Paraprofessional Resource
A paraeducator is an employee who works under the supervision of teachers or other licensed personnel. The ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of education and related service programs belongs to the supervising teacher or other licensed personnel. The paraeducator is one whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers other direct or indirect services to children, youth, and/or their parents. Synonyms for the term “paraeducator” include: paraprofessional, educational aide, instructional aide, or associate.

A myriad of other position titles are used to describe paraeducators in educational settings: teacher associate, teacher aide, instructional assistant, learner assistant, transition trainer, job coach, education technician, home, and community liaison, childcare worker, native language tutor, media associate, clerk, health aide, lunchroom aide, office interventionist, library assistant, student support assistant, behavior management aide, student coach, and tutor. In today’s schools, assistants to teachers are best described as paraeducators just as their counterparts in law and medicine are designated paralegals and paramedics. The prefix “para” means “along side of” as in working alongside of an educator. Subsequently, the term “paraeducator” is an accurate term.

Paraeducators work in complex situations and perform a variety of tasks. When confronting unfamiliar procedures or situations, they ask for directions, instructions or guidance. They model lifelong learning by participating in professional, college, or in-service opportunities.
# Table of Contents

What is a Paraprofessional? .................................................................................................................. 2

Rationale and Competencies .............................................................................................................. 4

Roles and Responsibilities of the Paraprofessional ........................................................................... 9
  Need to Know Information ............................................................................................................. 10
  Which Professional Plans? ............................................................................................................. 11
  Paraprofessional/Teacher Responsibilities .................................................................................. 13
  The Paraprofessional’s Chain of Command .................................................................................. 14

Substitute Information Forms ........................................................................................................... 15
  General Information Form ........................................................................................................... 16
  Sample Sub Plan Form ................................................................................................................ 17

Confidentiality and Professionalism ................................................................................................. 18
  Professionalism ........................................................................................................................... 19
  Confidentiality ............................................................................................................................. 20
  Communication ............................................................................................................................. 22
  Self-Advocacy: Asking For Your On-the Job Needs ................................................................... 23
  Flexibility ....................................................................................................................................... 24

Best Practice Methods ....................................................................................................................... 25
  Fostering a Positive Classroom Atmosphere ................................................................................. 26
  Supporting Students in the Classroom .......................................................................................... 28
  Communication with Students ....................................................................................................... 29
  Ideas for Assisting Students with Learning Problems ................................................................. 32
  Promoting Student Independence ................................................................................................. 34
  Checking for Understanding .......................................................................................................... 36
  10 Ideas for the Inclusive Classroom ............................................................................................. 37
  Visual Supports for Student Success .............................................................................................. 40

Job Description and Performance .................................................................................................... 43
  Job Description ............................................................................................................................. 45
  Evaluation Process ......................................................................................................................... 46

Glossary of Terms ............................................................................................................................. 50
  Terms and Abbreviations ............................................................................................................. 51

Resource and Tools .......................................................................................................................... 55
Paraeducators are employees who work under the supervision of teachers or other licensed personnel. They provide an invaluable service to students and teachers in a complex work environment requiring a variety of skills. Paraprofessionals working with students in Wisconsin schools are expected to possess basic competencies, skills, and knowledge gained before, within, or further developed during employment. This resource addresses the standards required by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and guidelines of the School District of Bloomer.

The goal of providing Bloomer School District paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators with this manual is to provide resources, tools, and guidelines to assist paraprofessionals in their role as assistant to teachers and to promote constructive working relationships so that all professionals can effectively meet the needs of all students in the School District of Bloomer.

The resources provided in this manual will assist the paraprofessional with meeting the Wisconsin DPI competencies outlined below.

- Support and collaboration
- Instructional strategies
- Diversity
- Technology
- Commitment to Professional Growth
Support and Collaboration

The paraprofessional has an understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of licensed staff (teachers, administrators, education specialists, etc.) in supporting students and collaborating with each other.

Competencies
1.1 Provide assistance with individualized instruction through various instructional strategies.
1.2 Assist students according to directions given by the teachers.
1.3 Serve as a proctor of tests as appropriate.
1.4 Assist the teacher in preparing necessary instructional materials.
1.5 Apply effective methods for enhancing students’ working knowledge of core subjects at appropriate levels.
1.6 Follow written and oral instructions.
1.7 Organize time, materials, and workspace.
1.8 Practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including confidentiality.
1.9 Apply work-related legal issues concerning the education of children and youth.
1.10 Follow work-related health, safety, and emergency procedures.

Communication

The paraprofessional has the ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem-solving and other skills that will enable him/her to work as an effective member of the instructional team.

Competencies
2.1 Interact effectively in the workplace.
2.2 Recognize, describe, and report student behavior and academic progress to the teacher.
2.3 Impart information at the child’s level of comprehension.
2.4 Use a variety of technological tools to communicate.
Growth and Development of Children and Youth

The paraprofessional has an understanding of the various developmental stages of children and youth.

Competencies

3.1 Recognize patterns of human development and benchmarks typically achieved at different ages, as related to instruction.

3.2 Recognize risk and environmental factors that may prohibit or impede typical development, as related to instruction.

3.3 Recognize the expected behavior of children and youth.

3.4 Use age appropriate materials for instructional reinforcement.

Behavior Management

The paraprofessional has the ability to assist in supporting and managing positive student behavior.

Competencies

4.1 Assist in basic classroom management.

4.2 Establish positive relationships with students.

4.3 Supervise students in the classroom and other locations.

4.4 Promote student self-esteem.

4.5 Model and assist the instruction of citizenship, social skills, and respect for others.

4.6 Assist with mediating minor student conflicts.

4.7 Describe student behavior and report characteristics and changes to the teacher and/or administrator.

4.8 Redirect inappropriate behavior through approved methods.

Instructional Strategies

The paraprofessional has knowledge of and can assist the teacher in applying the elements of effective instruction.

Competencies

5.1 Use appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support.

5.2 Possess a basic level of competency in core academic subjects at the appropriate levels.

5.3 Use correct English, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

5.4 Correct and score students’ work.
5.5 Conduct small group instruction as prescribed by the teachers.
5.6 Provide individualized instruction as prescribed by the teacher.
5.7 Demonstrate various instructional activities as prescribed by the teacher.
5.8 Assist the teacher with planning and organizing instructional activities and developing classroom procedures.

**Diversity**

The paraprofessional has an awareness of and respect for diversity among children, youth, families, and colleagues.

**Competencies**
6.1 Demonstrate an awareness of and respect for how diversity impacts student learning.
6.2 Demonstrate an awareness of student disabilities by category.
6.3 Recognize how ethnic and cultural differences affect and enrich the school and community.
6.4 Apply discipline techniques impartially and consistently.
6.5 Know the school organization and its community.
6.6 Support high expectations for all students.

**Technology**

The paraprofessional has knowledge and skills necessary to support instruction using technology.

**Competencies**
7.1 Use computers, software packages, and related information technology devices.
7.2 Use assistive technology, when applicable.
7.3 Operate audiovisual equipment.
7.4 Assist students in using hardware, software, and other information technology.
7.5 Use administrative and technical skills necessary to assist the implementation of programs.

**Commitment to Professional Growth**

The paraprofessional is committed to being a reflective practitioner and to participate in professional growth.

**Competencies**
8.1 Secure and maintain special education or other licenses, when applicable.
8.2 Participate in continuing education programs, staff development workshops, and professional training opportunities.

