<br><br>*Develop an organization system to manage student work samples and materials. | *Prepare instructional materials based on a model and/or detailed instructions provided by a teacher.<br><br>*Assist with organization of student work samples and materials, as directed by the teacher. |

These are intended only as examples of the various types of job duties to be performed. The omission of specific duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is a similar, related, or logical assignment to the position. Duties may be assigned by the building principal. These duties may vary from school to school.



## **Working with Students with Health and Physical Needs**

### **Health and Safety Practices**

- Seek training from school nurse on Universal Precautions.
- Practice universal precautions at all times to protect yourself and others.
- Wear gloves when coming into contact with bodily fluids. (changing diapers, feeding, wiping noses, etc.)
- Use proper hand washing techniques to protect yourself and others, before and after assisting with feeding, when coming in contact with bodily fluids. Wash with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.
- Seek input and training from the school nurse concerning the health procedures for specific students.
- Clean materials and items mouthed by students only with a safe cleaner.
- Call for a custodian to clean blood, vomit, urine and bowel spills.
- Follow the proper disposal of diapers recommended by your school nurse and custodians.
- Place soiled clothes in a double lined plastic bag and seal tightly.
- Alert nurse of any skin breakdown or rash noted during diapering.

### **Self Care Strategies**

- Always be discreet when assisting with the self care needs of students. Carry diapers and supplies to the bathroom in a bag.
- Provide supervision of self care skills as needed, yet allow for privacy when appropriate.
- Discuss IEP goals related to self care skills with teacher and reinforce throughout the school day.
- Independence should be encouraged and taught while assisting a student with self care skills. Allow the student to do as much as possible while completing self care tasks. It will take longer in the beginning, but will pay off as the student becomes more independent!
- Occupational therapists may provide guidance on toileting, feeding and dressing strategies.

### **Mobility**

- Seek training from the Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapists, and/or Special Education Teacher concerning lifting and positioning for specific students.
- Encourage independence of students.
- Be aware of evacuation plan for students using walkers/crutches or wheelchairs.



**Medical Issues** - Students with medical issues have an individualized health care plan. Discuss the specifics of the plan with the special educator and school nurse prior to working with the student. The protocols for specific students may vary.

- **Seizures – General Guidelines** - The protocols for specific students may vary. Consult with the special educator and nurse prior to working with the students.
  - Discuss with the teacher and nurse the students who a history of seizures.
  - Discuss with nurse and special educator the typical nature, length of time of seizures and protocol to follow for particular students (see Health plans).
  - Stay calm
  - Take note of the time the seizure started
  - Clear area/Protect from injury
  - Do not leave student unattended
  - Do not try to restrict motor movements of the seizure
  - Do not place anything in student's mouth.
  - Call for the nurse if necessary
  - If student falls to the floor, position student on his side, when possible
  - Observe and be prepared to describe the pattern of the seizure, i.e. what part of the body was affected, type of movement, length of seizure
  - When the seizure is over, allow the student to rest when necessary
  - Document the nature and length of time of the seizure
  - Report to special educator and/or nurse as directed
- **Allergies- General Guidelines-** The symptoms and protocols for specific students may vary. Consult with the special educator and nurse prior to working with the students.
  - **Allergic Reactions**
    - Become aware of symptoms of allergies such as respiratory problems, swelling of face, lips or tongue, rashes on the skin, hives, vomiting and report to the school nurse.
    - Become aware of procedures for students in need of an Epi pen. The school nurse will provide instruction (follow emergency action plan).
  - **Food Allergies**
    - Become aware of the food allergies of students you are feeding or are assisting with feeding. This information may be obtained from the school nurse.
    - Become aware of symptoms of food allergies such as respiratory problems, swelling of face, lips or tongue, rashes on the skin, hives, vomiting and report to the school nurse immediately.
    - Remain with student; do not send student alone to the health suite.
  - **Latex Allergies**
    - Wear non-latex gloves for students with latex allergies.
    - Be aware that latex may be in the following: Gloves, band aids, balloons, rubber bands, koosh balls, paint, rubber/foam puzzles, glue, and erasers. Check with the school nurse for a complete list of materials not to expose to students with latex allergies.



