

# Welcome to the World of **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

A TRAINING GUIDE FOR TAs



**Does ANYBODY here use complete words when they speak?**

Developed through Silver Grant 3 & 4  
Coordinated by Nassau BOCES  
2001-02

# **Welcome to the World of Special Education**

## **A Training Guide for TAs**

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Developed through Sliver Grant 3 & 4

Coordinated by Nassau BOCES

September 2002

# Forward

To the Directors of Special Education and Trainers

## HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to provide introductory information that is needed for TAs to better understand their role and the special education process. The manual also provides general suggestions concerning curriculum modifications and behavioral interventions. As TAs work directly with general and special educators who have the primary responsibility for addressing students' needs, it is recommended that all members of the team familiarize themselves with the information contained herein.

Please feel free to customize any portion of this manual to meet the needs of your district, however appropriate citations must be indicated. We estimate that training in the entire contents of the manual will take at least a day and a half. For some chapters several participatory activities have been provided to allow you a selection that would best meet the needs of your group.

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Section 1

# Introduction



This section is intended for Administrators, Teachers and Trainers

## Section 1

### For Teachers and Administrators only

The purpose of this manual is to provide introductory information that is needed for TAs to better understand their role and the special education process. It also provides general suggestions concerning curriculum modifications and behavioral interventions. As the TA works directly with general and special educators who have the primary responsibility for addressing each student's needs, it is recommended that all members of the team-familiarize-themselves with the information contained herein. There may be sections that you will need to modify, add to or delete, based on the needs of your individual district.

The manual is meant to provide an overview only, with the presentation taking approximately one-full day or several shorter sessions. If more extensive training is desired, you will need to supplement the modules contained herein. A list of resources that may be helpful in this regard is included in the appendix.

In addition, we have included some suggestions for teachers and administrators that you may want to consider in working with the TA in your school.

### **CREATING A TEAM**

To create a successful team, all educators and administrators must be "on board" (Giangreco et al, 1999). For each professional to carry out his or her responsibilities, all personnel must be knowledgeable and agree on those specific responsibilities. The school must create and live by a shared understanding. The understanding provides the structure for the teacher, TA, principal and central administration to attain their goals.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS**

Following are suggestions for working with TAs and facilitating a team approach:

*(Adapted from Doyle and Lee, 1997. Reprinted with Permission. O M. Giangreco)*

*Additional copies may be made for distribution to school personnel as part of the training program.*

#### **1. Welcome TAs into your classroom**

- If feasible, provide a desk or other space to work and store belongings/materials
- Provide a tour of the building and introductions
- Make them feel valued and part of the team by asking their opinion
- Let them know they are appreciated
- Make them a part of the entire class

*By making TAs feel like an integral part of the classroom, a foundation is laid for a productive partnership.*

## **2. Establish the Importance of TAs as team members**

- Identify whether they will participate in any building or other team meetings, and what their role would be in this regard.
- If they will be participating in meetings, make sure they know the purpose of meeting, their role, and how to prepare for the meeting.

## **3. Clarify TAs' Roles and Responsibility**

- The teacher and TA play very different roles in the classroom. Try to find time for these roles to be defined and discussion shared between TA and teacher.
- Clarity contributes to a positive working environment.

*When not given the opportunity to clarify roles, there is a risk of inappropriate and less productive uses of a TA's skills. - TAs may believe they are only there to support the students with disabilities; they may hover and not promote independence; or they may sit on the sidelines waiting to be told what to do rather than implementing their part of the responsibilities of the classroom.*

## **4. Establish Expectations for Student Learning and Classroom Management**

- As a teacher you have specific ideas about expectations for the students. Make sure the TA understands and shares these expectations.
- Establish expectations for classroom participation and acceptable behaviors. TAs should be aware of class rules, how typical classroom conflicts are handled, and when/how they should intervene with situations involving behavior.
- Provide the TA with as much specific information as possible concerning the students. Information concerning areas of strength, weaknesses, learning modalities and specific strategies that have been successful will be helpful if the TA needs to make "on-the-spot" modifications during a lesson. TAs need to be aware of the 'extent to which they can/should modify during a lesson if a student is having difficulty.

*When behavioral and academic expectations are not shared with TAs, much time is wasted through trial and error as well as lack of consistency. Students are given mixed messages regarding routines and behavioral interventions.*

## **5. Ensure Certified Staff Guides the TA**

- Establish that the teacher is the instructional leader and the TA has been employed to assist with some of the students. The teacher should oversee all learning activities as well as the activities of the TA.
- Help TAs to resolve which decisions they can make on their own and advise them that they can-always ask for help and guidance.

## 6. Review TAs' Activities

- TAs' activities should be reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. They should receive direct feedback as well as provide self-evaluation. Are they offering enough assistance without providing too much? Are the students given opportunities to learn from their mistakes as well as their successes?
- Suggest alternate activities and modifications that can be used to enhance learning.
- Make sure the strategies they use are not constantly repetitive but have variety and creativity.

*With ongoing discussion, you both remain informed about changes that need to be made before a situation becomes ineffective. This evaluative communication will place everyone's energies on a positive note.*

## 7. Establish Procedures for Unexpected Situations

Daily school activities are continually changing due to schedules, absences, field trips, special events and test days. It is important to share with TAs how they are to handle these flexible situations. Share a copy of a weekly routine and provide the necessary training, support and expectations for the type of schedule changes. It is important to explain their role when:

- The teacher is absent
- Students are engaged in testing
- Unexpected changes need to be made in the plans for the day

## 8. Ensure TAs Promote Student Responsibility

- Successful learners take risks that result in either success or failure
- The teacher can assist the TA in understanding how to create a safe environment in the classroom that allows students to take risks
- Discuss the value of making a mistake

## 9. Establish Times and Ways to Communicate

- Communication should occur regularly. If possible, identify a time for sharing during the day (10-15 minutes) or at a weekly meeting. If this is not feasible, then work within what is realistic, but try to ensure meeting time!
- You may want to develop a system that addresses what you need to communicate as well as how and when you will communicate.

A list of topics to be discussed may include:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming events                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Development of student independence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Student progress                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modifications                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal concerns                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation of classroom materials | <input type="checkbox"/> TA and teacher interactions         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contact with parents               | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching models                     |

*When communication between TAs and teachers is poor TAs are unclear of their responsibilities and how to judge their effectiveness. Too much important information is left to chance. The possibility of overlooking important instructional support techniques is increased.*



Section 2

# What is Special Education?



## **Welcome to Holland**

**by Emily Pearl Kingsley**

*I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability - to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.....*

*When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.*

*After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland."*

*"Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy."*

*But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.*

*The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.*

*So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.*

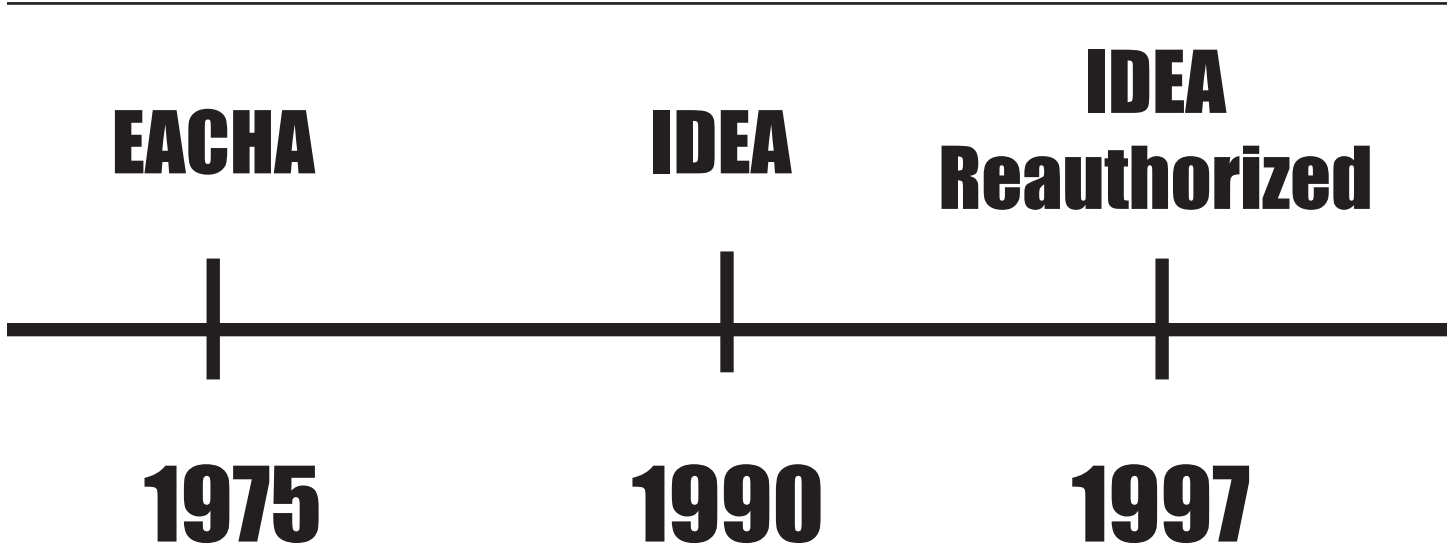
*It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around.... and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills....and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.*

*But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy... and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say "Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned."*

*And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away... because the loss of that dream is a very very significant loss.*

*But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things ... about Holland.*

# Timeline



Education of  
All Handicapped  
Children Act  
(PL 94-142)

Individuals with  
Disabilities Act  
(PK 101-476)

Individuals with  
Disabilities Act  
(PK 105-17)

Focus:  
Access to Public  
Education



Focus:  
Improved Student  
Outcomes

From NYC SETRC

# Individualized Education Program

**Progress in  
mastering  
goals and objectives**

**Evaluation  
results**

**Present levels of  
performance  
and needs**

**Annual  
Goals**

**LRE  
considerations**

**short-term  
objectives/  
benchmarks**

**Specialized  
equipment and  
assistive  
technology**

**Educational  
disability  
classification**

**Special  
alerts**

**Programs  
and  
Services**

**Transition  
plans and  
long term  
adult  
outcomes**

**Test  
modifications**

**Functional  
behavior  
assessment/  
behavior  
intervention  
plan**

2-3

# **IDEA → KEY COMPONENTS**

- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**
- **Appropriate Evaluation**
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**
- **Parent, teacher and student-participation in decision-making**
- **Procedural safeguards**

Instructional  
Outcomes for  
Students with  
Disabilities

Services  
for  
Students in  
the LRE

# IDEA

High  
Standards for  
All Students

Access to  
General  
Education  
Curriculum

# What is Special Education?

Special education-means specially designed individualized or group instruction or special services or programs designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities and to enable those students to make progress in the general education curriculum. These services or programs are provided at no cost to the parent. Special education is a service or a program provided to the student to promote progress in the curriculum, not a place or a separate location.