8.3 Document professional development through such vehicles as portfolios.
Roles and Responsibilities
Checklist of Need-to-Know Information

- Phone numbers of supervisor, teacher(s) and/or colleagues
- Procedures for notifying appropriate personnel in case of illness
- Fire evacuation routes and other emergency procedures
- Location of fire/safety equipment and first aid supplies
- Building layout
- Chain of command
- Daily, weekly schedule
- Substitute information
- Appropriate playground and special event procedures
- Students you are responsible for servicing
- IEP at a glance
- Names of building, personnel, and location of pertinent offices
- Transportation system and personnel involved with student’s class or program
- Your response when parents raise questions concerning their child’s functioning, confidentiality
- Discipline policy and procedure, classroom rules, PBIS language and ODRs
Which Professional Plans?
All school professionals hold a responsibility to plan for the students in their class or on their caseload whether they deliver services personally or not.

For special education students who are included in general education classes, it is the duty of the general education teacher to plan lessons and individualized adaptations based on all existing individualized plans for the student and with consultation from all the other appropriate professionals. All professionals who are involved with a student’s IEP are obligated to provide relevant information about the functioning of the child in that domain to the general education teacher and to other special education service providers.

It is not legal or ethical for a paraprofessional to adapt lessons that have been designed by general educators, even though it is acceptable for the paraprofessional to create or revise materials and to carry out the adaptations planned by the professionals. The special education teacher may create a procedural plan to cover several types of lesson activities and tasks that classroom teachers typically utilize. The paraprofessional may then follow through with the general education modification plan to the specific instructional activity or task on a day-to-day basis.

Adaptations to General Education Curriculum and Instruction
For students with disabilities, there are two laws that provide guidance on the subject of adapting curriculum and instructional activities for students whose instructional needs are not typical.

- IDEA 1997 requires that students with special education needs have an IEP and other individualized plans as necessary that include goals and objectives to “enable the student to participate in the general curriculum.”
- Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires any agency that receives federal funding to afford persons with disabilities the same rights and privileges that persons without disabilities are allowed.
- This means that all students must have access to curriculum and instruction, even if it requires adaptation. Teachers must provide adaptations to the curriculum or instruction for any student who has a disability, or is perceived to have a disability, whether or not the student qualifies for special education services.

There is legal accountability for the planning of adaptations and school professionals assume the responsibility for providing these plans to paraprofessionals.

What is the Paraprofessional’s Role in the Adaptation of Curriculum and Instruction?
- The paraprofessional holds the ethical responsibility to follow written plans and oral directions provided by any or all school professionals assigned to the student with disabilities.
- The written plan must be developed by the professionals who participated in assessment of the student and in the IEP planning, and who hold responsibility for that student’s IEP goals and objectives.
- A list of goals and the related adaptations covering the range of classroom instructional situations meets the legal requirements if it is shared with the paraprofessional and the general education teacher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Paraeducator</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plans</td>
<td>Assists in the implementation of student plans. May include instruction, material preparation, teacher support and other duties as assigned by the classroom teacher or case manager.</td>
<td>Creates and implements daily lesson plans. Supervises paraeducators in the implementation of lesson plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>Assists classroom teacher in implementing student behavior management plans.</td>
<td>Creates and implements student behavior and classroom management plans. Supervises paraeducators implementation of the management plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with Parents</td>
<td>When assigned, may contact parents to present information. Should NOT make recommendations or express personal opinions without direct assignment by the teacher or case manager.</td>
<td>Communicates with parents about student progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Monitoring</td>
<td>Collects and records data as assigned by teacher.</td>
<td>Review and monitor the academic and behavioral progress of all students and makes data based decisions. Trains paraeducators in data collection procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>Discusses student issues only with the teacher.</td>
<td>Discusses student issues only with authorized individuals. Reviews the requirement of maintaining confidentiality with paraeducators, volunteers and peer tutors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td>Learns and follows the “chain of command” appropriately. Takes responsibility for resolving conflicts constructively.</td>
<td>Effectively communicates expectations. Follows the “chain of command” appropriately. Resolves conflicts using appropriate problem solving strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning environment</td>
<td>Creates a safe and positive learning environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Duties</td>
<td>Monitors playgrounds, lunchrooms, Study halls and busses.</td>
<td>Facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into general Education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides health services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides opportunities for students to practice skills in the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Paraeducator may:</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Paraeducator may not:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be left alone in the classroom for short periods of time when the supervising teacher is away. The supervising teacher remains responsible for the classroom at all times and must be accessible.</td>
<td>Be used as a substitute for certified teacher unless the para has a substitute certificate and it has been prearranged with the site administrator.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work without direct supervision with individuals or groups of students.</td>
<td>Teach new concepts and skills without direct supervision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have specific instructional and management responsibilities for the students.</td>
<td>Be given primary responsibility for working with individual students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be involved in student staffing.</td>
<td>Be assigned to attend student staffing in lieu of supervising teacher.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be used to support the integration of exceptional students into general education classes by tutoring these students in general class assignments and giving tests orally, etc.</td>
<td>Be given primary responsibility for mainstreaming one or more students or used to teach general curriculum content to non-exceptional students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be assigned record keeping tasks relevant to the classroom assignments.</td>
<td>Be used to carry out clerical responsibilities usually assigned to other staff members in the building.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist the supervising teacher in supervising assemblies and group field trips. Take individual students in job-related activities, job interviews, curriculum-based recreation, shopping, etc.</td>
<td>Take full responsibility for supervising field trips, assemblies or other non-teaching duties usually assigned to teachers, e.g., hall duty, extra duty, school clubs, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Rice Lake Area School District Paraprofessional Resource*
If you have an issue with personnel, follow the steps below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1:</th>
<th>The chain of command begins with the paraeducator’s supervising teacher. If you have a request or concerns, contact your supervising teacher first.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, if you have a concern regarding your supervising teacher, then go to step two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2:</td>
<td>If the supervising teacher refers you to him/her -or- If you and the teacher cannot resolve a concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask for an appointment with the building principal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have a question or concern regarding a student you are assigned to, follow the steps below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1:</th>
<th>Discuss your concern with the students’ current classroom teacher.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2:</td>
<td>If the issue or concern is not resolved, contact the student’s case manager.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We strongly urge you not to bypass any steps. Each contact will ask you if you have discussed the issue according to the chain of command.
Substitute Information Forms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Name:</th>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Report to Room #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Hours:**

- [ ] Regular Education Para
- [ ] Special Education Para Classroom
- [ ] Special Education Para 1:1

Brief Description of Position:

Quick Glance Schedule (subject to change)

- [ ] Get child off bus _______ _______
- [ ] Ride the bus: when? _______ _______

- [ ] Recess duty: [ ] Large group supervision [ ] One-on-one supervision
- [ ] Lunch duty: [ ] Large group supervision [ ] One-on-one supervision
- [ ] Bus duty: [ ] AM [ ] PM

- [ ] Para Personal Lunch Time: _______ _______
- [ ] Breaks: _______ _______ / _______ _______

- [ ] See attached schedule
- [ ] Check for updated schedule in Room #
- [ ] Other information:

### Contact People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Title</th>
<th>Room #</th>
<th>Phone/Ext</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information for Substitute Paraprofessionals

Sub Plan Template

*(Employee Name)*

*(School/Room Number)*

*Instructions:* Delete unwanted text (only) and replace with your schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hour/Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Duties and Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hour 1</td>
<td>Tech Rm #333</td>
<td>Mr. xxxx</td>
<td>Names students worked with Responsibilities Other notes/procedures/details that will be helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15-8:58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hour 2</td>
<td>History Rm #888</td>
<td>Mr. xxxx</td>
<td>Names students worked with Responsibilities Other notes/procedures/details that will be helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:01-9:44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hour 3</td>
<td>Math 8 Rm #998</td>
<td>Mr. xxx</td>
<td>Names students worked with Responsibilities Other notes/procedures/details that will be helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:08-11:20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-12:30</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continue through end of day……
Confidentiality and Professionalism
A paraeducator plays a critical role in the lives of students, in the school, and in the community. As a representative of a school, you are considered a professional and expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. Therefore, as a paraeducator you are expected to demonstrate characteristics such as honesty, integrity, dependability, cooperation, accountability, and a willingness to learn. In addition, it is expected to treat students with dignity and respect. Other expected professional behaviors are:

**Attendance**
Attendance and punctuality convey how seriously you take your job. Your supervising teacher and the students you work with count on you being at work and on time every day.