# **Characteristics and Instructional Strategies**

## **for Specific Disabilities**



*Educational disabilities include: Autism, Deaf-blindness, Deafness, Developmental delay, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Loss, Cognitive Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other health impairment, Specific learning disability, Speech or language impairment, Traumatic brain injury, or Visual impairment. This is a general list of characteristics and instructional strategies of the most common disabilities that may or may not apply to all students with each disability. Please seek input from the teachers you work with to discover additional information that will assist you in meeting the unique needs of our students.*

### **Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)**

#### **Categorized as Other Health Impairment**

ADHD is a neurobiological disorder. Typically, children with ADHD have developmentally inappropriate behavior, including hyperactivity, inattention, and impulsivity and occur in several settings such as home, school and extra-curricular activities.

#### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Hyperactivity
- Distractibility
- Inattention
- Impulsivity
- Social skills deficit
- Difficulty Focusing
- Poor organization of materials and thoughts
- Fails to give attention to detail and makes careless mistakes
- Varied perception of time (difficult tasks may seem like they take a very long time, preferred tasks maintain their attention for longer periods of time)
- Difficulty following through with directions and completing assignments
- Difficulty with problem solving

#### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Minimize distractions
- Provide uncluttered workspace
- Provide structure and routine
- Provide organizational tools and strategies
- Provide visual and graphic organizers
- Break tasks into smaller segments
- Highlight important ideas
- Color coding
- Use of timers and providing reminders of remaining time to complete an assignment
- Modified instruction
- Set behavioral expectations
- Provide structured breaks between assignments
- Allow for movement opportunities
- Active learning
- Use of fidget objects and wiggle cushions

## ***Autism***

A developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction.

### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Verbal and nonverbal communication deficit
- Narrow interests with stereotyped behaviors
- Resistance to environmental change and daily routines
- Engage in repetitive activities (repeating a phrase/story or performing same motor task over and over)
- Literal and concrete thinker
- Unusual responses to sensory experiences
- Varying levels of intelligence and ability
- Difficulty with social interaction skills
- Motor difficulties

### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Obtain the student's attention before giving a direction or talking with the student.
- Provide structure, consistency and routine.
- Allow enough time for the student to respond.
- Reduce amount of talking to the student.
- Provide choices for students when possible.
- Use visual supports (objects, photos, picture, symbols, gestures, or sign language) to increase understanding.
- Prepare students for transitions and changes in schedule or routine (First, then chart, use of a picture schedule, visual timer).
- Avoid using idioms, words with double meanings and sarcasm.
- Allow the use of a "fidget" or sensory object when appropriate.

## ***Developmental Delay***

A student age three through six assessed and evaluated as having a disability or delay in development that needs special education and related services.

Since the characteristics and instructional strategies for individual students will vary, consult the teacher for recommendations for each student.

## ***Emotional Disability (ED)***

Characterized by one or more of the following: inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; inappropriate types of behavior or feeling under normal circumstances; general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression or a tendency to develop physical symptoms of fear associated with personal or school problems.

### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings
- Uncooperative

- Withdrawn
- Low self esteem
- Difficulty with social skills and interacting with peers and adults
- Resists authority
- Poor coping skills
- Poor social skills
- Poor self control
- Aggressive behavior
- Anxiety

#### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Set clear rules, boundaries and expectations
- Learn what might trigger a student's behavior and work with the student to prevent or de-escalate the behaviors.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Provide choices of two things you want them to do.
- Encourage the use of self control strategies (deep breathing, counting backwards)
- Consistently follow the behavior plan or behavior strategies recommended by the teacher.
- NEVER use physical restraint unless you have completed Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI) training.
- Refrain from "rehashing past behavior".