The Committee on Special Education (CSE) is a multidisciplinary team that is responsible for making determinations about students' eligibility and need for special education services. In New York State, the members of the CSE include\*:

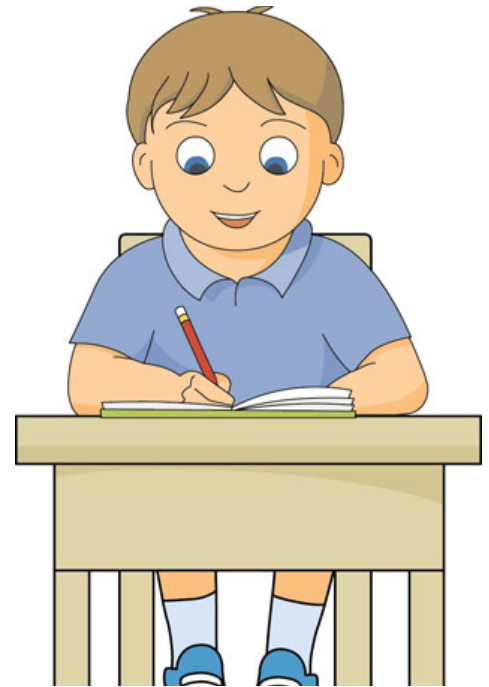
- the parent of the student;
- a chairperson (district representative who is qualified to provide or supervise services for students with disabilities and is knowledgeable about the resources in the district);
- a general education teacher of the student (if the student is, or may be, participating in the general education environment);
- a special education teacher or provider;
- a school psychologist;
- a parent member (who is a parent of a child with a disability and is required unless the parent of the student chooses to decline the participation of a parent member);
- a physician (if requested by the parent prior to the meeting); and
- the student, whenever appropriate.

*\* - The above is a summarized list of the members of the CSE. Refer to Part 200.3 of Part 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education for the exact wording.*

# Special Education Process: Step by Step

## Step 1: Initial Referral for Special Education Services

Students suspected of having a disability are referred to the Committee on Special Education (CSE). A referral is a written statement and may be initiated by the parent of the student (or a person in parental relationship), teacher (or other school personnel), doctor, judicial officer, a designated person in a public agency, or the student (over 18 years of age). When initiated by school personnel, the referral must indicate the interventions (pre-referral strategies) implemented prior to referral, describe the nature of contacts with the parent/guardian and state the reason for the referral. Upon receipt of the referral, the CSE informs the parents/guardians of their due process rights and obtains written consent for an evaluation of the student.



## Step 2: Individual Evaluation Process

The CSE arranges for an appropriate evaluation of the student's abilities and needs. The evaluation is based on information from a variety of sources, including a physical examination, a psychological evaluation, a social history, formal and informal educational assessments, observations, teacher progress reports and information from the parent/guardian.



### Step 3: Determining Eligibility for Special Education Services

Based on evaluation results, the CSE decides if the student is eligible to receive special education services and programs. Eligibility is based on whether the student has a disability that affects his/her ability to learn and who, because of mental, physical or emotional reasons, requires special services or programs. Students with educational disabilities will be classified with one of the 13 categories outlined in State Regulations. The classifications are:

*autism, deafness, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, learning disability, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment (including blindness).*

Federal regulations outlined in the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) state that students may not be determined to be eligible for special education if the determinant factor is lack of instruction in reading or math or limited English proficiency.

In determining the level of special education support and service, the CSE considers the least restrictive environment along a continuum of services. This continuum includes the following programs and services that are generally available in local school districts:

- Declassification support services (for students who are ready to move from special education to full time placement in general education)
- Transitional support services (temporary services provided for a teacher when the student transfers to a general education program)
- Related services (including: speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, etc.)
- Consultant teacher (direct and/or indirect services provided to a student with a disability and/or to the student's teacher)
- Resource room (supplementary instruction in a small group setting for a portion of the school day)
- Special class (provides specially designed instruction for a group of students with similar needs)

Other options, such as BOCES and private placements, are available for students with more significant needs.

Federal and State guidelines describe special education as a service, not a place, which is designed to promote the student's progress in the general education curriculum. This means that students may receive special education services within the general education setting, as appropriate. Consistent with these guidelines, many school districts are developing programs and services that allow students to receive special education services within the general education setting. These models may be referred to using a variety of terms, including: push-out, pull-in, collaborative, integrated, inclusive, etc.

## Step 4: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

If the student is eligible to receive special education services, the CSE develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and arranges for implementation of services. The IEP is a written plan that is based on evaluation results and is intended to guide instruction and meet the individual needs of the student. The IEP includes information about:

- the student's classification (educational disability);
- the results of evaluations;
- the student's present level of performance and needs in social, physical academic and management areas;
- annual goals and short term objectives/benchmarks to enable the student to master the curriculum;
- the specific special education programs and services;
- how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general education curriculum;
- transition planning (for students age 14 and above);
- test modifications and accommodations, which must be consistently and uniformly applied;
- functional behavior assessment / behavior intervention plan
- special alerts (e.g., medical issues), and
- the student's need for specialized equipment/assistive technology.

The Board of Education must approve the recommendations made by the CSE and the parent/guardian must provide written consent for the provisions of the IEP to be implemented. Once the recommended services are implemented, IEP progress reports will be provided to the parent; these reports will reflect the student's progress toward mastery of the goals and objectives.

## Step 5: Annual Review/Reevaluation

The CSE periodically, but not less than annually, reviews the student's IEP. The annual review serves as an opportunity to consider the student's progress and achievement. The IEP may be modified or revised at an annual review. At least every 3 years, arrangements are made for a reevaluation to determine the student's individual needs, educational progress and achievement, ability to participate in general education and continuing eligibility for special education.

Throughout the process, consideration must be given to how special education services and/or programs can be provided in the least restrictive environment. CSE must first consider placement in a regular education program with supplementary aids and services provided to the student and/or the student's teacher in that setting. Alternative placements, such as special education classes, special schools or other removal from general education environment should be considered only when the CSE determines that a student's education in regular education classes cannot be satisfactorily achieved, even with the use of supplementary aids and services.

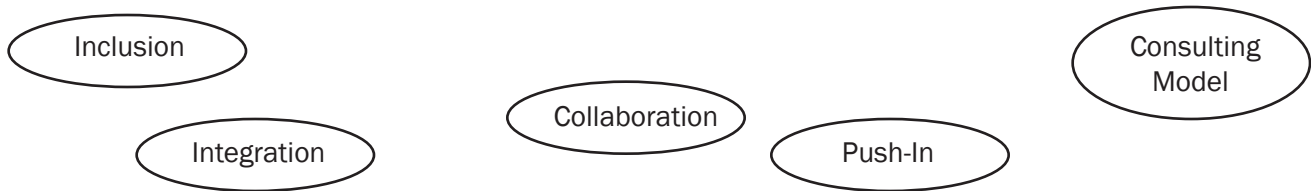
*Sources: Special Education in New York State for Children Ages 3-21, A Parent's Guide, August 2000 (New York State Education Department); NYS Sequence of Events for Special Education (February 1998)*

## Least Restrictive Environment and Models for Inclusion

Regulations require that special education students be provided with services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This means that “placement of students with disabilities in special classes, separate schools or other removal from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved.” LRE placement will:

- provide the special education needed by the student;
- provide for education of the student to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student with other students who do not have disabilities; and
- be as close as possible to the student’s home.

Given the requirement for LRE, many school districts are developing new instructional models to serve students with disabilities in general education settings by bringing the appropriate supports and services to the student, rather than having the student leave the classroom to receive those supports and services. These instructional models may be referred to in different terms, including:



**The implementation plan for these new models may differ from district to district. -However, it is important to remember that, whatever the model, the purpose is clear...**

**LRE**

## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### Island in the Mainstream

from: Giangreco, Michael

#### Ants in His Pants – Page 27

The above cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restrictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

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# Confidentiality Activity

*Directions:* Several situations related to confidentiality that require a decision to be made are presented below. Read each of the situations and apply your school's policies in order to make a decision for each scenario. Then discuss your response with other team members.

## Student To Student

Sue is a new TA at Smith High School. She is 20 years old. Sue went to Smith High School as a student, so she knows many of the teachers and several of the students. Her primary responsibilities are related to supporting two students with moderate intellectual disabilities in several inclusive classrooms:

Sue is trying to figure out how to support the two students in their history class. She is very frustrated and has decided to solicit input from several other students in the class. She meets with the student's classmates during her lunch break and describes to the students without disabilities what she believes are the challenges and the learning priorities of the students with disabilities. The students without disabilities generate a wide variety of strategies that may potentially be supportive of the students with disabilities. At the end of the lunch break, Sue feels excited and very positive with the outcome of this informal lunch chat. As a matter of fact, she has decided to have lunch with these students once a week to solicit their ideas and feedback related to the educational program of the student with disabilities.

*Discussion:* Has Sue broken any rules about confidentiality? If so, which ones? How? What could she have done differently?

## Faculty Lounge Talk

Brian is a TA who supports a student with severe disabilities in an inclusive third-grade classroom. He has been a TA in the school for about 5 years and is widely known and respected by other TAs as well as many faculty members.

Brian walks into the faculty lunchroom and sits down with several TAs and teachers. As he tunes into the discussion, he notices that the topic of conversation has to do with the student he supports. He hears several comments made about the student's family. As Brian is becoming increasingly uncomfortable, one of the teachers turns to him and asks, "Brian, is that true about Mrs. Smith?"

*Discussion:* How should Brian respond? What is Brian's responsibility in the specific situation? What is Brian's responsibility with his team afterward?

## Community Helpers

Pat is a TA who supports several students who have challenging behavior at the middle school. She has been a TA for many years. Pat is widely known in her community for her volunteer work at the local youth center.

One of the students that Pat supports attends the youth center regularly. One afternoon Pat notices that the student is beginning to have some difficulty managing some of his behaviors. Pat has learned several behavioral management techniques to support this student during school.

*Discussion:* What should Pat do? Should she intervene at the youth center with the behavioral management techniques that she learned at school? If so, when another volunteer asks her what she did and why she did it, should Pat describe the behavior management strategy?

# Confidentiality Activity

## Student To Student

*Discussion: Has Sue broken any rules about confidentiality? If so, which ones? How? What could she have done differently?*

Key: In most schools this would represent a breach in confidentiality. Sue should have brought her questions and concerns to her team. It is inappropriate to discuss issues related to a student with and without disabilities with any other student. It is also inappropriate for Sue to establish ongoing meetings with students.

## Faculty Lounge Talk

*Discussion: How should Brian respond? What is Brian's responsibility in the specific situation? What is Brian's responsibility with his team afterward?*

Key: Brian should respond. His response should explain that it would be a breach of confidentiality to respond to their inquiry. For example, he might say, "I'm not comfortable discussing the student's family life" or "It is my understanding that it would be a breach of confidentiality to discuss this type of information in this context." Brian should document the entire situation and discuss the incident with his team during the next scheduled meeting.

## Community Helpers

*Discussion: What should Pat do? Should she intervene at the youth center with the behavioral management techniques that she learned at school? If so, when another volunteer asks her what she did and why she did it, should Pat describe the behavior management strategy?*

Key: This situation is a bit more challenging. It is still inappropriate for Pat to discuss the specifics of the student's program with community members. As a volunteer who has responsibilities at the community center, Pat should approach the student's parents and voice her concerns. It is important to remember that Pat would do the same thing if the student did not have disabilities.



*From: The Paraprofessional's Guide to the Inclusive Classroom: Working as a Team  
©1997 by Mary Beth Doyle Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.*

## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### Grapevine

from: Giangreco, Michael

### Flying By the Seat of Your Pants – Page 42

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## **HANDOUT- Addressing Confidentiality**

Directions: Members of the education team need to meet to discuss the policies and procedures related to confidentiality as they apply to both students with and without disabilities, as well as their families.