**Serve as a positive role model**
Engage in positive behaviors at all times, treating students and colleagues with dignity and showing regard for individual differences and diversity. As a role model, the paraeducator understands her/his own skills, abilities, attitudes, capacities, and needs.

**Attitude**
It is important to display a positive attitude. Often other’s perception of your attitude is developed from verbal and nonverbal cues. A positive attitude can be conveyed in many ways. For example, just remembering to smile and being friendly towards others can make a difference as well as looking for ways to assist others. When working with students, having a sense of humor, praising their positive efforts, and using positive statements show students that you care about them and that you enjoy what you are doing. Be willing to take initiative. Show responsibility by looking ahead at what needs to be done and not forcing the teacher to always plan tasks for you. Become eager to assist the teacher, don’t sit back and watch. Listen to directions and follow them. If unclear about what is being asked, ask questions!

*Never resort to your own methods unless discussed with the teacher first.* Work only on teaching concepts the teacher has set for the student. If unclear, ask questions. Never show disapproval in a task assigned to you in front of the student or students. Go ahead and perform the task or teaching concept, then discuss it with the teacher after school.

**Remember:** All employees convey an image of the Bloomer School District to other professionals, to parents and to the community as a whole. We want this to be a favorable image. The paraeducator is as much a part of creating this image as is the certified staff member. Therefore, your actions, speech and dress should be appropriate and professional at all times. Show your support for the special education program as well as your supervising teacher verbally, enthusiastically, and actively, and by your involvement in Bloomer School District events whenever possible.

* Adapted from *The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom*
Paraeducators must comply with strict guidelines as to how and with whom information is shared. Consider the following:

- Information should be shared only with staff working directly with the student.
- Parents’ requests for information should be referred to the supervising teacher.
- Paraprofessionals should never discuss confidential information in the teachers lounge.
- Confidential information should never be shared in any setting other than the school and never in community social situations.

This is an extremely important component of the law. There are many federal laws and state statutes that protect the privacy of educational records. Federal laws pertaining to student records are: *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* and *(IDEA) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.*

Information or records falling under these laws must remain confidential. Many school staff fails to realize that even conversations with non-school personnel or school personnel without an educational involvement with a specific child can be a violation of this act.

Information and records covered under these acts may include but not be limited to:

- Personal and family data
- Academic performance and progress
- Social, behavioral and psychological actions and data Program goals and objectives
- Evaluation and test data
- Psychological, medical and anecdotal reports Records of school achievement and progress reports Disability information
- Copies of correspondence concerning student Records of conferences with students and/or parents

**Discussing specific facts about the students with which you work is a violation of the students’ confidentiality rights. Remember that matters regarding students are confidential and cannot be a topic of public discussion – not even in the teacher’s lounge, not at the grocery store, and not with other paraeducators who do not work with the student. Violation of confidentiality could result in immediate termination.**
### Things to Avoid | Instead
--- | ---
Never discuss information about a student in a public place (e.g. faculty lounge, hallway, grocery store). | *Request that meeting with classroom teacher be in private space (e.g., classroom).*

Never discuss information about one student with the parents of another student. | Respond to such a request with “Respectfully, Mrs. Xxxx, it would be inappropriate for me to discuss another student or family with you,” or “We have a fairly strict confidentiality policy to protect students and families. I think this would breach that policy; let me check with the teacher before I talk about this,” or “I’m sorry, but I am not comfortable with this discussion; perhaps the teacher could assist you.”

Never discuss information about one student with another student. | If students with and without disabilities are engaged in a cooperative activity, students may need to know specific information about one another to offer mutual support. In such situations, it is important for the team (including the student’s parents and the student) to discuss what information is appropriate to share. For example, it may be helpful for a student without disabilities to know how to push his friend’s wheelchair. It also might be important for a student with disabilities to know that his or her friend without disabilities get upset easily.

Never discuss information about a student with school personnel who are not considered members of that student’s service-providing team. | Ask yourself whether or not the person is on the student’s team; if not, find the appropriate team member with whom you can discuss any issues about the student.

Do not access student records inappropriately. | Ask the teacher what type of information you need and how to obtain it. Ask him or her to explain the school policies on accessing records.

Do not create your own files on a student or family. | Only take data as directed by certified personnel, and then give the data to the person who requested it.

Never breach confidentiality. | Review the confidentiality policies of your school with your immediate supervisor at least annually. If you have questions about the policies and procedures in your school, speak to your supervisor immediately.

*Adapted from The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom*
Communication

Communication is a key component of the paraeducator role. No matter how well a program is designed, success depends on good communication between the teacher and the para. Poor communication skills and negative statements are at the heart of most problems. The learning process is totally dependent upon the staff establishing and maintaining good lines of daily communication. However, communication with students and staff goes beyond verbal interaction and also includes nonverbal interaction. Research has concluded that approximately 80% of communication is nonverbal. Your actions may actually speak more loudly than your words.

Choosing Communication Channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Channel</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td>When one person needs to present digital information easily so that it is available to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face conversation</td>
<td>When you need feedback, but not immediately. Lack of security makes it problematic for personal, emotional, or private messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face group meeting</td>
<td>When group decisions and consensus are important. Inefficient for merely distributing information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>When your message must cross time zones or international boundaries, when a written record is significant, or when speed is important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>When a written record or formality is required, especially with customer, the government, suppliers, or other outside an organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo</td>
<td>When you want a written record to clearly explain policies, discuss procedures, or collect information within an organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>When you need to deliver or gather information quickly, when nonverbal cues are unimportant, and when you cannot meet in person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report/proposal</td>
<td>When you are delivering considerable data internally or externally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice mail</td>
<td>When you wish to leave important or routine information that the receiver can respond to when convenient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>When digital information must be made available to others. Useful for collaboration because participants can easily add, remove, and edit content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom*
Self-Advocacy: Asking For Your On-the Job Needs

Asking for what one needs is an important skill, and it is particularly important for you as a paraprofessional. However, for a variety of reasons, it is sometimes an uncomfortable task for many of us. Paraprofessionals can self advocate, or ask for what they need, in a kind and respectful manner that reminds teachers to realign their expectations with each person’s role. It is always the teacher’s role to make the decision regarding specific instructional strategies and student grouping arrangements and the paraprofessional helps with implementation. A paraprofessional might ask, “How should I support (student name) during this activity?” or “What is the grouping arrangement?” Though this might seem simple, these two questions have made a world of difference in the daily life of instructional teams.

The following list of questions may help with clarification of a paraprofessional’s duties.

- How will we communicate about the students we are serving? (e.g., lesson plans, progress reports, written logs, regularly scheduled time, etc)
- What do you want me to communicate to you?
- Who will provide me with the necessary tools for my job? (TE texts, answer keys, test copies, rubrics, assignment copies, etc)
- What and how should I communicate with parents, staff?
- Are there special instructions for each student I will be working with? What are the priorities for each student I will be working with?
- What lesson plan system will you provide?
- What are the strengths/interests of the student I’ll be working with?
- Where should I document information regarding academics, behaviors, and schedule changes?
- What are your classroom rules?
- What are your typical classroom routines and schedules?
- If I notice students without disabilities passing notes or speaking out, how should I respond?

Paraprofessionals and teachers work in partnership for the success of the students we serve. There will always be opportunities for you to assume the role of self-advocate by continually reminding the licensed personnel of your roles and responsibilities. Offering gentle, carefully worded reminders can assist the team in shifting from old patterns of behavior and support all parties in meeting their individual responsibilities.