### ***Deaf/Hard of Hearing Impairment***

Students have a wide range of hearing loss. The term deaf implies that a person has a very severe hearing loss and relies primarily on lip reading or sign language for communication.

#### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Language and speech delay
- Different voice characteristics
- May misunderstand information presented
- Difficulty understanding concepts that are not concrete
- Takes things literally



#### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Use of visuals
- Gain the student's attention before speaking
- Face the student when talking
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace
- Be sure the student is seated close to the speaker
- Allow time for the student to respond

### ***Cognitive Disability***

A significant overall delay in thinking, communicating and performing daily life skills.

#### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Require more time and repetition to learn things
- May have difficulties with fine and gross motor

- Delayed academic skills
- May have delayed speech and language
- Adult assistance or supervision for activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)

**Instructional Strategies:**

- Multi-sensory approach (sandpaper letters, gross motor activities, hear it and say it and write it)
- Use of visual supports (objects, photos, picture, symbols, gestures, or sign language) to increase understanding
- Scaffolding (Identify what they know and build on previously learned skills)
- Provide structure and establish routines
- Modeling (showing them how to complete a task, providing model of completed task)
- Allow extra time for response
- Break tasks/assignments into down into smaller segments
- Need assistance or supervision for activities of daily living
- Use redirection and frequent positive reinforcement
- Modified and/or alternative curriculum

## ***Orthopedic Impairment***

Physical (motor) difficulties in mobility, writing, and or sitting.

**General Characteristics May Include:**

- Limited movement and functioning of arms and/or legs
- Involuntary movements (cannot control)
- May need assistance with activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)

**Instructional Strategies:**

- Remove or accommodate barriers for student
- Allow students to be as independent as possible
- Speak to the person on their level (sit down if they are in a wheelchair)
- Allow enough time for student to respond, complete activities
- Ensure proper positioning for access and comfort prior to instruction

## ***Specific Learning Disability (SLD)***

A disorder in one or more basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself ability to listen, think, speak, read, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

**General Characteristics May Include:**

- Have difficulty in one or more academic area, yet may be strong in other areas
- Difficulty processing information either visually or through spoken language
- Average or above average intelligence
- Distractible
- Easily frustrated
- Inattention
- Social skills deficit

**Instructional Strategies:**

- Use the student's strengths to work on difficult areas.

- Chunking (Breaking assignments down into smaller, more manageable tasks)
- Allow extra time for response
- Graphic organizers
- Visual organizers
- Use of strategies (Example: COPS Capitalization, Overall Appearance, Punctuation, Spelling)
- Multi-sensory approach (sandpaper letters, gross motor activities, hear it and say it and write it)
- Scaffolding (Identify what they know and build on previously learned skills)
- Color coding
- Use of timers and providing reminders of remaining time to complete an assignment
- Modified instruction

## ***Speech/Language Impairment***

Difficulty in understanding or expressing language, stuttering or unusual voice characteristics.

### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Delay in language concepts (sentence length, vocabulary)
- Poor pragmatic (social language)
- Difficulty understanding when speaking

### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Model good speech and language
- Allow students to communicate as independently as possible utilizing their mode(s) of communication (verbal, sign language, picture symbols, augmentative communication device/voice output device, computer)
- Ask student to repeat if you did not understand or express in a different way (show me, point to)
- Allow enough time for student to respond
- Use visual supports (objects, photos, picture, symbols, gestures, or sign language) to increase understanding

## ***Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)***

An injury to the brain that adversely affects a student's educational performance.

### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- Impairment may be in one or more of the following areas: cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, motor abilities, processing and speech
- May need assistance with activities of daily living (toileting, dressing, feeding)
- Anxiety of coping with the loss of skills prior to injury

### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Use simple and concrete language, but maintain high expectations
- Repetition of skills
- Modeling
- Break tasks/assignments into down into smaller segments

## ***Visual Impairment***

Impairment in vision which, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. Visual Impairment includes partial sight and blindness.