1. How is “confidentiality” defined in our school policies?
2. What are the policies and procedures in this school related to confidentiality?
3. What are the expectations of the members of our team regarding confidentiality? How can our team support one another in maintaining respectful interactions and confidentiality in relation to the students and their families with whom we work?
4. How will we ensure that confidentiality is maintained in our daily work with students and their families?
5. What do we do when we are in situations in which we believe confidentiality is being breached? What are some phrases that we might use to remind another person of this issue?

*From: The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom: Working as a Team  
©1997 by Maly Beth Doyle, Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.*



# Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), often referred to as the “Buckley Amendment,” was passed by Congress in 1974. The Act grants specific rights to protect the privacy of parents and students. The provisions in this Act apply to all students, including students with disabilities.

## **A Brief Overview of FERPA Regulations Related to Disclosure of Information on All Students**

Unless there is a court order to the contrary, all parents have a right to inspect the educational records of their children.

An eligible student over age 18 or attending post-secondary school obtains rights previously afforded the parents.

Each educational agency or institution shall have a policy regarding how it meets the requirements.

A parent or eligible student may request amendment of a record believed to be false or misleading.

If the request is denied, the parent or eligible student has a right to a hearing.

If the hearing results in an unchanged record, the parent or student may have a statement inserted in the record describing desired change.

With few exceptions, written parental or student consent must be obtained before transferring personally identifiable information to another person, agency or facility.

Exceptions include, but are not limited to, those within the agency with legitimate educational interests (i.e., teachers and school officials) and emergency situations (i.e., to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals).

# Eligibility for Special Education

Eligibility for special education is based on whether a student has a disability that affects his or her ability to learn. The Committee on Special Education (CSE) is responsible for determining the eligibility for students who are ages 5-21. The CSE must determine whether the student meets the criteria for one of the 13 disabilities outlined in the NYS Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. The following information represents a summary of the classifications described in the regulations. (Refer to the Appendix for the detailed list of the classifications as defined in NYS Regulations).

**autism:** a disability that affects the student's functioning in communication and social interactions; other characteristics may include repetitive movements, resistance to change and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

**deafness:** a disability that impairs the student's ability to process information through hearing

**deaf-blindness:** a combination of disabilities that causes communication and other needs

**emotional disturbance:** a disability that affects behavior, feelings, interpersonal relationships

**hearing impairment:** a disability that could be permanent or fluctuating

**learning disability:** a disability characterized by a severe discrepancy between the cognitive (intellectual) potential and academic performance that affects the ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations

**mental retardation:** a disability that is characterized by sub-average intellectual functioning along with deficits in adaptive behavior

**multiple disabilities:** a combination of disabilities

**orthopedic impairment:** a disability that includes impairments from birth, from disease or from other causes (e.g., clubfoot, poliomyelitis, cerebral palsy, amputation, etc.)

**other health impairment:** a disability that includes health problems affecting strength, vitality, alertness (e.g., heart condition, asthma, sickle cell anemia, epilepsy, attention deficit disorder, Tourette syndrome, etc.)

**speech or language impairment:** a disability that affects expressive language (e.g., speaking) or receptive language (e.g., understanding) and is characterized by problems organizing thoughts and ideas, rapid or disorganized language, voice disorders related to pitch, sound or the quality of the sounds produced

**traumatic brain injury:** an injury to the brain caused by an external force (e.g., in an accident) or by a medical condition, such as a stroke or brain tumor that impacts on the student's functioning

**visual impairment (including blindness):** impaired vision, even with correction, that results in partial sight or blindness

When Congress reauthorized IDEA 1997, there was a great deal of concern that some students may have been classified as disabled when their learning problems were related to bilingualism or limited instruction, rather than an educational disability. In an effort to ensure that these students would not be classified as disabled, federal and state regulations specifically prohibit the classification of students whose learning difficulties are due to limited educational opportunities or diverse linguistic backgrounds. Regulations state that a **“student may not be determined to be eligible for special education if the determinant factor for that eligibility determination is lack of instruction in reading or math or limited English proficiency.”**

Preschool Students with Disabilities

## Preschool Students with Disabilities

The Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) is responsible for determining eligibility for children ages 3-5. A preschool child is eligible for special education if there is evidence of a “significant delay or disorder in one or more functional areas related to cognitive, language and communicative, adaptive, socio-emotional or motor development which adversely affects the student's ability to learn.” An eligible preschool child is classified as a “preschool student with a disability.” All preschool students with disabilities are considered for eligibility for school-age service by the CSE when they are transitioning from CPSE. At that time, their eligibility for special education services will be considered according to the CSE classifications described above.

# ATSEA\*

## \*A Test of Special Education Acronyms

- |     |      |       |  |
|-----|------|-------|--|
| 1.  | IDEA | _____ | A. Means that students with disabilities should be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent appropriate          |
| 2.  | LD   | _____ | B. A disorder that is characterized by difficulties with attention   |
| 3.  | IEP  | _____ | C. A plan describing specific interventions to address a student's difficulties with behavior                                    |
| 4.  | PT   | _____ | D. Specially designed program of developmental activities, games, sports and rhymes for some students with disabilities          |
| 5.  | FAPE | _____ | E. A written statement that outlines all aspects of the student's special education plan   |
| 6.  | LRE  | _____ | F. Multidisciplinary team that is responsible for recommending and providing appropriate special education services and programs |
| 7.  | TBI  | _____ | G. A related service that addresses difficulties with gross motor skills   |
| 8.  | APE  | _____ | H. Process of determining why a student engages in behaviors that impede learning  |
| 9.  | FBA  | _____ | I. An educational classification that is characterized by a discrepancy between intellectual potential and academic achievement  |
| 10. | BIP  | _____ | J. Federal law concerning students with disabilities   |
| 11. | CSE  | _____ | K. An educational disability that results from an acquired injury to the brain   |
| 12. | ADHD | _____ | L. An entitlement that guarantees students with disabilities have access to an appropriate public education                      |

## Learning Standards and Test Access

The Learning Standards set by the NYS Education Department are for all students, including students with disabilities. In order to demonstrate progress toward and mastery of those standards, students with disabilities will participate in assessments - either the regular assessment program or, for severely disabled students, in an alternate assessment. The following information outlines the provisions that are made for students with disabilities to participate in the assessment process.

Most students with disabilities will participate in the regular assessment program alongside their non-disabled peers. In order to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, some students with disabilities will require test modifications, which are intended to enable these students to participate on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers. Test modifications are not intended to provide students with an unfair advantage or to substitute for knowledge and skills that have not been achieved.

The Committee on Special Education is responsible to consider the need for test modifications based on individual student needs and educational characteristics. If it is determined that a student requires test modifications, these must be indicated on the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Recommended test modifications must be consistently and uniformly applied throughout the student's program. This includes tests, quizzes and examinations administered either in special education class settings or in general education class settings, as well as for district and State examinations. There are only two situations when test modifications would not apply: when a student refuses and when restrictions are required by the test authorities. When a student refuses, school personnel should make every effort to effectuate full implementation. If the student continues to refuse, the situation should be documented.

Teacher assistants may be responsible for implementing test modifications. It is essential that the modifications that are consistent with those recommended on the IEP provide for the minimum deviation from the regular test format. For example, when a student's IEP recommends a scribe, the person assigned to this task has to be sure to transcribe exactly what the student dictates and not probe for more information or encourage the student to provide more detail.

### **Remember:**

1. Test modifications are individually determined.
2. Test modifications are not recommended for the potential benefit - all students might benefit - but based on need.
3. Test modifications must be consistently and uniformly applied.

The CSE may determine that a student with severe disabilities who, even with test modifications, would be unable to participate in the regular assessment program and, as a result, will need to participate in the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSSA). The CSE will reflect that recommendation on the student's IEP and, starting in September 2001, students in this category who are ages 9-10, 13-14, and 16-17 will participate in the NYSSA. This alternate assessment will document the student's performance toward meeting alternate performance indicators, which were specifically developed for students with severe disabilities. The alternate assessment is a data folio of information and may include written work/products, videotaping, audio-taping or observation of the student demonstrating a performance task.

# Test Modifications Summary

## Purpose of Testing Modifications:

- To enable students with disabilities to participate in test programs on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers.
- To provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery of skills and attainment of knowledge, without being unfairly restricted due to the effect of a disability.
- In determining eligibility, emphasis must be placed on the necessity for modification, not merely the potential-benefit from modification.
- Modifications are intended to address a disability and, to the extent possible, to minimize the impact of a student's disability.

## Modifications Are Not:

- intended to substitute for knowledge and abilities that the student has not achieved.
- intended to provide an unfair advantage over students taking tests and examinations under standardized procedures.
- intended to be recommended solely on the basis of an expectation that the student would achieve a higher score.

## Eligibility and Implementation

- The CSE determines the appropriate test modifications based on individual student needs and educational characteristics
- The IEP must list the specific test modifications
- Test modifications must be consistently and uniformly applied throughout the student's program, including tests, quizzes and examinations administered either in special education class settings or in general education class settings.
- Test modifications must be fully and consistently administered during State examinations.

## Basis for not implementing test modifications:

- Student Refusal - school staff should take appropriate action to effectuate full implementation. However, where such action is not effective in altering the student's position, officials should document the incident and inform the parent.
- Restrictions by Test Authorities - Special test modification considerations and restrictions apply to certain examinations for which the Education Department has established separate standards.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF TEST MODIFICATIONS

### Flexible Scheduling

Extended time to complete tests  
Administer tests in separate location

### Flexible Setting

Administer tests over several sessions  
Administer tests to a small group in separate location

### Revised Test Format

Large print or Braille editions of tests  
Reduce number of test items per page

### Revised Test Directions

Read directions to student  
Simplify language in directions

### Use of Aids

Word processor  
Calculator

# Alphabet Soup

Following is a list of the abbreviations commonly used in special education.

ADHD	Attention Deficit Disorder w/w out Hyperactivity
APE	Adaptive Physical Education
BIP	Behavioral Intervention Plan
CP	Cerebral Palsy
CPSE	Committee on Preschool Special Education
CSE	Committee on Special Education
ED	Emotional Disturbance
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment
FERPA	Family Education Rights and Privacy Act
HI	Hearing Impairment
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LD	Learning Disability
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MD	Multiple Disabilities
MR	Mental Retardation
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
OT	Occupational Therapy
PDD	Pervasive Developmental Disorder
PT	Physical Therapy
RR	Resource Room
S/L	Speech and Language
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VI	Visual Impairment

# Getting Started



**Note to Trainer:**

This chapter contains multiple activities; you should select those that are most appropriate for your district. Since the activities used will vary, you will also need to determine when they should be presented.



## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### **Flexibility**

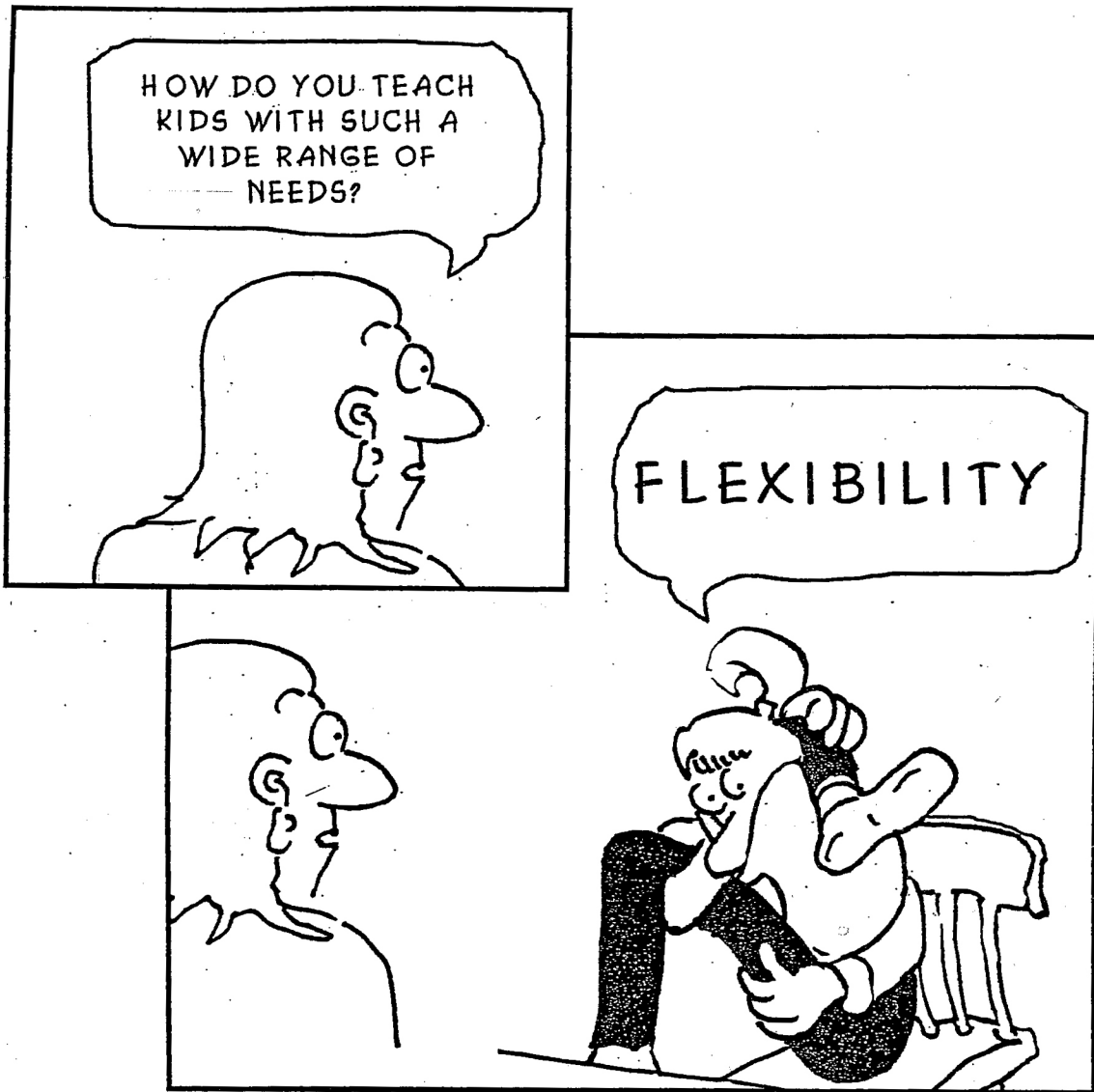
from: Giangreco, Michael

### **Ants in His Pants – Page 81 (see cartoon on reverse side)**

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© 1998 MICHAEL F. GIANGRECO. ILLUSTRATION BY KEVIN RUELLE

MRS. JONES EXPLAINS HER SECRET TO NEVER GETTING BENT OUT OF SHAPE.

Giangreco, Michael F. *Ants in His Pants*, Minnetonka, Minnesota, Peytral Publications, 1999

# Getting Started

## Facts:

1. Para-educators are one of the fastest growing positions in public education.
2. In the early 1960's there were approximately 10,000 Para-educators; currently there are more than 500,000.
3. The increase in inclusive classrooms has greatly contributed to this growth.
4. A number of titles are used to refer to this position, depending on the area of the country. The most commonly used are:
  - Teacher aide
  - Teacher assistant
  - Paraprofessional
  - Para-educator
  - Instructional assistant

The first two titles are commonly used in Long Island, while the remaining three are the terms generally used throughout the rest of the country.

*Statistics from Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools— [www.ed.gov/pubs/paraprofess](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/paraprofess)*

A teaching assistant, by definition, is someone who assists a teacher and a school by providing multiple aspects of support services. General overall services may be student directed and/or clerical and may include:

- In classroom support services
- Building support
- Direct assistance to teachers
- Direct and indirect support to students
- Creating and keeping classroom and student schedules

General benefits of using a TA in the classroom whether inclusive or self-contained:

- Increases student learning opportunities
- Provides more individualized attention
- Increases monitoring of student progress and analysis of skills development
- Increases assistance for supporting positive classroom behaviors

Numerous factors influence the specific assignment and responsibilities delineated for the TA. These may vary depending on the supervising teacher, classroom composition, special education teacher, experience of the TA, physical environment of the classroom and needs of the entire school. TAs may be assigned to more than one classroom. They may support one student in gym class, another in computer, and have lunch period with a different student. They may be assigned to a specific student as a "1:1". While the general and special education teachers are responsible for direct instruction to the students, the role of the TA is based on support and reinforcement of student learning, performance and behavior.

# Some Basic Questions When Getting Started

When you start in a classroom, it is important to have some basic information. Knowing the protocols of the building is important to “getting started.” For instance:\_\_\_\_\_

- > Who is your direct supervisor?
- > What is your primary assignment?
- > How many and which children are your primary concern?
- > Where do you sign in?
- > Whom do you call if you are going to be absent?
- > How do you find out if school is canceled due to weather?
- > Can you eat in the teacher’s room? If not, where can you eat?
- > What is the name of the school secretary?
- > Are you allowed to use the copy machine?
- > What information are you allowed to discuss with a student’s parents?

## **You should also acquaint yourself with the following school policies and practices:**

- > Bus Safety Drills
- > Fire Drills/Emergency evacuation procedures
- > Lunchroom assignments
- > Playground and recess times
- > Your role / participation in class specials
- > District policy regarding gifts to school personnel
- > Use of personal property in school
- > Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or maltreatment
- > The location of your classroom(s), student and staff bathrooms, and specials (library, gym, art and music)

# Classroom Orientation Checklist

This list will help to organize the TA when beginning in a new school or orientation.

## 1. Personal Information

- Workday responsibilities/ Prepared for a substitute
- Work schedule
- Breaks
- Salary and benefits
- Lunch time and location
- Sick and personal days
- School calendar and holidays
- Review any school standard forms

## 2. School Information

- School Policies (i.e.: gifts to employees)
- Programs operated by the school
- Location and use of equipment and supplies
- Where to park, eat, etc.
- Hours of teachers' school day
- Building layout (i.e.: gym, cafeteria, playground, specials, bathrooms)
- TA evaluation procedures

## 3. Confidentiality Instructions

- Review any written policy
- Review policy with teacher or administrator

## 4. Classroom Orientation and School Policies

- Student characteristics
- Classroom rules
- Physical arrangement of classroom
- Work assignment
- Job expectations / role in the classroom
- Daily routines
- Discipline strategies
- Location of classroom materials

## 5. Other Notes and Information

Adapted from Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at <http://www.para.unLedu>

## Becoming A Chameleon

As a TA one must wear many hats and communicate with varied people on various levels. When working with different professionals a TA may be expected to change his/her style, manner, responses, responsibilities and communication techniques to meet the needs of the teacher and the students in the classroom. A TA must develop and demonstrate attitudes and approaches that encourage students' independence, foster appropriate interdependence, promote inclusion and peer interactions and enhance self-image, while simultaneously supporting academic needs.

Not everyone can be a TA. The job is demanding, requires extreme flexibility, and the TA must fit into the surroundings. The rewards, however, are numerous. They may be as simple as a smile on a child's face when he learns to read, understand a math concept, or is able to participate in a group activity. The feeling a TA gets by knowing he or she is making a positive difference in children's lives is a wonderful reward.



### To be a “chameleon” the following characteristics are important:

#### Flexibility

- Positive communication
- Good listening
- Ability to ask questions freely
- Value for others' opinions
- Respect for colleagues and students
- Proficient problem solver

#### Suggestions to aid your ability to become a chameleon:

- Communication with your supervisor will help you define your position X Share your ideas and compromise
- Ask for help if you need clarification of an assigned task
- Familiarize yourself with the teacher's instructional style, behavioral expectations and strategies
- Observe how the teacher handles children with unique learning needs X Observe students and discuss with the teacher how to address certain behaviors
- Become aware of students' strengths and weaknesses
- Familiarize yourself with the instructional materials and modifications used X Ask the teacher what role you should play when s/he is absent
- Get a school calendar and ask about upcoming events
- Ask if you may have access to or be aware of lessons prior to starting, so you can anticipate the materials needed and have them ready for the children.

## Your role in the classroom

When working in the classroom the TA can enhance instruction, under the supervision of the special education and general education teacher, by supporting students as follows:

- Reinforcing previously instructed concepts
- Observing and documenting student progress
- Assisting students in carrying out daily routines more independently
- Helping students to initiate tasks
- Adapting tasks and assignments
- Implementing teacher modifications
- Promoting student independence, not interdependence
- Providing individual or small group supplementary instruction
- Implementing behavior management programs
- Implementing testing modifications
- Helping children with transitions
- Supporting the integration of students into the mainstream
- Communicating with teachers about student needs
- Helping the teacher monitor, record and chart behaviors
- Working with the teacher to develop classroom routines and rules
- Keeping students focused on tasks
- Responding to social/emotional needs as per the teacher's protocol
- Supervising in the lunchroom, during recess and at arrival / dismissal (bus duty)
- Keeping appropriate records for the teacher
- Helping organize and supervise for class trips

Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at <http://www.para.unl.edu>

The duties of the TA are as varied as the students they support and the environments in which they work. Some common qualities that would be helpful are:

- Dedicated to helping children
- Ability to adapt to various teaching styles
- Flexible to different needs
- Resourceful
- Able to collaborate with many people
- Good at solving conflicts
- Open-mindedness
- An effective communicator
- Able to understand and accept the role expectations of the position with regards to teachers, administrators, parents and students
- Ability to discipline effectively and use management strategies
- Ability to organize and use instructional materials and strategies
- Understands (or is willing to ask about and learn) characteristics of disabilities
- Respects confidentiality regarding students and teachers

From: [www.cec.spec.org/careerprofile/paraeducators](http://www.cec.spec.org/careerprofile/paraeducators)

3-6

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This table shows the differentiation of the roles of the teacher and the TA for the same task.

Area	Teacher's Role	TA's Role
Classroom Organization	Plan weekly schedule, room arrangement, assignments and activities for individuals and the entire class.	Implements plan as specified by the teacher.
Assessment	Administers and scores formal and informal tests.	May administer informal tests. May assist in implementing testing modifications.
Setting Objectives	Determines appropriate objectives for groups and individual children.	Carries out activities to meet objectives.
Teaching	Teaches lessons for the entire class, small groups and individual children. Provides initial instruction for new learning.	Reinforces and supervises practice of skills with individual and small groups.
Behavior Management	Observes behavior and implements behavior management strategies for entire class and individual children.	Observes behavior, carries out behavior management activities.
Working with Parents	Meets with parents and initiates conferences concerning their child's progress.	Participation in parent conferences may vary; in most instances the TA will not participate.
Building a Team	Arranges schedules for conferences, shares goals and philosophy with TA, and organizes job duties for TA.	Shares ideas and concerns with the teacher, but participation in team meetings will vary between districts.

The term "TA" in this chart refers to both teacher aides and teacher assistants. Please be aware that the roles and responsibilities may vary according to the confines of each district and the job title.

Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at [http:// www.para.unl.edu](http://www.para.unl.edu)



# Activity

## Roles and Responsibilities

Trainer:

Create a Venn diagram on a large paper or individual papers depending on if you choose to do this activity as one large group, smaller groups, or individually.

Given the following list of responsibilities, have the participants fill in the Venn diagram indicating which person is responsible or whether the responsibility is shared.

You can print each of the responsibilities on individual post-its or labels, so they can be readily placed in the appropriate space to save rewriting. If doing as individual groups, without a whole group review at the end, it may be sufficient to write the numbers in the appropriate space.

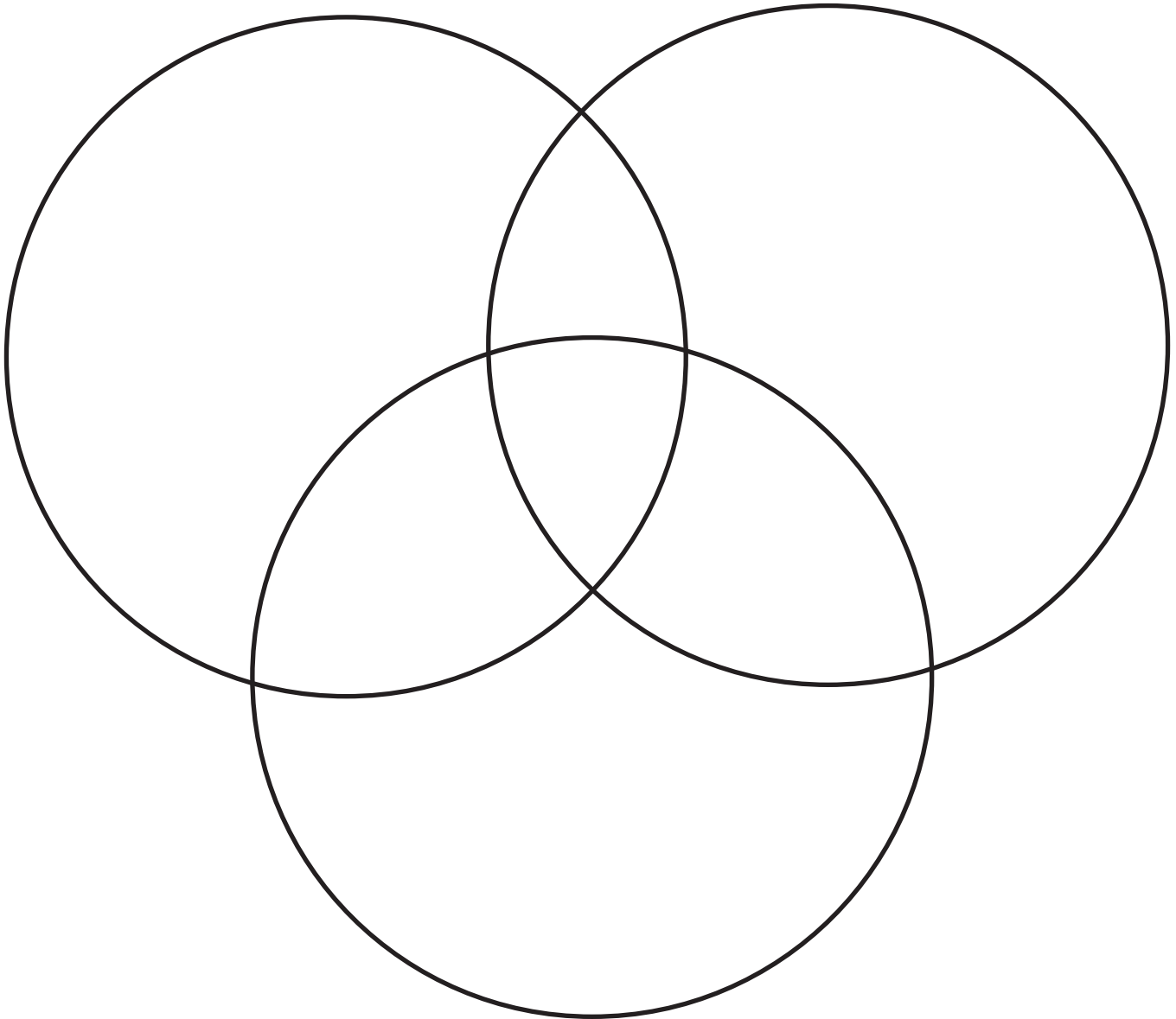
<b>Who is responsible for the following? Check ALL that you believe apply for each item.</b>	<b>Gen. Ed Teacher</b>	<b>Spec. Ed Teacher</b>	<b>TA</b>
1. Provide initial instruction for new learning			
2. Demonstrate instructional strategies or approaches			
3. Gather materials and resources			
4. Use role playing to help student improve social skills			
5. Create large group lessons to present curriculum to all			
6. Reinforce previously instructed concepts			
7. Create innovative, high interest material for the students			
8. Grade formal evaluations			
9. Assist in daily routine activities			
10. Modify tasks, assignments and instructional materials			
11. Coordinate student support team meetings			
12. Troubleshoot problem areas			
13. Decide and implement on-the-spot modifications			
14. Develop behavior management programs			
15. Plan instruction for individual students			
16. Implement behavior modification strategies			
17. Meet with parents and initiate conferences			
18. Observe and record behavioral responses			
19. Implement test modifications			
20. Supervise lunch and playground activities			
21. Develop IEP			
22. Grade students			
23. Record and chart behaviors			

# Activity

Roles and Responsibilities - page 2

Gen. Ed Teacher

Spec. Ed Teacher



Teacher Aide/Asst.

From: [www.cac.spec.org](http://www.cac.spec.org), careerprofile: paraeducators

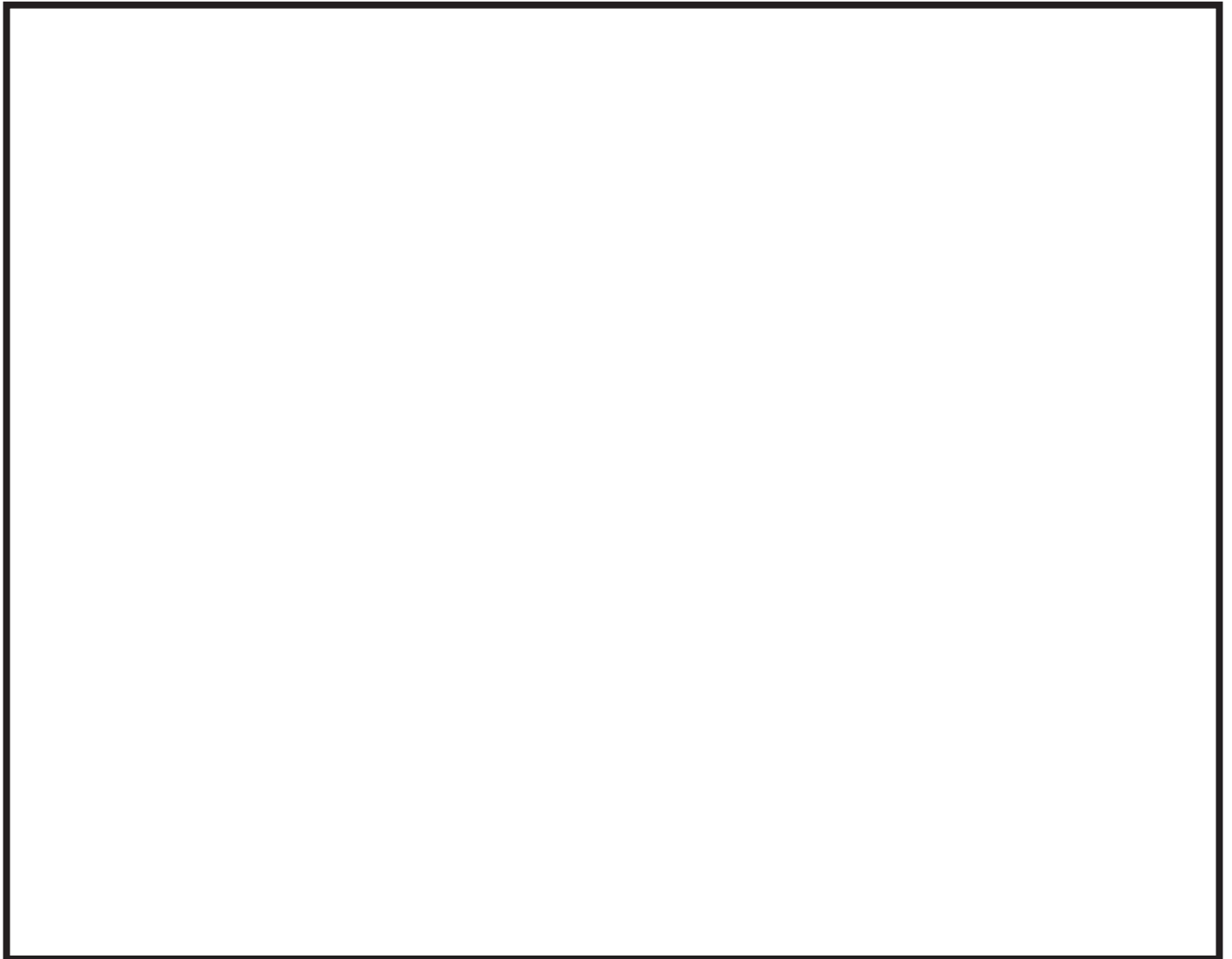
3-9

# Activity

## Create a TA

Working in a small group, generate a list of characteristics describing the model TA. Using the characteristics generated, draw the perfect TA.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



© Mary-Beth Doyle, *The Paraprofessional's Guide to the Inclusive Classroom*  
Used with the permission of the author.

# Activity

## Create A Job Ad

Working in small groups, create a fun newspaper ad for the position of TA

---

**Position Title:**

---

---

**Setting:**

---

---

**Qualifications:**

---

---

**Purpose:**

---

---

**Duties/Responsibilities:**

---

---

**Time/Hours:**

---

Section 4

# In the Classroom



**Note to Trainer:**

This chapter contains multiple activities; you should select those that are most appropriate for your district.

## **In the classroom**

Effective communication skills will help to define your role as a TA, as well as increase student success. Communication with the teacher will clarify the needs of the class and the type of assistance that would be effective and successful in that particular classroom. Communication with students is essential for promoting self-esteem, establishing trusting relationships, and making sure that they understand the tasks.

### **Communicating with Teachers and Colleagues**

In the position of a TA, you will be communicating with the general education and special education teachers, students, your supervisor, other TAs and, on some occasions, the parents or principal. Each teacher runs his/her classroom differently and may have a different perspective regarding acceptable behavior. Being aware of these details will create an effective atmosphere. At times both parties may need to compromise; however, even that needs to be communicated.

Communication is essential for:

- Achieving the goals for the classroom
- Delineating the responsibilities of each team member
- Learning each other's expertise

Understanding roles and assignments

- Planning and carrying out learning activities
- Coordinating approaches with students
- Providing information to teachers on student progress and behaviors
- Building positive relationships with students, teachers and other staff

*Project PARA – University of Nebraska at Lincoln – Available at <http://www.para.unl.edu>*

# Examples of Communications:

## 1. Understanding the Teacher's Style

What do you need to know about the teacher to get started?