*It’s important to remember that classrooms are complex and demanding environments and it is not at all uncommon for paraprofessionals to assume the initial teaching responsibilities of licensed teachers. General education teachers juggle many responsibilities, so when non-optimal decisions for a student with disabilities are made, it is very often unintentional.*

*Adapted from The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom*
The roles and responsibilities of a special education paraprofessional have been under construction over the past decade. It is important to note that expectations of performance will vary from team to team depending on the individual needs of the students. Specificity of roles and responsibilities is necessary, but flexibility is paramount to the effectiveness of the paraprofessional. The role of paraprofessional is to support and enhance the effort of the teachers, to enable them to provide instruction to more students and at greater depths. Assessment, modifications and adaptations to curriculum require the teacher to spend increased amounts of time planning, observing, documenting and providing direct instruction to students. A trained paraprofessional working under the direction of a certified teacher will provide increased learning opportunities for students to acquire new skills.
Best Practice Methods
Foster a Positive Classroom Atmosphere

Establishing an atmosphere that is generally positive, predictable, and consistent is the first step in supporting all students. Many strategies do not generally require the approval of a certified teacher. For instance, the paraprofessional can do the following:

- Be prepared with all of the necessary teaching material before the students arrive. Welcome each student warmly and greet each student by name and with a smile as a kind invitation into instruction.
- Avoid too many yes or no questions during the instruction; instead, offer students choices and opportunities to express their ideas. This gives students a sense of control and contribution. It also encourages students to engage in complex thinking.
- Avoid repeating verbal cues that can come across as nagging. If a student does not respond to a request, it is likely that he or she heard it but is choosing not to respond. Restate the expectation once, giving the student a specific and reasonable time frame. Then let it go. If the student responds, acknowledge the response in a positive manner without expressing excitement. If he or she does not respond, make a note of it. Work with the teacher to determine the communicative intent of the student’s behavior and design an appropriate and supportive intervention.
- Be consistent in teaching PBIS plans; children and youth rely on the adults in their world to be consistent.
- Avoid threats, bribes, lecture, and power struggles. They are not forms of specialized instruction.
- Implement any individualized PBIS plans, keeping the five tenet of PBIS in mind:
  1. All children are inherently good.
  2. Adults in the classroom significantly affect the quality of the atmosphere for all students.
  3. All behavior is an attempt to communicate.
  4. Power and control are not effective ways to shape students’ behaviors.
  5. Treat students as you would like to be treated.
- Ask for help and feedback frequently.
- Remember that most students really do want to have a positive school experience. Encourage each student and communicate very explicitly pleasure at having him or her in the group.
- Always assume that all students want to do what is right.
- Allow students to save face. This increases the likelihood that they will learn the intended lesson. Humiliation, power, and control are never effective teaching methods.
- Be aware of own attitudes and feelings prior to entering the classroom each day. Bring a sense of energy and optimism.
- Apologize to a student for making a mistake or speaking in a harsh manner. Be specific with the apology by naming the behavior and accompanying feelings: “Cathy, I’m really sorry that I used a harsh tone of voice with you. That tone isn’t helpful. It must have been hurtful to you.”

These strategies go a long way in creating a supportive learning environment. It can be helpful for the classroom teacher and the paraprofessional to review these steps frequently.
### Nonintrusive Behavioral Support Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State the expectation</td>
<td>Tell students what to do and how you want them to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use proximity</td>
<td>Stand closer to the student who is engaged in inappropriate behavior. Do not look at the student. Instead, keep your focus on the teaching at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a gentle touch</td>
<td>Touch the student’s desk, shoulder or arm while maintaining focus on the instruction at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give nonverbal cues</td>
<td>Smile, nod, or give a thumbs-up to reinforce appropriate behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give indirect verbal cues</td>
<td>Make a statement about the behaviors of another student. For example, when a student calls out an answer, say, “I like the way Sue is raising her hand.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give direct verbal cue</td>
<td>In a quiet and private manner, tell the student exactly how you want him or her to behave. End the statement by saying, “Thank you.” Step away from the student. During the interaction, act calm and dispassionate, regardless of how you actually feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer a choice</td>
<td>Offer the student a choice in which the options are incompatible with continuing the behavior. For example, when a student refuses to do an assignment that requires writing, you could ask, “Do you want to use a black pen or a purple pen to do the assignment?” or “Do you want to sit at your desk or at the table to do this project?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom*
1. Focus attention on rewarding rather than punishing behavior.
2. Be specific in praising desired behavior such as, I like the way Carrie is working on her math.”; “John I like the way you quickly lined up.”; “I like the way Carolyn raised her hand before talking.”
3. Good behavior should be modeled and high expectations maintained.
4. Remember when modifying behavior they tend to get worse before they begin to improve.
5. Students actively engaged in appropriate learning activities infrequently misbehave. Well-structured lessons that are interesting, have relevance, use multiple modalities and are reasonable will reduce the need for discipline. Assign tasks that can be accomplished. Many problems begin with boredom.
6. Be understanding of outside environmental factors that might contribute to tardiness, fighting, aggressive behavior, failure to complete work, etc.
7. When disciplining, try to make it a win-win situation by giving the student options for consequences to misbehavior. Remember your composure will determine if the situation will escalate or de-escalate. At all costs avoid sarcasm, ridicule and embarrassment of students. This will only magnify problems.
8. Maintain good rapport and communication with students.
9. Never label students as bad or handicapped.
10. Have good plans for days with substitutes, rain days or modified schedule days.
11. Concentrate on current behavior rather than on past problems.
12. Be sure that consequences for inappropriate behaviors are realistic and appropriate. For instance, making a child write 100 times I will not make a mess is not as effective as making them clean up the mess. Another example would be after school detention for writing on the wall. This would not be as effective as requiring the student to clean or paint the damaged area.
13. Identify a cool off room or location for students with poor anger control.
14. Something concrete that involves multiple modalities, such as a written behavior contract, can be very effective with some students.
15. Learn to give nonverbal signals to control behaviors. We have all known teachers who, with a look or stance, could stop misbehavior clear across the gymnasium. Additionally, close physical presence, or proximity, can often reduce misbehavior.
16. Employ repetitive command or broken record technique. For example, “I want you to stop talking.” Pause, “I want you to stop talking.” (This approach, when stated in a firm manner while in close proximity to the student, usually works.)
17. Be predictable and consistent.

Adapted from Rice Lake Area School District Paraprofessional Resource
Communication with Students

Communicating with students in a positive way helps students develop skills that will benefit them in all areas of their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good communication leads to:</th>
<th>Poor communication leads to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Warm relationships</td>
<td>• Tuning out-especially with adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperation</td>
<td>• Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feelings of worth and accomplishment</td>
<td>• Misunderstandings and stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Communicate acceptance.**
   Accepting a student just as he is makes it easy to communicate with him. Using “put downs” is never okay. Phrases such as “You’re acting like a baby”, “You’re not like your sister”, or “Come on, this is easy” are not acceptable. They diminish a person’s self worth and hinder trusting relationships.

   Instead use terms that build acceptance: “That was so nice of you to help Kim”, “You are such a hard worker”, or “I like it when you talk to me.”

2. **Use door openers.**
   Invite the students to say more, to share ideas and feelings. Use phrases such as, “Tell me more, this sounds interesting”, “What else happened?”, “Say that again, I want to make sure I understand you”, or “How does that make you feel?”

   Tell the student that her ideas are important and that you are interested in and respect her ideas.

3. **Listen attentively.**
   Stop what you are doing and listen attentively. Use “active listening” techniques such as paraphrasing what you think they are saying or restating. Statements such as, “So it sounds like that made you angry”, or “You must have felt happy when she did that”, show the student that you heard what they said and understand it correctly.