### **General Characteristics May Include:**

- May tire easily visually
- Sensitivity to light
- May have difficulty finding materials
- Difficulty with mobility
- Poor depth perception



### **Instructional Strategies:**

- Close proximity to teacher and instructional materials
- Enlarged print
- Multi sensory (hearing, touch)
- Assistive Tech devices (talking calculators, dome magnifier)
- Light boards
- Organized workspace
- Reduce glare
- Use pens or markers vs. pencil
- Slant boards
- Contrast of color/use of contrasting backgrounds



## **Accommodations and Modifications**

Accommodations and modifications are types of adaptations that are made to the environment, curriculum, instruction, or assessment practices in order for students with disabilities to be successful learners and to participate actively with other students in the general education classroom and in school-wide activities. Specific accommodations and modifications are identified and approved for students by the IEP (Individual Education Plan) Team. The special education teacher will share the specific accommodations and modifications for each student to be successful. As a paraprofessional you will assist in providing the appropriate accommodations and modifications in academic settings.

### **Accommodations vs. Modifications**

#### **Accommodations**

- Changes **HOW** a student accesses or demonstrates learning
  - Setting
    - Small group
    - Seating in front of the room
    - Limited distractions
    - Study carrel
  - Presentation
    - Chunking –breaking up tasks/assignments into smaller pieces
    - Outline/highlight key points/concept
  - Scheduling
    - Occasional Breaks
    - Use of timers
    - Visual schedule
  - Response Mode
    - Dictated response
    - Picture Symbols
    - Extended time for written response

#### **Examples of Accommodations:**

- ✓ test taken orally



- ✓ large print textbooks
- ✓ additional time to take test
- ✓ locker with an adapted lock
- ✓ weekly home-school communication tool, such as a notebook or daily log book
- ✓ peer support for note taking
- ✓ lab sheets with highlighted instructions
- ✓ graph paper to assist in organizing and lining up math problems
- ✓ tape record lectures
- ✓ use of a computer for writing

## **Modifications**

- Changes **WHAT** a student is expected to learn
  - Requiring a student to learn less material or content
  - Revising assignments to reduce expectations
  - Reducing test content

### **Examples of Modifications:**

- ✓ outline in place of essay for major project
- ✓ picture/ symbols choices on tests
- ✓ alternative books or materials on the same theme or topic
- ✓ spelling support from a computerized spell check program
- ✓ word bank of choices for answers to test questions
- ✓ use of a calculator on a math test
- ✓ film or video supplements in place of text
- ✓ questions re-worded using simpler language
- ✓ projects substituted for written reports
- ✓ important words and phrases highlighted

*"In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn."*

Phil Collins

| Student Communication                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Types of Communication                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Materials and Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Verbal</p> <p><i>*This student communicates through oral language independently.</i></p>                                                                                                                                | <p>*Provide simple, clear, directions.</p>                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Verbal with Prompting</p> <p><i>*This student communicates in simple words or short phrases. The child will need prompts to generate language.</i></p>                                                                  | <p>*Use visuals, gestures, or sign language.</p> <p>*Provide simple and concise language.</p>                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Sign Language</p> <p><i>*This student may use sign language expressively and/or receptively to assist with comprehension.</i></p>                                                                                       | <p>*Consult with the special educator, speech therapist or deaf educator for direction to assist student.</p> <p>*Sign language is sometimes used as a strategy to increase receptive language (understanding).</p>   | <p> <a href="http://www.aslpro.com">www.aslpro.com</a></p> <p><i>This website provides video tutorials on how to create specific signs.</i></p>                                                                                        |
| <p>PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)</p> <p><i>*This student may have minimal or no verbal language. He/she communicates through pictures expressively and/or receptively to assist with comprehension.</i></p> | <p>*Once student provides symbol, read the symbol to indicate your understanding, and then respond to the request; encourage, but do not require verbal participation in the exchange.</p>                            | <p>Boardmaker, Writing with Symbols<br/>PECS</p> <p>  </p> |
| <p>Augmentative Communication (Voice Output Devices)</p> <p><i>*This student has limited, unintelligible, or no verbal communication. The student utilizes the voice output devices for expressive communication.</i></p>  | <p>*Model use of the device in the beginning.</p> <p>*Provide opportunities for the students to use the device for responding.</p> <p>*Make sure the device is available to the student at all appropriate times.</p> | <p> </p>                                                                                                                                        |