- teaching styles
- discipline strategies
- supervisory style

*A mutual understanding of how a teacher teaches and disciplines is necessary for the team to be effective.*

**2. Reporting Student Performance, Behavior and Social Skills** - The TA is responsible for reporting his/her observations about students to the teacher. In some situations, such as in the lunchroom or specials (electives), the TA may observe the students' performance more frequently than the teacher.

Why is this information important, and how can the TA keep records?

- This reporting will help the teacher review and modify lessons.
- This communication can be on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.
- Keep a notebook or index cards to jot down observations that are important to share.
- There will be additional explanations on observing student behaviors in the chapter on behavioral interventions.

## 3. Building a Common Vocabulary

- Both teachers and TAs must have a common base of reference when sharing information. All must understand the technical language. If this is not shared with the TA, s/he may feel excluded from conversations where unfamiliar language is used.
- If you do not know or understand terms that are being used, ask the teacher or other professional to explain them.

## 4. Observing TAs

- Some school districts have yearly observations or reviews to assess the TA's performance. It would be preferable if this were an ongoing process, even if done informally. In this manner, the TA can be given suggestions as soon as possible. In addition, positive feedback concerning his/her role in the classroom also makes the TA feel a valued member of the team.
- Do not hesitate to ask the teacher to provide you with feedback concerning your performance in the classroom.

*Adapted from © Peytral Publications - An Essential Guide for the Paraprofessional (Hammeken, Peggy)*

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## Becoming a Team:

In order to create an optimal learning environment for the students, the teacher and TA need to become a working team. The responsibility for creating this team lies with both the teacher and the TA. Both need to develop a sense of common purpose and shared meaning. It is important for everyone to create an environment that promotes acceptance, belonging and a sense of community among the students. A trusting positive atmosphere where everyone plays an integral part is the only environment that creates a successful team.

We recognize that the primary responsibility for initiating and maintaining a positive team approach lies with the classroom teachers and administration. In this regard, a separate section has been developed for distribution to the administrators and teachers. However, the following suggestions can help TAs develop relationships with team members:

- Ask questions about assignments
- Adhere to the teacher's standards of classroom behavior
- Be loyal to teachers, students, administrators and other TAs
- Discuss problems with appropriate personnel
- Avoid criticizing other TAs and teachers
- Offer your services to the teacher
- Develop a personal, friendly relationship within the school
- Do not be afraid to ask questions about students and about language (jargon) that is not familiar to you, etc.

## Problem Solving with Other Adults

Some steps to consider when faced with a communication problem with another adult:

- 1. Identify the Problem by putting it in your own words.** Try to use "I" messages. Allow others to communicate their feelings.
- 2. Define and Determine the Cause of the Problem.** Determine the real problem, and generate ideas for the cause of the problem. What behaviors or circumstances lead to problems?
- 3. Identify Potential Solutions.** Brainstorm as many solutions as you can. Do not analyze solutions; just create a list
- 4. Analyze Potential Solutions.** Evaluate each solution, giving each one equal respect. Judge which one would work and what it would entail to be successful. Narrow down the solutions.
- 5. Try to Agree on a Solution.**

*Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at <http://www.para.unl.edu>*



## **Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers**

### **Anatomy of an Effective Team Member**

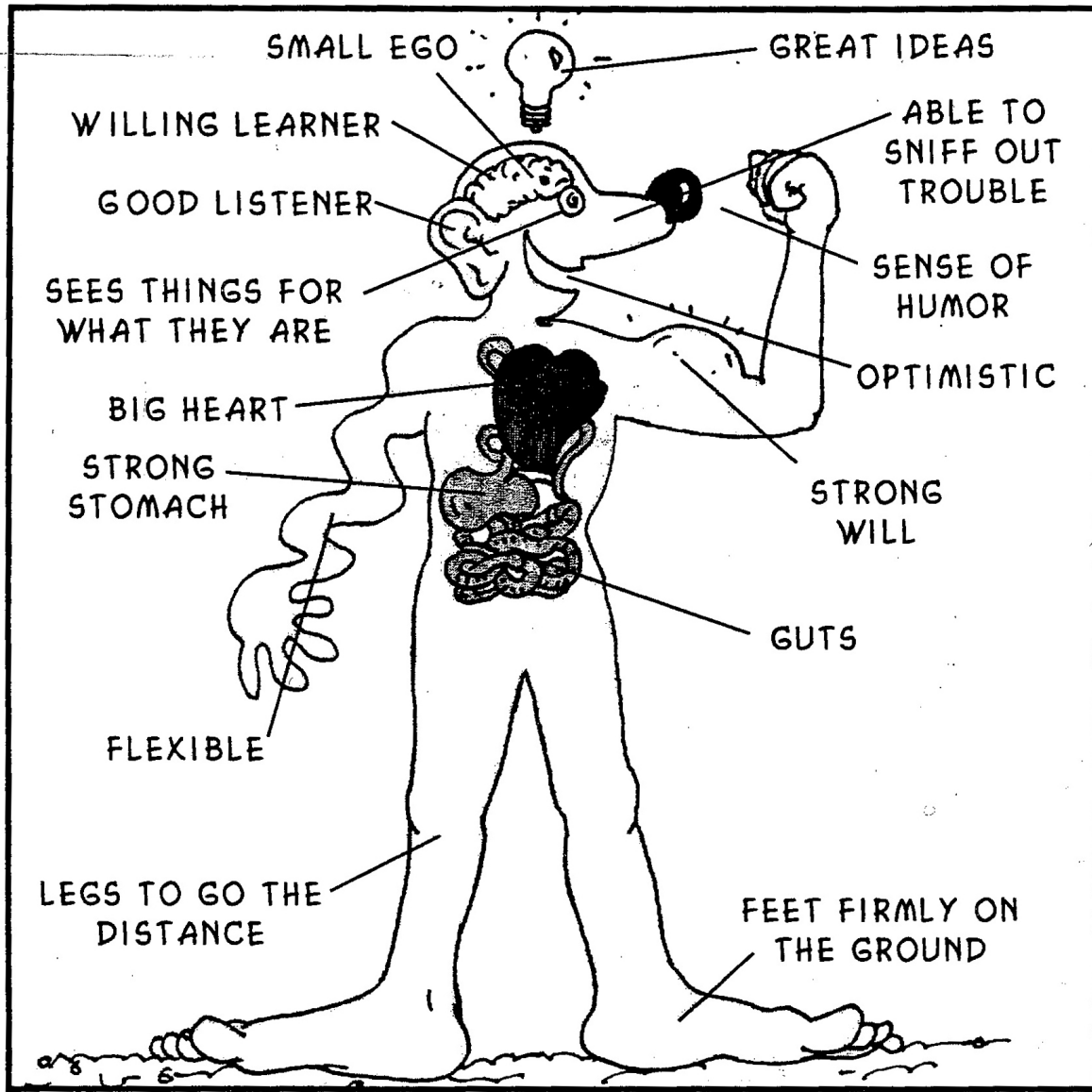
from: Giangreco, Michael

#### **Teaching Old Logs New Tricks - Page 3 (see cartoon on reverse side)**

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# ANATOMY OF AN EFFECTIVE TEAM MEMBER

Giangreco, Michael, *Teaching Old Logs New Tricks*, Peytral Publications

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There are other personnel in the school who provide-services and support to students with disabilities. Below is an overview of some of their responsibilities. Please be aware that their role may vary from district to district.

### **Psychologist**

- Mandated member of the CSE
- Conducts observations of students
- Administers and interprets standardized testing (IQ, achievement and personality)
- Provides counseling
- Designs/implements behavior plans

### **Speech Therapist**

- Administers testing to determine whether speech/language impacts learning in the classroom
- Provides therapy to address speech and/or language deficits
- May provide suggestions for addressing language within the classroom

### **Social Worker**

- Provides counseling to students
- Completes social histories (i.e.: information concerning student's birth, developmental and school history, family information)
- May act as liaison between the home and school

# What's My Role?

### **Nurse**

- Administers and monitors medication
- Performs screenings, such as hearing and vision
- May address other medical and /or physical needs
- Maintains students' medical records

### **Occupational Therapist**

Evaluates and treats:

- Fine Motor Skills (e.g.: handwriting, scissors skills, clothing fasteners)
- Sensory Motor Skills (e.g.: perceiving touch, sound, taste, temperature)
- Visual Motor Skills (e.g.: tracking, copying from the board)
- Activities of Daily Living (e.g.: dressing, hygiene, toileting, eating)

### **Physical Therapist**

Evaluates and treats:

- Gross Motor Skills (e.g.: muscle strength, joint movement, balance, equilibrium, developmental skill level)
- Negotiating the School Environment (stairs, getting on/off the bus)
- Adapted devices (wheelchairs, braces)

## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### **Appropriate Label**

from: Giangreco, Michael

### **Flying by the Seat of Your Pants - page 18 (see cartoon on reverse side)**

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THE MOST APPROPRIATE LABEL IS  
USUALLY THE ONE PEOPLE'S PARENTS  
HAVE GIVEN THEM.

Giangreco, Michael, F. *Flying By The Seat of Your Pants*, Minnetonka, Minnesota, Peytral Publications, 1999

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# Communicating with Students

Communication with students is multifaceted. This section will provide suggestions for the following:

- Establishing relationships with students
- Talking with students
- Effective listening
- Asking questions

## Establishing Relationships with Students

Self-esteem is often an issue for special education students. This may be a result of feeling a lack of success. Part of your job, along with the teachers, is to build self-esteem. There are various ways to do this.

- Listen to what the students are saying. Take their conversations seriously and respond positively.
- Do not be judgmental. You should not pass judgment on how the student perceives a problem.
- Show a genuine interest in each student. Accept each student despite his/her personality, disability, or background.
- Remember what the student tells you. This shows caring and interest.
- Ask if you can help. If you sense the student has a problem, ask him/her quietly if you can help. Do this privately as not to embarrass the student.
- Praise; don't criticize. Think about what you are going to say. Compliment students often and sincerely.
- Nevers - Never compare students! Never make fun of a student! Never do in public what you can handle in private!
- Always keep your sense of humor.

# Talking with Students

When speaking with students, it is the TA's major goal to have them listen, understand, and use the information. To do this the TA should incorporate techniques that encourage openness and acceptance. The older the students are, the more essential the concept of acceptance becomes important to remember that, at times, you may not be able to understand their thought processes, especially when dealing with inappropriate behaviors, but confrontation is rarely a positive action. It is more advantageous to work with the student in a positive, supportive manner.

## The following are helpful hints to promote positive communication:

- First establish positive relationships with students.
  - Encourage students rather than trying to control them.
    - Be positive. Avoid “putting students down.”
      - Organize your thoughts before speaking.
      - Speak in a calm manner.
      - Encourage students to clarify your message.
- Maintain eye contact.
  - Minimize distractions.
    - Let the student know why the topic is important.
      - Explain why and how this information is beneficial for them.
      - Include examples the student can relate to.
      - Avoid discussion of uncomfortable personal issues.
- Reinforce and commend listening.
  - Use simple, specific and unambiguous directives.
    - Teach children to label their feelings properly.
      - Use connective discussion when possible (connect behavior to feelings).
      - Be aware of nonverbal misinterpretations.
      - Make yourself as approachable as possible.

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## **Techniques that promote positive supportive communication:**

- Posture. Speak with the student face to face, making sure you are on or about the same height level.
- Eye Contact. Eye contact reveals your interest in the communication.
- Facial Expression. Your facial expression should match the child's expression and the emotion of the message.
- Distance. Physical distance impacts comfort level. Allow some space between you and the student
- Voice Quality. Your vocal tone and volume should match that of the student's.