4. **Use more “do’s” than “don’ts”.**
   Focus on what you want the student to do rather that what you don’t want them to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t slam the door!</td>
<td>Close the door quietly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No yelling!</td>
<td>Use your quiet voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop running!</td>
<td>Remember to walk inside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Talk with students, not at them.**
   Always try to establish two-way conversations with students. Give them time to respond and contribute to the conversation.
6. Use “I-messages” to communicate thoughts and feelings.
I-messages are statements of fact from your point of view, they are non-blaming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You made a big mess! Look at this junk on your desk.</td>
<td>I need your help picking this up. I can’t see your work when your desk is covered with papers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Make requests simple.
Some students have a hard time remembering too many directions at once. Use one or two-step directions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before you come to the table, put your books in your desk, quietly walk to the back of the room and sit at the table.</td>
<td>Put up your books and come to the back table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Get the student’s attention before speaking to him or her.
Many people can only concentrate on one thing at a time. Say the student’s name and wait for her to focus on you before speaking to her.

9. Communicate at eye-level.
When working with children or people in wheelchairs or those who are seated, stoop, squat down, or pull up a chair so that you are communicating at eye-level. This helps get their attention and shows respect as well.

10. Make important requests firmly.
If the student doesn’t have a choice, be clear and direct. When giving directions, speak as if you mean it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to stop drawing and get your backpack?</td>
<td>It’s time to stop drawing and get your backpack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Promote independent thinking.
When possible, ask students to tell you what they should do rather than you telling them. This promotes higher level thinking skills and encourages independence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get out your pen and paper.</td>
<td>What do you need for writing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Try not to interrupt and scold.
Let students tell their story. They need a chance to explain things from their point of view. Listen to the whole explanation and get more information if you need it, before jumping to conclusions.
13. Use kind words when dealing with difficult behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of….</th>
<th>Say….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You’re such a baby.</td>
<td>If that upsets you, use your words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t believe you did that.</td>
<td>That surprised me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re stupid.</td>
<td>It’s okay if you need more time to figure it out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Label behavior, not people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of….</th>
<th>Say….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t be a baby.</td>
<td>I can’t understand you when you whine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s a bad kid.</td>
<td>What he’s doing is hurtful to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s such a tomboy.</td>
<td>She really like outdoor sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He’s ADHD.</td>
<td>He has difficulty sitting still and attending.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Give positive feedback.

Positive feedback encourages and builds up self-confidence. However, to be effective, it should be specific and true! Focus on observable behaviors rather than subjective observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of….</th>
<th>Say….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good job!</td>
<td>Good job on that assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a nice boy.</td>
<td>That was nice of you to share your things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re so pretty.</td>
<td>You always have such a nice smile for everyone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Set a good example by what you say.

- Words to use frequently: Thank you.
- You’re welcome. You’re fun to be with! Please
- I like talking with you. You’re really a hard worker. You’re very thoughtful.
- I appreciate you.

Adapted from Rice Lake Area School District Paraprofessional Resource
Ideas for Assisting Students with Learning Problems

Education for SPED students is basically the same as education for other children. There are no mysterious teaching methods that must be utilized for students with special need. There are, however, certain changes or modifications that can be made to minimize the student’s learning difficulties and maximize his/her educational successes in school. Below are some ideas, which will benefit students with learning problems:

1. Follow teacher direction concerning IEP goals and objectives. Much assessment, diagnosis and planning have gone into development of the IEP. The lessons, which the teacher develops to accomplish these, are critical to the student’s educational program.
2. With teacher communication, adjust learning times. Not all students learn or accomplish tasks in the same amount of time.
3. Give reasonable length assignments and breaks. Be particularly aware that ADHD students and others with behavioral problems may need shortened assignments.
4. With teacher communication, you may modify tests. Some students can demonstrate knowledge or mastery through completion of a project or by being administered an oral rather than a written examination. Use a tape or digital voice recorder as needed for assignments or oral tests.
5. Peer tutoring and cooperative learning assignments are beneficial
6. If appropriate, have students repeat words aloud while writing them down.
7. Be careful not to require students with reading deficits to read aloud in front of the class. This can be very embarrassing to the student.
8. Technology such as computers can be great learning tools because they use visual, tactical and auditory modalities. Plus computers with spell check features will encourage students to move beyond small, safe words in the writings. Also, adaptive devices bring more innovative technology that can greatly assist in the learning process. (Examples of these include: speech boards, video cameras, touch screen systems, puff and sip systems, symbol keyboard, computers you speak to.
9. Attempt to move the instruction from the concrete to the abstract. Have available alternative materials for optional projects.
10. Consider using homework assignment signature sheets with parents.
11. Smile frequently.
12. Use manipulative projects such as science fairs, cooking units and restaurant units. A school store requires comparison-shopping, reading labels, mathematics in purchasing, verbal communication.
13. Students spend great amounts of time over the course of a year in unstructured settings such as recess, lunch, hallway transition, etc. These times can be extremely isolating for some the students we work with. Be sure to develop strategies that will facilitate positive integration with peers.
14. Students with learning problems make many errors and erasures. Messy papers do not mean that learning has not occurred. Accept some degree of messy work.
15. For the visual learner color-coding can be of benefit. Highlighting important information in textbooks and on tests can assist students with reading disabilities. Many of our students have poor organizational skills and color-coding can enhance this skill, i.e. use color-coded folders.
16. Reading cursive writing can be difficult for some learning disabled students. Consider using typed or neatly printed worksheets, tests, etc.
17. Students with learning problems need to have new vocabulary words and concepts reviewed with them prior to lessons in which they will be utilized.
18. Permit students with learning difficulties to recite important learning information into a tape or digital voice recorder and then play it back to them.

19. For younger students the use of finger-paints to spell words or writing words in trays of sand can facilitate learning through the use of multiple modalities.

Remember that the development of social relationships is as important as any learning activity. Much of the social skills and language development that children learn comes from peer interaction.

Adapted from Bloomington Paraprofessional Handbook

“A professional is someone who can do his best work when he doesn’t feel like it.” Alistar Cooke
Promoting Student Independence

It often feels right to give help to students with disabilities, but this may not be in their best interest. Use this list to help yourself to step back.

1. You are stepping back so your students can step forward and become independent. Keep this in mind.

2. Clock how long it actually takes for students to, pick up dropped papers, or find page numbers or start a task. What’s a few more seconds in the grander scheme?

3. Say nothing for a whole task while you practice giving visual cues instead of verbal. If you need verbal cues, use only when they accompany a visual.

4. Let your students make mistakes and get into trouble. It’s part of the human experience!

5. Acknowledge your own needs. There’s a reason you chose the helping profession.

6. Sit further away. If you’ve been within arm’s reach, sit just within earshot. If you’ve been sitting just within earshot, sit across the room.

7. Pat yourself on the back every time you help students be more independent. Your job is to help them problem solve.

8. Even though helping can feel right, be aware that too much assistance is short-sighted. Sometimes less is more, less is better.

9. Catch yourself before you correct your students’ work; don’t cover for them. This is about their skills…not yours.

10. Commit to no intervention for a whole activity. Take data instead. Things might not fall apart as much as you had expected.

11. “What page are we on?”; “What’s for lunch?”; “Is it an A day or B day?” Have students ask other students, check for posted calendars, etc. instead of asking you.

12. Assign peers as learning partners.

13. Teach students to try tasks before asking for or accepting help. “Thanks, but please let me try it by myself.”

14. Whenever you add prompts, make a plan to phase them out.

15. Let the boss know that you will be stepping back so that your students can be more independent. You’re not shirking your responsibilities.

16. Collaborate with other adults to break your habits of helping too much. Agree to remind each other to step back.
17. Try helping only when classroom teachers give you a signal. You may prefer to respond directly or give students more time to figure it out alone.