## Keys to Effective Communication



- Maintain close proximity and use a low volume when communicating with students.
- Provide clear and simply stated directions of what you expect the child to do instead of telling them what you don't want them to do.
- Repeat back to the student what you think they are saying to clarify what the student means.
- Some children may require a model, picture, or sign of the action paired with the verbal direction.
- Use age appropriate language when speaking with students. (Refrain from using "baby talk"). Encourage students to use age appropriate language.
- Allow students time to communicate independently using their mode(s) of communication.
- Allow for extra processing and response time.

### **For example:**

| <b>Instead of saying:</b> | <b>Say/Model</b>                                                                                                                                  | <b>Reinforce</b>                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "No yelling!"             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Use a calm voice."</li><li>• "Use an inside voice."</li></ul>                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Speak in a low voice while saying... Now I can listen, you are using a quiet voice."</li><li>• "Nice job using your inside voice."</li></ul> |
| "Don't run!"              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "We walk in the hallway."</li><li>• "Use walking feet."</li><li>• "Walk please."</li></ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I like the way you're walking."</li><li>• "Thanks for walking!"</li></ul>                                                                    |
| "Stop calling out!"       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Raise your hand."</li><li>• "When you raise your hand, the teacher will answer your question."</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Thank you for raising your hand."</li><li>• "I like the way you raised your hand to share your ideas."</li></ul>                             |

*"When people talk, listen completely."*

Ernest Hemingway



## **Positive Behavioral Strategies and Supports**

- Behavior is a means of communication. Consider what the student is trying to tell you with the behavior. Is she hungry? Is he frustrated? Is he trying to get attention? Is she trying to escape the demand? Is he sick?
- Behind most behaviors exists a skill deficit.
  - Language and social difficulties
  - Sensory processing difficulties
  - Academic and writing skill deficits
  - Difficulties managing stress and anxiety
  - Attention difficulties
  - Difficulties handling transition and change
  - Difficulties with self esteem
  - Organizational difficulties
- Implement classroom and individual student behavior plans created by the teacher and/or IEP team consistently.
- Remind students of expectations prior to the transitions of an activity.
- Be cognizant of triggers/antecedents (what happens prior to the behavior occurring) that may lead to inappropriate behavior.
- Communicate with the teacher regarding student behaviors within a reasonable time frame.
- Encourage, expect and reinforce age appropriate behavior, even with students with lower cognitive abilities.
- Be proactive when assisting with behavior management. Provide structure and routine in an environment that is conducive to learning.
- When communicating with students, state directions and expectations in a simple, explicit, and positive manner. Tell the students what they are supposed to do. For instance, instead of saying “Don’t run”, say “Please walk in the halls”.
- Offer students choices to avoid a power struggle. Rather than say “Don’t tap your pencil”, state “Would you rather put your pencil in your pencil case or in your desk.”
- Provide and encourage association with appropriate peer role models.
- Avoid overreacting to inappropriate behavior. Some students may be reinforced by negative attention, which may increase inappropriate behaviors.
- When possible, ignore attention seeking behaviors that are not disruptive to the classroom.

- Diffuse stressful situations for students through redirection and distraction when appropriate.
- Provide positive reinforcement. Avoid focusing on punitive consequences or loss of privileges.
- When offering positive reinforcement, state what you like about the behavior. Rather than just saying say “good job”, state “I like the way you raised your hand to participate.”
- Avoid discussing incidents of behavior that occurred in the past.
- Physical intervention is used as a last resort. This intervention is utilized only by those trained in Crisis Prevention Intervention. Must complete documentation if physical intervention is used.
- Avoid personalizing student behavior and language.
- Focus on the positive!