## **Effective Listening**

Effective communication is a major factor when working with students of all ages. Being aware of the different processes that impact communication will help the development of effective communication. Listening is also a major factor with regard to communication. We need to model good listening to encourage children to develop appropriate attending skills.

## **Some factors that impact listening:**

1. Listening - Actively hearing what is being said and attending to the message. By empathic listening we show concern and interest in the other person.
2. Bias - Personal prejudice can affect how we listen and how we perceive what a person says. Anger can cause distortion of the message. It is important to make eye contact with the student and use non-verbal communication to demonstrate your intention and interest in the conversation.
3. Environmental Factors - It is hard to concentrate on a verbal message when we are distracted, either externally by the environment or internally by self-distractions. It is difficult to attend to a listener if it is very noisy or your mind is on something else.
4. Short Attention Span - Some people have difficulties retaining verbal messages. Various strategies help in maintaining attention, such as asking questions to clarify the message and staying actively involved.
5. Filtering - If a student is disinterested in the information being shared, he/she may tend to listen for an overview and tune out the rest of the message.

## **Asking Questions**

One of your major responsibilities may be to reinforce and review already learned material. Asking questions effectively is a crucial part of your role.

- Pause before and after asking the questions. This allows student to think about their response.
- Monitor the number and type of questions you ask. Too many questions are not always valuable. Assess which types of questions are more effective.
- Check for understanding. Ask the student to repeat directions, questions or what was said.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

## How do I approach the classroom teacher with a concern or suggestion?

- Form a simple, sincere question and ask it.
- If offering a suggestion, approach by describing the need: “Susie is really having trouble getting all the notes written before you move the overhead sheet. I wonder if there is something I can do to help her
- If you do-not feel-confident with such a direct approach, consider the following:
  - Never imply judgment of teacher’s instructions.
  - Do not make excuses for the student or overly praise the teacher’s actions. It will sound insincere.
  - Keep it simple, short and to the point.
  - Even if you have a suggestion, wait to give it. Give the teacher a chance to think of it first.
  - Older students, especially those in middle and high school, need to take more responsibility and develop more self-advocacy. If your concern is in regard to the student and some activity, you may want to encourage the student to speak to the teacher.

## What if one of the other students in the class asks me about the child with the disability - questions like “What’s wrong with her?”

- It is only natural that students will have questions and these questions need to be addressed - but in a way that won’t give out more information than the students can understand or want to understand.
- Older students can understand like “muscular dystrophy,” whereas younger children need short explanations.
- Be honest and direct. Talk about how the student is like other students, but maybe different in a few ways. Talk to the general and special education teachers. They may have developed some type of explanation for the class.
- Try and talk about the specific behavior or characteristic or condition rather than the child. It’s okay to say, “Sometimes he needs a little help to do the things you can do, and that’s OK.”
- Encourage students to give help and support, but also remind them that people need to learn to do things themselves.
- Instead of asking a student to “take” a student with a disability somewhere, ask the helper to “go with” him or her.

## What if a parent contacts me personally about his/her child?

- It is not uncommon for TAs to be residents, the district in which they work. As a result, parents may encounter the TA in situations outside of school, or may be more comfortable talking with the TA. Whatever, reasons, you may be formally or informally contacted by a parent.
- You need to know your district’s policy and procedure in this regard. This should also be discussed with the general and special education teachers at the beginning of the school year.
- The wrong answer is one that results in confusion, which causes parents to be unsure of whom to contact.
- In many instances the teachers will prefer to handle this directly.

*Adapted from 07-the Personal Planner & Training Guide the ParaProfessional, Wendy Dover, The Master Teacher 1996. Reproduced with the permission of the publisher.*

# Classroom Organization

## Room Arrangements and Routines

Routines are part of the general and special education classrooms. The general education teacher usually establishes these routines. However, since the increase of inclusion and team teaching general and special education teachers often establish these routines jointly. In addition, therapists and special subject teachers frequently either push-in or pullout students from the classes. This results in a need to coordinate schedules and develop blocks of teaching time to make lessons less fragmented and more meaningful. It is important that the TA be aware of these routines, so the classroom runs smoothly. This information can be obtained through discussion with the teacher, observation of the class, and/or review of the weekly schedule.

The physical arrangements of the room also impact the student learning. Generally the teacher determines room arrangements. However, the following list contains some suggestions that will enable you to be of assistance in this regard:

- Children should be seated so that attention is towards the teacher.
- Make sure there are no objects interfering with the view of the chalkboard, screens or other displays that are being utilized.
- High traffic areas should be free of congestion.
- Post schedules on the board, or on the desk (if necessary).
- Make sure you can readily view the student(s) from where you are standing or sitting.
- Students should have easy access to well organized materials and information:
  - Books, supplies and other materials used can be kept in several locations, however each
  - item should be maintained consistently in the same location.
  - Teach students to use folders or other systems to organize themselves.
  - Keep a calendar for projects that are due.
  - Have students keep a checklist of things they need to take home.

## Work Area

It is important to establish your own work area and have the supplies you need readily available. It helps to both organize the classroom, as well as establish your importance and value as a team member.

Following are suggestions of items you might want to have available:

- folder, notebook or index cards for daily notes
- lists of classroom rules, expectations for students, and emergency procedures / information
- a place for classroom materials
- your daily schedule so you can be located if necessary
- information for a substitute, if you are absent
  - Lunchroom and bus responsibilities
  - Your daily schedule
  - Information about students with special medical needs or concerns (i.e.: reminders about time to go to nurse for medication)
- items needed to implement on-the-spot curriculum modifications. See chapter on curriculum modifications for additional information.

# ACTIVITY

## Examine Your Own Non-Verbal Communication

*This exercise will help you identify your non-verbal and verbal behaviors. Reflect on how you would react and answer the following questions.*

**When you are.....**



	How do you stand?	What is your voice like?	What facial expressions do you use?	What gestures do you use?	How is your eye contact?
Angry					
Relaxed					
Happy					
Sad					

*Students pick up on all these cues and make quick decisions as to how they will relate to you.  
Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at <http://para.unl.edu>*

# Activity

## Communication Problem Solving: Pass the Envelope

*This activity should be modified based on the number of workshop participants.*

1. Divide participants into small groups. Provide each group with a package of index cards.
2. Give each group an envelope with an index card taped to the front. Participants at each table should write a concern regarding communication with one of the following: a teacher, another TA or administrator. (Give a 5-minute time limit)
3. Pass the envelope clockwise to the next table. At that table one person will read aloud the communication concern. Given 2-3 minutes, each person will jot down his/her solution to the problem on an index card and place it in the envelope.
4. The envelope will then be passed to the next table and each member of the group will generate solutions for the concern written on that envelope.
5. Continue this until each group has seen all of the envelopes.
6. Review solutions with all participants.

### **Modifications - You may need to modify the activity depending on the amount of time and the number of participants.**

- If there are many participants, this activity can be done before lunch. The facilitator can choose a few solutions to share with the entire group after lunch.
- Instead of each participant generating a solution, each group can brainstorm 2 solutions.

### **Use the Questions Below - Another option: place one of the following on each envelope or design your own.**

- 1. How can I get the general and special education teacher to communicate?**
- 2. How can I approach the teacher with a concern or suggestion that I have?**
- 3. What do I do if I feel that the regular education teacher really doesn't want me in the classroom?**
- 4. What if the parent contacts me personally wanting information on the child's functioning in the classroom? What about specials where I am the person assigned to accompany the child?**
- 5. How do we explain my presence in the classroom to all the students and parents?**
- 6. How can I have access to the teacher's lesson plans so I can know what we are doing?**

*Questions only from: The Personal Planner and Training Guide for the Paraprofessional, by Wendy Dover.  
© The MASTER Teacher, Inc., 1996.  
(The guide also contains the author's responses to the questions.) Used with the permission of the publisher.*

# Activity

## Communication Case Study

*This activity should be modified based on the number of workshop participants.*

Sharon, a TA at an elementary school, receives a note from Carol, one of the teachers she works with. The note asks her to come to Carol's room, which is across from the cafeteria, at 12:00 to talk about the lesson plans for the following day. When Sharon arrives at Carol's office, she is hoping Carol has decided to let her take a more active role in the classroom.

When she steps into the office Carol is sitting at her desk, eating and talking on the phone. Sharon enters the room, sits down, and waits for Carol to complete her phone call. When finished, Carol resumes eating, while telling Sharon about the following day's plans and how many copies she needs of materials. Sharon waits for a break in the conversation so she can discuss her concerns. However the noise in the cafeteria and the distraction of Carol eating makes Sharon drift off and not pay close attention to the conversation. After one more interruption Carol is ready to end the conversation. Sharon stands up, frustrated that she was unable to discuss her concerns. She decided to reschedule another meeting.

**What were barriers to communication?**

**List 3 possible solutions?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**What would have you done in these circumstances?**

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# Activity

## Open Communication Channels

1. Identify 2 strategies which would encourage communicating with staff and students
2. What are 3 ways that a TA can promote a team approach?
3. If Susie tells you she hates school and all teachers, how would you respond?
4. Sometimes teachers and the TA have different perspectives. What are 2 strategies that can be used to resolve a conflict?
5. List 3 ways you could encourage students to use good listening skills.
6. Good communication is often more than a one-time event. It is built on trust and good relationships. What are 2-3 ways that teachers and TAs can work together to establish these relationships?

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## Activity

**Classroom Routines:** This activity is to generate thoughts about how the room arrangement may impact performance and behavior.

**SITUATION:** Jonathan is a 5th grade child who is extremely distractible. He fidgets with any object he can find; leaves his chair frequently for no apparent reason. He touches peers sitting near him, without any negative intent. With verbal prompting he can attend to a group lesson for a limited amount of time. He performs better in a small group. Although testing reveals that he has the cognitive ability to do the class work, he consistently has difficulty initiating and completing the task.

**Based on this situation think about the following questions:**

1. What are the primary behaviors the teacher is likely to be promoting for this student in the classroom?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What might you do or consider in assessing whether the current arrangement of the room contributes to promoting those behaviors?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Suggest or draw a classroom arrangement that would be advantageous for your students.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. List 3 suggestions for arranging an effective classroom:
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why is it necessary to post and teach rules and procedures for the classroom?

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# ACTIVITY

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- In order to evaluate how you respond to conflict, list the people with whom you occasionally have conflict. Make a check mark next to the way you deal with conflict with these persons.
- You may add or amend the suggestions.
- This activity will be done individually, and does not have to be shared.