18. Post a sign, “Are there any other ways I could step back?”

Not all students learn or accomplish tasks in the same time.

Adapted from National Literacy Council/American Council for the Blind
When working with students, it is important to make sure they understand what they are working on. Following are some approaches to help students learn.

1. **Don’t ask “yes” or “no” questions when checking for comprehension.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you understand?</td>
<td>What, who, where, why and how questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the princes eat?</td>
<td>Tell me what the princess did.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Get clarification.**
   *If the student’s answer is unclear, ask for clarification so that you know what he understands. Don’t pretend to understand!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Say…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Okay</td>
<td>Please tell me a different way. I’d like to understand you better.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Be prepared to wait.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Do this…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anticipating responses</td>
<td>Be patient and wait for a response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finishing his sentences</td>
<td>Assist the student by giving him possible choices. (Do this only after you’ve given him wait time and he is still struggling.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Be aware of student fatigue.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Do this…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring fatigue or irritability</td>
<td>Change activities, slow down, make tasks easier, take a break.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Correct misinformation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Do this…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blame student for not getting it</td>
<td>Monitor and correct responses. Re-teach concepts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Correct misinformation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of…</th>
<th>Do this…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking a break</td>
<td>Walk around and check work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading a book</td>
<td>Reinforce correct responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remediate incorrect responses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Rice Lake Area School District Paraprofessional Resource
10 Ideas for the Inclusive Classroom

1. **Learn about the learner from the Learner**
   Teachers wanting to know more about a student should ask that student to provide information.
   Ask the student to create a list of teaching tips that might help kids with learning differences.
   - If the student is unable to communicate in a reliable way, the teacher can go to the family for help.
   - Observe the student in another setting. These observations should focus on the student’s successes: What can the student do well? Where is she strong? What has already worked to create success for the student?

2. **Support Transitions**
   Some students struggle with transitions. Some are uncomfortable changing from environment to environment, while others have problems moving from activity to activity. Individuals with autism report that changes can be extremely difficult causing stress and feelings of disorientation. Teachers can minimize the discomfort students may feel when transitioning by:
   - Giving five and one minute reminders to the whole class before any transition.
   - Providing the student or entire class with a transitional activity such as writing in a homework notebook or for younger students, singing a short song about “cleaning up.”
   - Ask peers to help in supporting transition time. In elementary classrooms, teachers can ask all students to move from place to place with a partner. In middle and high school classrooms, students with autism might choose a peer to walk with during passing time.
   - Give the student a transition aid. Some students need to carry a toy, object, or picture, or other aid to facilitate their movement from one place to the next.

3. **Give Fidget Supports**
   Often times, learners struggle to stay seated or to remain in the classroom for extended period. While allowing learners to move frequently is one way to approach this need, some students can be equally comforted if they have an object to manipulate during lessons.
   - Students having such a need might be offered Slinky toys, Koosh balls, straws, stir sticks, Silly Putty/Theraputty, etc.
   - Allowing students to draw can be another effective “staying put” strategy. Many learners with and without identified needs appear better able to concentrate on a lecture or activity when they are given the opportunity to doodle on a notepad, write on their folders, or sketch in a notebook.

4. **Help with Organizing**
   While some students are ultra organized, other need support to find material, keep locker and desk areas neat and remembering to bring their assignments home at the end of the day. Some strategies that might be helpful are:
   - Going home checklist attached to inside of locker.
   - Keep small set of school supplies in each classroom rather than carrying them classroom to classroom.
   - Have students do a two-minute clean-up/organization session at the end of class.
   - Provide checklists around the classroom-especially in key activity areas.

5. **Assign Class Jobs**
   Many students are comforted by routine and predictability. Routines and jobs can provide structure while also serving as an opportunity for instruction and skill practice. A student who likes to organize material might be put in charge of collecting equipment in physical education. A student
who is comforted by order might be asked to straighten the classroom library. Counting the raised hands and having to record the numbers in the right spaces helps build literacy and numeracy skills.

6. Provide Breaks
Some students work best when they can pause between tasks and take a break of some kind (walk around, stretch, or simply stop working). Some learners will need walking breaks—these can last anywhere from a few seconds to 15/20 minutes, others will need to walk up and down a hallway once or twice, others are fine if allowed to wander around the classroom. Five minutes tossing a Nerf football with another student (or staff) served the same purpose for another student. Be creative and keep in mind the student’s interests when choosing a break activity.

7. Focus on Interests
Whenever possible, educators should use interests, strengths, skills, areas of expertise, and gifts as tools for teaching. For instance, student strength areas can be used to facilitate relationships. Some students who find conversation and typical ways of socializing a challenge, are amazingly adept at connecting with others when the interaction occurs in relation to an activity or favorite interest.

Any of the interests students bring to the classroom might also be used as part of the curriculum. A student who loves weather might be asked to write a story about tidal waves, investigate websites related to cloud formation, or do an independent research project on natural disasters. A student fascinated by Africa might be encouraged to write to pen pals living on that continent or asked to compare and contrast the governments of certain African nations with the government of the United States.

8. Rethink Writing
Writing can be a major source of tension and struggle for some students. Some students cannot write at all and others who can write, may have a difficult time doing so. Handwriting may be sloppy or even illegible. Students who struggle with writing may become frustrated with the process and become turned off to paper/pencil tasks.

In order to support a student struggling with writing,
✓ Staff may try to give the child gentle encouragement as he or she attempts to do some writing—a word, a sentence, or a few lines.
✓ Teachers might also allow the student to use a computer, word processor/Alpha Smart, or even an old typewriter for some lessons.
✓ Peers, classroom volunteers, teachers, and paraprofessionals can also serve as scribes for a student who struggles with movement and motor problems, dictating as the student speaks ideas and thoughts. *This technique is particularly successful with students on the Autism spectrum.

9. Give Choices
Choice may not only give students a feeling of control in their lives, but an opportunity to learn about themselves as workers and learners. Students, especially those who are given opportunities to make decisions, know best when during the day they are most creative, productive, and energetic; what materials and supports they need; and in what ways they can best express what they have learned.

Choice can be built into almost any part of the school day. Students can choose which assessments to complete, which role to take in a cooperative group, which topics to study or which problems to solve, and how to receive personal assistance and supports. Examples of choices that can be offered in classrooms include:
✓ Solve five of the ten problems assigned
✓ Raise your hand or stand if you agree
✓ Work alone or with a small group
✓ Read quietly or with a friend
✓ Use a pencil, pen, or the computer
✓ Conduct your research in the library or in the resource room
✓ Take notes using words or pictures
✓ Choose any topic for your term paper

10. Include
If students are to learn appropriate behaviors, they will need to be in the inclusive environment to see and hear how their peers talk and act. If students are to learn to social skills, they will need to be in a space where they can listen to and learn from others who are socializing. If students will need specialized supports to succeed academically, then teachers and staff need to see the learner functioning in the inclusive classroom to know what types of supports will be needed.

If it is true that we learn by doing, then the best way to learn about supporting students with autism and other disabilities in inclusive schools is to include them.