***“Tell me and I’ll forget;  
show me and I may remember;  
involve me and I’ll understand.”***

Chinese Proverb



## **Ways to Positively Reinforce Students**



- ✓ Remarkable!
- ✓ I knew you could do it!
- ✓ What a great idea!
- ✓ You are so smart!
- ✓ You brighten my day!
- ✓ Outstanding answer!
- ✓ Thanks for volunteering.
- ✓ What a good listener!
- ✓ I like the way... (you are working quietly, sitting nicely in your seat, working with your partner, etc)
- ✓ How creative!
- ✓ Can you share your great idea with the class?
- ✓ Matthew is the first one who is ready to work!
- ✓ Now you've got it!
- ✓ I can tell you worked hard on this.
- ✓ You must be so proud of your project!
- ✓ Hooray for you!
- ✓ Let's cheer for Michael
- ✓ Super job!
- ✓ Does everyone see how nicely Erin is standing in line?
- ✓ You figured it out all by yourself!
- ✓ I like the way you are sitting nicely in your seat.
- ✓ That's a good point!

- ✓ Excellent work!
- ✓ Congratulations!
- ✓ I'll bet your mom and dad would be proud to see the job you did on this.
- ✓ You did well on the test because you studied hard!
- ✓ Good thinking!
- ✓ Much better!
- ✓ Your classmates look up to you.
- ✓ I am so glad I get to work with you today.
- ✓ I appreciate your help.
- ✓ Justin, you are the best!
- ✓ That is the coolest picture I have ever seen!
- ✓ You have put a lot of thought into the answer to the question!
- ✓ It is amazing how much you have learned this year!
- ✓ Way to go, Ryan!
- ✓ How does it feel to know all of your multiplication facts?
- ✓ I learned something new from you.
- ✓ Good thinking!

## **Strategies for Facilitating Student Independence**

- Increasing learner independence is the instructional goal for every student! Encourage students to be independent rather than dependent.
- Encourage and allow students to make choices and decisions.
- Encourage students to complete activity as independently as possible prior to offering support.
- Allow student work to be authentic, rather than completed by the paraprofessional or inclusion helper.
- Allow students to make mistakes and experience natural consequences, unless there is a safety issue.
- When appropriate, sit or stand at a distance from the student who requires additional adult support.

**Break larger tasks into smaller steps to allow student to independently perform parts of task/assignment.**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Functional Example | When learning to use a phone. Encourage the student to push the first and last digit. Slowly encourage them to increase the number of digits.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Academic Example   | A student is expected to write a paragraph. This task could be divided into smaller sections such as formulating ideas, creating a topic sentence, developing supporting sentences, and formulating a conclusion. The student may only complete one or two of these tasks during the class time. |

**Utilize peer support when possible.**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Functional Example | <p>A student is unable to tie his/her shoe. Rather than the paraprofessional tying the student's shoe, a peer could do this instead.</p> <p>Students may benefit from having a packing up/locker buddy at the end of the day rather than depending on adult support for this task.</p>                                                                                                         |
| Academic Example   | <p>During math class, pairs of students work on an activity sheet together. Instead of the paraprofessional scribing for a student with a fine motor disability, the student's partner can write for her/him.</p> <p>A student with a reading disability participates in a play during Integrated Language Arts. This student could be paired with a peer to help him/her learn the lines.</p> |



## **Utilizing the Prompt Hierarchy to Facilitate Student Independence**

- A prompt hierarchy refers to different levels of support provided to assist a student who is learning or demonstrating a task.
- This is a suggested prompt hierarchy begins with least intrusive and moving through most intrusive. The goal is to begin with the least intrusive prompts. The most intrusive prompts should be used minimally and gradually faded as appropriate under the direction of the teacher.
- Some students may have individualized prompt hierarchies. For example, you would not utilize gesture prompts for a student who is blind or has a severe vision disability.
- Seek direction from the teacher concerning the appropriate prompts to be used with students.
- It is important to provide sufficient wait time between prompts. Students may need 3-8 seconds of wait time to respond to a direction.