Adapted from P. Kluth (2003)
### Visual Supports for Middle and High School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map of school outlining classes</td>
<td>To assist the students in navigating school halls</td>
<td>Taped or velcroed inside locker, velcroed inside back cover of textbook or folder/notebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To help orient and structure the student. This map shows the student where her classes are, the order in which they take place and times to visit her locker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of classes, room numbers, books and other supplies needed</td>
<td>To aid the student in getting to class with needed materials.</td>
<td>Taped or velcroed inside locker, velcroed inside back cover of textbook or folder/notebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This list works well with students who have difficulty with maps. It lists the class, room number, supplies needed and when to go to the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of teacher expectations and routines for each class</td>
<td>To help the student understand the environment</td>
<td>Velcroed inside front cover of textbook or folder/notebook, placed on a key ring that is kept in pocket or on backpack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To reduce anxiety associated with routines and lack thereof, this visual support details the routine that is to be followed in the classroom (Such as what the student is to do upon entering class and when and where to turn in homework, etc.) and outlines particular characteristics that can help the student get along in class (such as Mrs. Johnson does not permit talking with neighbors and likes both feet on the floor at all times; Mr. Thomas allows students to bring a bottle of water to class.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule of activities within the class</td>
<td>To prepare the student for upcoming activities as well as assist in transitioning between activities</td>
<td>Listed on the chalkboard or whiteboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This list simply details what activities will occur during a given class. As each activity is completed, it can be erased, crossed out, or checked off.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Outlines and notes from lectures** | • To facilitate the student’s understanding of content material | • Prepared by staff in advance and placed on student’s desk  
• Notes taken by peer during class using carbon paper or photocopied and handed out at the end of class  
• Tape recording of lecture with tape recorder placed near teacher and tape discreetly provided to student at the end of class. | Many students have fine motor challenges that make it difficult for them to take notes. Others cannot take notes and listen at the same time. These supports alleviate these challenges and allow the student to focus on understanding the content. |
| **Sample models of assignments** | • To help the student understand exactly what is required | • Prepared in advance by staff and given to the student discreetly. This can be a copy of an actual assignment that received an “A” grade. | A model of an assignment helps students to be visually aware of format requirements. They can then concentrate on the content. |
| **List of test reminders** | • To ensure that the student knows when a test occurs and what material will be covered | • Prepared in advance by staff and given to the student to allow sufficient time to study  
• Final reminder given the day before the test. Often presented on a colorful piece of paper and placed in the student’s folder  
• A school-wide homework hotline is helpful. If this is not available, a peer can serve as the homework hotline. | A study guide that lists content and textbook pages covered in the test is helpful. This guide should include a timeline for studying and outline content to be studied each night and the approximate time required to do so. The teacher assumes responsibility for developing it, but then works with student to complete the task independently. |
| **List of schedule changes** | • To ensure that the student is prepared for change | • Written on the chalkboard or whiteboard  
• Prepare in advance by staff (at least one day prior to activity) and given to the student to place in notebook. If the activity is one that the student is not familiar with, the list should also include his behavior responsibilities | This prompt helps students prepare for a change in routine. Including the responsibilities of the student in the activity helps her complete the activity with minimal stress/anxiety. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of homework assignments</th>
<th>• To assist the student in understanding requirements so that he can complete homework independently</th>
<th>• Prepared in advance and given to the student discreetly. This homework support should include all relevant information such as due date, items to complete, format, etc.</th>
<th>Some students need written details of homework. Teachers often write on the board or the overhead the basic elements of homework and supplement them verbally as students write down the assignment. This is not sufficient for many students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cue to go to home base</td>
<td>• To prompt the student to leave class to lower her stress/anxiety level</td>
<td>• A small card, approximately the size of a business card, is carried by the staff member, who discreetly places it on the student’s desk when home base is needed.</td>
<td>There are some students who often do not recognize that they are entering the cycle for a tantrum, rage, or meltdown. When staff recognizes the behaviors associated with the start of the cycle, she can use this card to prompt the student to leave the room.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adapted from Simple Strategies that Work!*
Job Description and Performance Evaluation
Paraprofessionals new to the School District of Bloomer have a one-year probationary period from the time of hire. During the probationary period, the building principal will conduct a formal evaluation. The supervising teacher(s) and/or Director of Special Education may also provide input. Every three years after the probationary period, the building supervisor, in most cases the building principal or the Director of Special Education, will conduct a formal evaluation. If a paraprofessional disagrees with the evaluation in whole or in part, the employee may attach a written response to accompany the evaluation that is placed in the employee’s personnel file.
Certified Aide
(Job Description)

Qualifications:
1. Maintenance of proper administrator license and certification as required by the Department of Public Instruction;
2. Ability to create a collaborative work culture;
3. Possess the ability to work effectively with students, staff and administration;
4. Must have a strong work ethic.
5. Understand basic function and processes of a school schedule
6. Ability to operate a computer or other electronic devices and associated media;
7. Ability to participate in creating a positive school culture.

Reports to: Building Principal(s)
Director of Student Services
Classroom Teacher

Term: School Year – Determined by Contract Agreement

Responsibilities:
Perform general tasks required in supporting special student needs:
   a) Assist with the student’s scheduling and academic needs;
   b) Communicate effectively with supervisors;
   c) Demonstrate sensitivity to individual student needs;
   d) Assist with management of student behaviors as established through the IEP or classroom rules;
   e) Assist in providing services and resources to students and teachers;
   f) Implement classroom activities as prescribed by special education teachers;
   g) Assist in maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning;
   h) Assist in the supervision of students in other areas of the school as assigned (bathrooms, playground, bus, field trips, lunch room, classroom(s), library etc);
   i) Assist physically disabled or impaired students upon school arrivals/departures, from room to room, and activity to activity;
   j) Assist with toileting or other essential support skills as required;
   k) Record student academic and behavioral progress as monitored by the teacher;
   l) Participate in conferences and meetings as assigned;
   m) Prepare learning materials and bulletin board displays;
   n) Provide routine maintenance of materials (e.g. put away/prepare materials);
   o) Maintain confidentiality;
   p) Assume other duties as may be assigned by the building principal or assigned classroom teacher.

Evaluation: Conducted annually by the principal.

Physical Requirements include but are not limited to the following:
Work at a keyboard or other required technology tool, bending, sitting for extended periods of time, walking, bending, twisting, fine motor movements, hearing, speaking, and lifting of materials and supplies of up to 50 lbs.

NOTE: The statements herein are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by people assigned to this classification. They are not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and skills required of personnel so classified.

LEGAL REF: Sections 120.13 (1), 121.02 (1), (q)188.24 Wisconsin Statutes, PI 3, Wisconsin Administrative Code 8.01(2) (q)

CROSS REF: POLICY 224.1 Administrative Staff Evaluation

APPROVED: July 19, 2001
BLOOMER SCHOOL DISTRICT
SUPPORT STAFF EVALUATION

Employee Name: Date of Report:
Assignment:
School:
Type of Review: Annual

INSTRUCTIONS TO SUPERVISOR: Review the employee’s performance on each of the standards listed below by placing an X following the most appropriate statement. An explanation should be added to clarify or expand on the rating award for the performance standard.

PERFORMANCE RATING
1. Exceeds Requirements: Achieves and maintains performance in all aspects of the job at or near maximum expectations.
3. Needs Improvement: Performance has not been maintained at satisfactory levels.
N/A Not Applicable

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A. PERSONAL QUALITIES:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____ Job appropriate attire; cleanliness; neatness; organization of work area and materials; other personal habits.

COMMENTS:

B. DEPENDABILITY:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____ Attendance/punctuality; on time and attends work when scheduled; completes work assignments on time.

COMMENTS:

C. ATTITUDE/COOPERATION:

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____ Work interest; loyalty; enthusiasm; courtesy and cooperation with fellow staff, students, and public; accepts and implements constructive criticism.

COMMENTS:
D. **JOB KNOWLEDGE:**

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____

Understands the requirements, methods, systems, and technology pertaining to the job; has the technical knowledge and skills necessary to perform the duties of the work assigned.

**COMMENTS:**

E. **INITIATIVE/RESOURCEFULNESS:**

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____

Anticipates problems and devises solutions; ability to proceed without supervision; works well with minimum supervision; creativity.

**COMMENTS:**

F. **COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS:**

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____

Uses efficient and effective written and verbal communication skills; displays discretion, tact, and sensitivity to the feelings of others.