### **Definitions of Prompt Types**

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Verbal Prompt</b>           | This level of prompt requires the teacher to give a specific verbal direction in addition to the task direction. Given a task direction, the student is unable to perform correctly until another; more specific, verbal prompt is provided (e.g., After the teacher gives the task direction and allows for wait time, the teacher then says, "Push the button to turn on the scanner.") |
| <b>Gesture Prompt</b>          | This level of prompt requires the teacher to move his/her finger, hand, arm, or make a facial expression that communicates to the student specific information (e.g. Teacher taps scanner switch button).                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Model Prompt</b>            | This level of prompt requires the teacher to demonstrate the correct response for the student, and the student imitates the teacher's model (e.g., The teacher demonstrates how to push the switch and then asks the student to repeat).                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Partial Physical Prompt</b> | This level of prompt requires the teacher to touch the student to elicit a response (e.g., Teacher touches the student's hand closest to the scanner switch button).                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Full Physical Prompt</b>    | This level of prompt requires the teacher to place his/her hand over the student's hand and move it toward the response (e.g., teacher places hand over student's hand and places it on the scanner switch button).                                                                                                                                                                       |



## **Inclusion Solutions**



Research supports students with disabilities learn best with their typical peers in the general classroom with accommodations and modifications. Our goal, in alignment with federal and state law, is for students to be included in the general education classroom to the fullest extent possible.

### **Tips for Supporting Students in the General Education Classroom**

- Implement the appropriate accommodations, modifications, and lesson plans provided by the special education teacher for specific students.
- Become familiar with the content of the unit/course. Ask the teacher for clarification about the material, when needed.
- Provide students with opportunities to ask questions and respond utilizing their mode(s) of communication (verbal, sign language, picture symbols, and augmentative communication/voice output device).
- Implement the classroom and/or individual behavior plan when the student is in the general education setting.
- Provide feedback and data to the teachers related to academic progress, work habits and behavior.
- Encourage students to become as independent as possible when following classroom routines.
- Avoid hovering over the student you are supporting. Facilitate student independence by varying the amount of support, monitoring, and prompting based on the need and independence level of the student.
- Assist with other students who need help, on occasion, not singling out the students who receive special education services.
- Be mindful of the volume of your voice in the general education classroom so as you provide direction; it does not distract other students.
- Communicate with teachers about a plan to remove the student from the general education classroom if he is distracting students or needs a break. Discuss ahead of time with the teacher the expectations if a student needs to be removed from the classroom. Where should we go? What alternative activity should the student engage in? How long the student should be removed from the classroom? What are the criteria for the student to return to the classroom? Who do I call for help?
- Encourage students to interact with peers and develop peer relationships.
  - When working with students with limited cognition, social skills or verbal ability, get to know the interests of your student and classmates to share common interests with each other.
  - Select appropriate peer role models to work with or assist a student with a task, when appropriate.



## **Suggested Questions about Your Job Responsibilities**



- Who are the students I will be supporting?
- What are the schedules of students I am supporting?
- What is my schedule?
- Are there student medical issues that I need to know prior to working with individual students?
- What are the school wide and classroom behavior systems?
- Does a student I am working with have an individual behavior plan? If so, what are the target behaviors, rewards and consequences?
- What are the safety considerations for individual students?
- How does the student communicate? What strategies are effective in communicating with the student?
- Can we discuss the snapshot IEP (summary of IEP goals, objectives, accommodations and modifications)?
- How will we communicate about instructional plans for the students I support?
- How will we communicate about student progress?
- When will we meet to discuss student successes and concerns?
- What strategies and techniques are effective when working with particular students?
- What level of prompting does a student need to complete assignments?
- What can I do to help facilitate student independence?
- What can I do to assist with facilitating peer relationships?
- What level of supervision/support does the student need for the activity?
- Where are school supplies and how are they obtained?