**COMMENTS:**

G. **PRODUCTIVITY/PROFICIENCY:**

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ N/A _____

Anticipates problems and devises solutions; ability to proceed without supervision; works well with minimum supervision; creativity. Quality and quantity of work performed is appropriate for the job assignment.

**COMMENTS:**
H. **JUDGMENT:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Uses generally accepted practices and discretion in determining the proper course of action; good decision making ability. Demonstrates emotional maturity.

**COMMENTS:**

I. **VERSATILITY/FLEXIBILITY:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Adaptable, demonstrates the ability and willingness to perform and learn new duties; adjusts to changing conditions; functions effectively under pressure/stress.

**COMMENTS:**

J. **LEADERSHIP:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Ability to inspire confidence and trust; commands respect; directs others effectively; assumes responsibility as required.

**COMMENTS:**

K. **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Rapport with supervisor(s), staff, students, and other citizens. Ability to listen to and empathize with others.

**COMMENTS:**
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: Cite examples of past performances that were outstanding, areas needing improvement, or performance areas that are unsatisfactory.

I recommend this employee for continuing employment
Yes _____ No _____

THE SIGNATURES BELOW ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS OBSERVATION REPORT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED.

Supervisor – Position

Employee

Date

Date

Copy 1: Personnel File
Copy 2: Supervisor
Copy 3: Employee
Glossary
Adaptive Physical Education (APE) A diversified program of activities specially designed for a child who has a mental, physical and/or emotional disability and is not able to participate safely and/or successfully in regular physical education activities.

Annual Review The law requires that students with disabilities must have their educational program reviewed each year. This consists of updating student progress and then planning the student’s program.

Asperger’s Syndrome A developmental disorder that is characterized by an inability to understand how to interact socially. Typical features may also include clumsy and uncoordinated motor movements, social impairment with extreme egocentricity, limited interests and unusual preoccupations, repetitive routines or rituals, speech and language peculiarities, and non-verbal communication problems. It is similar to autism, but children with Asperger’s do not have the same difficulties in acquiring language.

Assistive Technology (AT) Pieces of equipment, products, modifications to existing products, or customized items or products that are used to increase, support, or improve functioning capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Some examples of AT would be screen readers, voice-to-text software applications and computers.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Children with ADD usually have short attention spans and marked difficulty with concentrating. The child may seem to “zone out” often. Some may also have learning disabilities.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) A syndrome (a group of symptoms or signs) that is usually characterized by serious and persistent difficulties which result in inattentiveness or distractibility, impulsivity, and hyperactivity.

Audiologist A specialist who is concerned with studying the nature of hearing, administering hearing tests to detect possible hearing loss, and giving information about hearing aids, training programs, and medical treatment.

Autism A developmental disorder which significantly affects the child’s ability with regard to verbal and non-verbal communication as well as social interaction. (See Asperger’s Syndrome)

Behavior Modification A technique of changing human behavior, based on a system of positive and negative reinforcement. Emphasis is on observable behaviors and what events precede and follow them.

Cerebral Palsy (CP) A group of conditions caused by brain damage. Typical features may include limited muscle control, speech, psychological or learning difficulties.

Deafness A severe hearing impairment that limits the student’s ability to process linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, and negatively affects the student’s educational performance.
**Deaf-Blindness** Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness. IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

**Down Syndrome** A condition caused by chromosomal abnormality with a number of physical characteristics and varying degrees of mental retardation.

**Emotional Disturbance (ED)** A condition that includes one or more of the following characteristics to the degree that it interferes with the student’s educational performance.
- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by other factors
- An inability to build or maintain relationships
- Inappropriate behavior under normal circumstances
- Depression
- Physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school issues

**Hearing Impairment (HI)** A permanent or fluctuating impairment that negatively affects a student’s academic performance but is not included in the definition of deafness.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** This law gives all children, regardless of their disability, the right to a free public education.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)** A written document that is developed in order to meet the educational needs of a student with disabilities. It delineates the services which are to be provided to the student as well as the academic goals set for the student.

**Intellectual Disability** Intellectual disability means significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects the child’s educational performance.

**Learning Disability (LD)** A disorder in which one or more psychological processes interfere with written or spoken language ability. Evidence of the disability may be a lack of ability to listen, write, speak or do mathematical computations. Learning disabilities include conditions such as brain injury, perceptual disabilities, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** Procedures which ensure that to the extent it is appropriate, students with disabilities be educated with students who are not disabled. (Also referred to as Inclusion or Mainstreaming.)

**Modifications** Adjustments in curriculum or instruction that change or alter the requirements of the curriculum. Curricular requirements are revised to meet the needs of the student.

**Occupational therapy (OT)** The purposeful activity with students who have disabilities for the purpose of achieving maximum independence, disability prevention and maintenance of health.
Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)  Children with ODD typically have many of the following behaviors which occur for a period of greater than 6 months: negative attitudes, hostility, defiance, loss of temper, rule-breaking, non-compliance, refusal to cooperate, vengefulness, anger, spitefulness, disobedience, irresponsibility, and lack of accountability. The behaviors are severe and frequent enough that they will impair both social and academic growth.

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)  A variety of impairments which negatively impact a student’s educational performance. They include congenital anomalies such as club foot, disease-related difficulties such as tuberculosis and impairments from other causes such as amputations, fractures or burns.

Other Health Impairment (OHI)  Having limited strengths, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that – is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia and adversely affects a child’s educational performance. IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Physical Therapy (PT)  The prevention of disability as well as physical rehabilitation for congenital or acquired disabilities that are due to injury or disease.

Procedural Safeguards  Precautions which are taken to make sure that a student’s rights are protected.

Psychologist  A person with an advanced degree who specializes in administering and evaluating psychological tests including intelligence, aptitude, and interest tests. A psychologist could also provide counseling and apply principles of human behavior.

Range Of Motion (ROM)  The normal range of movement for a joint, specifically: flexion (how far it can be bent) and extension (how far it can be stretched out).

Referral  Initial step in the special education process; referrals for evaluation can be made by anyone associated with the student.

Related Services  Corrective and supportive services which are needed to assist a student with disabilities to benefit from education. These include speech, audiology, physical and occupational therapies as well as counseling, psychological, recreational, school health and social work services.

Resource Room  An area within the school where students may spend part of their day receiving extra help with academics.

Special Education  Educational programs and assignments including special classes and programs or services designed to develop the educational potential of children with disabilities.

Specific Learning Disability  A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).
Speech or Language Impairment (SL) Communication disorders include stuttering, articulation difficulties, or a voice impairment that negatively impact the student’s educational performance.

Speech Therapy The remediation of speech disorders which is conducted by a qualified speech-language pathologist.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) An external physical force causes injury to the brain which results in functional disability and/or psychosocial impairment in one or more of the following areas: language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, speech and physical functions.

Visual Impairment Including Blindness (VI) An impairment in vision that, even with correction, negatively impacts the student’s educational performance.

Ward of the State “Ward” being synonymous with person for whom a guardian has been appointed. A “minor ward” being a minor for whom a guardian has been appointed solely because of minority.
Resources and Tools
Recast all problems as learning opportunities.
   “Please coach me, don’t scold me.”

Provide fail-safe relationships.
   “A person like me really needs a fan club.”

Increase dosages of nurturance.
   “I need to believe that you really care.”

Don’t crowd.
   “When you get too close, I will back away for a while.”

Use the back door.
   “If you can help me do well, you are important.”

Decode the meaning of behavior.
   “I try to hide what I really think.”

Be authoritative, not authoritarian.
   “Help me learn to control me.”

Model respect to the disrespectful.
   “Your respect helps build mine.”

Enlist youth as colleagues.
   “We are the only real experts on ourselves.”

Touch in small ways.
   “I watch little things you do to discover who you are.”

Keep positive expectations alive.
   “I look in your eyes to see if there is hope.”

Give seeds time to grow.
   “Please be patient with me—I am still under construction.”