| <b>Common Question/Concerns</b>                                                                         | <b>Who do I ask?</b>                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| What accommodations does the student have?                                                              | Special educator/Case manager                   |
| Questions about specific subject matter (math algorithms, science vocabulary, comprehension strategies) | General Education teacher                       |
| Which days and hours do I work?                                                                         | Administrator/Supervisor                        |
| Questions about sick and personal days                                                                  | Administrator and refer to negotiated agreement |

**Additional questions I would like to ask:**

*“Know the person, not the disability, in fact look past the disability and you will see a person, a person who has the same thoughts and feelings as anyone else.”*  
..... Author Unknown



## Common Terms and Definitions



**Adapted Physical Education (APE)** – A related service for children who exhibit delays in motor development in addition to or in place of physical education including modifications of activities so students may participate more fully in physical education class.

**Assistive Technology (AT)** – Any item, piece of equipment, or product, which is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of students with disabilities.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** – A plan including target behaviors, behavioral strategies, positive reinforcement, and consequences for student behaviors. The plan is designed to teach students to demonstrate appropriate behavior and social skills.

**Extended School Year Services (ESY)** – Special education and related services during the summer. The purpose of ESY is to prevent a child with a disability from losing previously learned skills. The IEP team approves ESY goals for the student to work on. Not all students receiving special education services receive ESY.

**Fine Motor** – Motor skills related to the small muscle groups such as handwriting, using both hands to complete tasks, and buttoning.

**Gross Motor** – Motor skills related to the large muscle groups such as walking, sitting, and jumping.

**Individual Education Program (IEP)** – An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the educational program that has been designed to meet that child's unique needs. Each child who receives special education and related services has an IEP. The IEP is developed by teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when age appropriate) It includes educational goals and objectives, modifications and accommodations, documents progress and defines the services and placement of the student.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** – The educational placement that is close as possible to the general education environment that permits a child to receive the most educational benefit while participating in a regular educational environment to the maximum extent appropriate.

**Occupational Therapist (OT)** – Works with students to improve fine motor skills and meaningful activities of daily life such as self-care skills, education, recreation, or work.

**Physical Therapist (PT)** – Works with students to improve gross motor skills (large muscle groups) and mobility.

**Special Education** – Specialized instruction to fit the unique learning strengths and needs of students with disabilities. A major goal of special education is to teach the skills and knowledge the child needs to be as independent as possible. Special education programs focus on academics and include therapies and related services.

**Speech and Language Therapist** – Provides therapy to help a student develop or improve articulation (pronunciation), communication skills, pragmatics (social skills) and oral-motor skills.



## Special Education Acronyms



**ADHD** - Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder  
**ASD** - Autism Spectrum Disorders  
**AT** - Assistive Technology  
**APE** - Adaptive Physical Education  
**ASL** - American Sign Language  
**BIP** - Behavior Intervention Plan  
**CBI** - Community Based Instruction  
**CP** - Cerebral Palsy  
**ED** - Emotional Disability  
**ESL** - English as a Second Language  
**ESY** - Extended School Year  
**FBA** - Functional Behavior Assessment  
**IDEA** - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
**IEP** - Individual Education Program  
**LRE** - Least Restrictive Environment  
**NCLB** - No Child Left Behind Act  
**OT** - Occupational Therapy  
**PECS** - Picture Exchange Communication System  
**PDD** - Pervasive Developmental Disorder  
**PT** - Physical Therapy  
**RT I** - Response to Interventions  
**SLP** - Speech and Language Pathologist  
**SLD** - Specific Learning Disability  
**VSC** - Voluntary State Curriculum