PERSON(S)

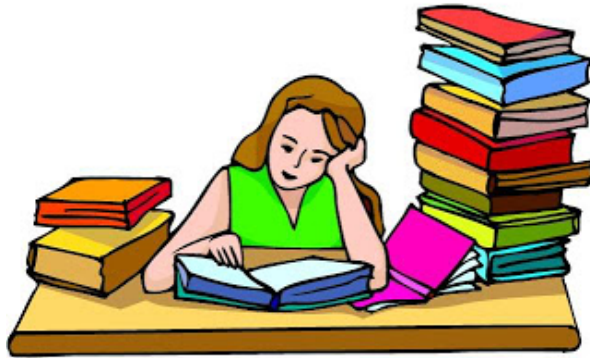
1					Avoid the person.
2					Change the subject.
3					Admit you were wrong even if you're not.
4					Give in.
5					Pretend you agree.
6					Whine and complain until you get your way.
7					Play the martyr. Give in but let the other person know how you suffer.
8					Try to reach a compromise.
9					Try to understand the other person's point of view.
10					Try to find another solution that both find acceptable.
11					Be persistent. Wear down the opposition.
12					Use your authority. Order the person to obey you.
13					Use sarcasm or ridicule.
14					Defend your position.
15					Acknowledge the conflict and work for consensus.
16					Try to eliminate and gain advantage.
17					Other:
18					Other:

*This will help you evaluate how you handle conflict. This is important in communicating effectively with a team.  
It must be mutually understood that disagreeing is advantageous, if resolved appropriately.*

*Adapted from Project PARA University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at [http:// www.para.unLedu](http://www.para.unLedu)*



# Different Strokes for Special Folks



## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### Swimming Lessons

from: Giangreco, Michael

### Flying by the Seat of Your Pants - page 20

The referenced cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restrictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

Purchasing the book would allow you to use the cartoon for training in accordance with the following, as stated in the publication:

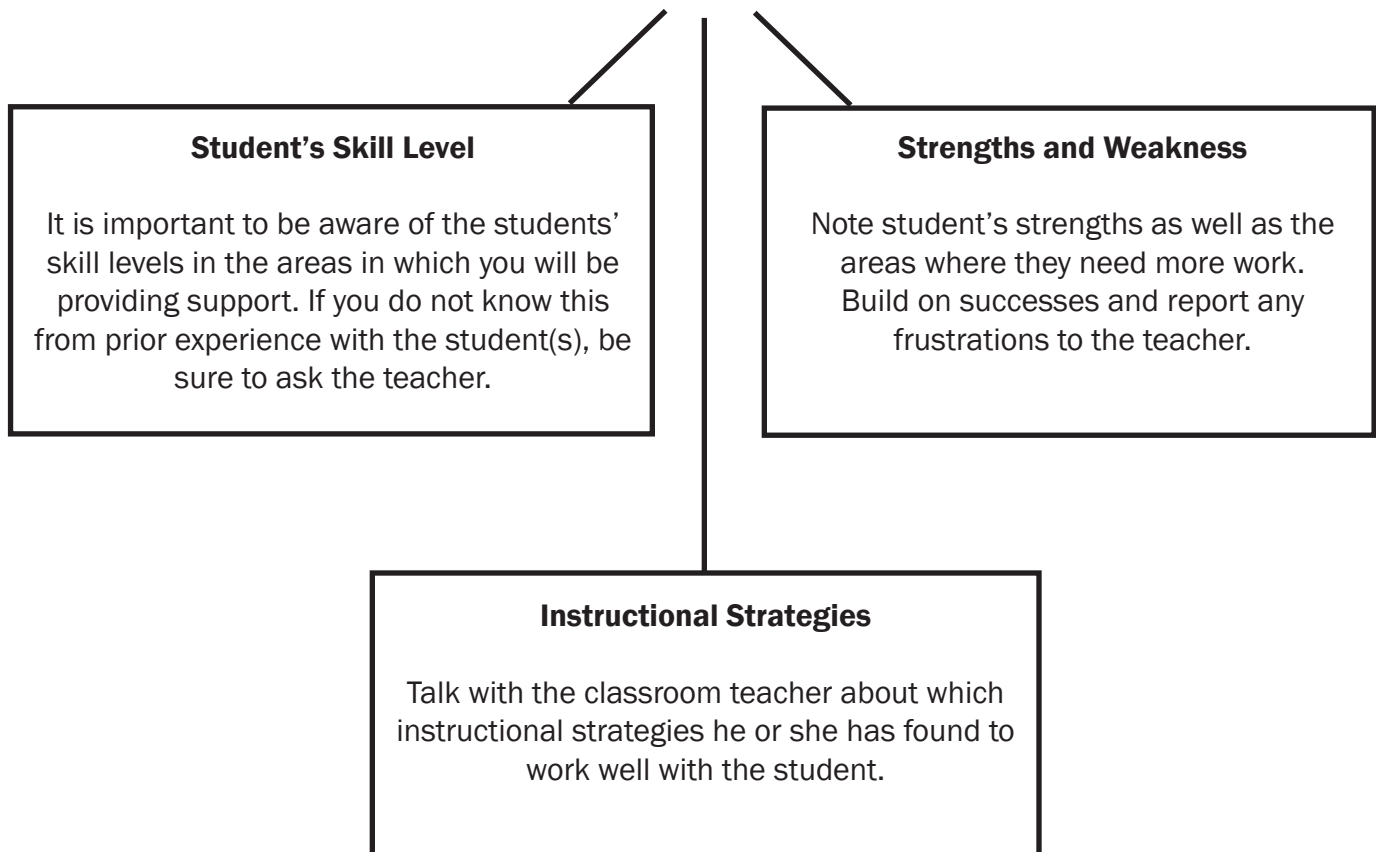
*“Permission is granted to the purchaser to make overhead transparencies of the cartoons for workshops, classes, inservice training, or other educational purposes. Photocopying or other reproduction of this material for entire school districts, workshop participants, classes or inservice training is strictly prohibited.”*

# Instructional Techniques and Modifications

## Supporting Individual Student Needs

For a child in a special education class, it is the responsibility of the special education teacher to design the instruction and curriculum adaptations. For students in inclusion programs, this responsibility is shared by the general and special education teacher. The TA's role is to provide assistance with aspects of instruction. TAs may have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the educational modifications; however they do not have the primary responsibility in this regard.

### What do I first need to know about a student?



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# Guidelines in Making Adaptations

Adaptations are defined as “any adjustment or modification in the curriculum, instruction, environment or materials in order to enhance the participation of a member of the classroom community.” (Udvari-Solner, 1992)

## General Categories of Adaptations:

### 1. Adaptations That Are Constant Over Time

- Each member of the team needs to be acquainted with student specific adaptations, including how the student is supposed to use them and the type of support needed.
- Although the TA may be asked to assist in the development or acquisition, it is generally the responsibility of a certified team member to acquire or design them.
- Wheelchairs, computers, communication systems, individualized picture schedules, calculators.

### 2. Adaptations That Are Short Term and Preplanned

- General and special educators are typically responsible for the designing; however TAs are often asked to assist in the development or refinement.
- These are usually specific to a given instructional unit or activity.
- An example is a worksheet that requires fewer responses.

### 3. Adaptations That Need To Be Developed on the Spot

- These are adaptations that are not planned in advance.
- They are developed or acquired in response to an activity that is about to occur or is in the process of occurring.
- If the preplanned adaptation does not work, the TA may need to quickly develop a new adaptation.

#### Adaptations Should:

- Promote active participation
- Build on the student’s strengths
- Not be overly intrusive

Generating on-the-spot adaptations is an appropriate and necessary component of many activities. The support of the TA in this regard is very important.

*From: ©Dr. Mary Beth Doyle: The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom  
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# Deviating from the Lesson Plan

- The lesson that the teacher planned for 20 minutes is completed in 10 minutes. What should you do?
- The lesson the teacher has prepared is clearly not working. The student is very frustrated. What should you do?

**At times it may be necessary to conclude a lesson before it is finished or before the scheduled time is up. This is especially pertinent if you are a 1:1 TA and are working with the student on an activity that is separate from the other students in the class.**

## When should I deviate from a lesson plan?

(These are guidelines; review with the teacher first)

- A student does not appear to have the basic skills necessary to complete the activity.
- A student is too upset to continue the lesson.
- The student completes the lesson in less than the allotted time.
- The student is making errors on every problem. > The student's behavior does not allow you to continue.
- The student stops and refuses to do anything else.
- The student shows obvious frustration with the lesson.
- Another event or emergency in the classroom requires your immediate attention.

*CAUTION: Students can become adept at finding reasons to delay or terminate a lesson. You do not want to be in the position of having to terminate a lesson frequently. If there are problems with a lesson, adjustments should be made prior to the next lesson. You should try to motivate the student, clarify directions, and provide assistance and examples before deciding to terminate the lesson.*

## Reporting Problems to the Teacher

When the student is having difficulties with a lesson you need to be able to report and explain the problem to your supervising teacher. The supervising teacher needs to know what is going wrong and why. You should note the types of mistakes the student is making and the student's behavior that contributes to the difficulties in completing the lesson. This information helps the teacher work with you to plan more effective modifications for the future.

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# Brainstorming Activity

**First: Break into groups of approximately four people.**

**Instructions: Explain the rules of brainstorming:**

Each group will be given a scenario describing a student. The group will have two minutes to “brainstorm” strategies for curriculum adaptations to address the student’s identified area(s) of need.

Select a recorder to write down the ideas as each one is raised.

In brainstorming, there may be **NO DISCUSSION** as to the appropriateness or value of the ideas raised. The goal is **QUANTITY**. Select a “gatekeeper” to signal (i.e.: tap on glass or table) when opinions or reactions are given about an idea. (A reaction can be non-verbal, e.g., a facial expression indicating a person’s feelings.)

**At the end:**

Do a quick count of how many strategies each group came up with. You may want to have each group present briefly. **However the main point is for the groups to generate ideas and to see how the quantity of ideas generated increases when following the rules of the “brainstorming” model.** Some of the ideas may be helpful for this student, while some may be applicable to other students.

**Scenarios:** Cut and paste on to index cards.

Allison cannot attend to a lesson for more than five minutes. She has difficulty organizing her supplies, carrying out simple tasks and shows limited impulse control.	Jamie has difficulty attending to a story. It appears that she cannot answer a simple recall question or carry out multi-step directions. The teacher is currently reading aloud to the class, and Jamie does not appear to be paying attention.
Brian has difficulty understanding content area materials, as shown by his inability to complete his social studies homework. He often says he cannot read the materials.	Billy participates in his math lesson; however when given work to do independently, he is unable to complete the assignment accurately. The teacher is presently working on multiplication and subtraction of double-digit numbers.
Andrea is a 10th grader in an inclusion program. She is an active participant in the classroom and is an eager learner. She is frequently late bringing in her homework; especially for long-term assignments such as book reports. (This example can also be used for a younger child.)	Courtney has difficulty organizing her thoughts into writing. She also has difficulty with sequencing and her vocabulary is simplistic. She is currently writing an essay comparing and contrasting George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

# Curriculum Adaptations

As discussed, there are situations in which a TA may need to make immediate modifications during an instructional activity. There may not be the opportunity during the course of a lesson to discuss changes that are needed “on-the-spot” with the teacher. Following are some suggestions for possible adaptations. In reviewing this list consider only those modifications that are appropriate for the age and functioning level of the students with whom you work. **In addition, please review this with the classroom teacher to obtain his or her input as to your role and the appropriateness of the modifications for each student.**

*The modifications below are basic and are by no means exhaustive. This is meant as a resource tool for TAs who are receiving initial training. You may have already successfully implemented more sophisticated strategies. In addition, the modifications used should be appropriate to the age and functioning level of the student.*

## Reading Decoding

- Help breakdown words into parts and sound out each section
- Show the student a picture or cards with a vowel sound and a corresponding word
- Provide the decoding rule
- Read aloud to a small group
- Use taped materials (check with teacher first)
- Make a picture frame so the student can see only one or two lines, of text

## Reading Comprehension

- Teach new words / meanings prior to the reading task
- Provide an outline or web prior to the reading task
- Have the student paraphrase short passages of text
- Have student mark unclear text with a sticky note
- Underline or highlight important text
- Have the student sequence story strips
- Have the student generate questions about the text
- After reading, partner the student reading to discuss the content
- Assist the student in using context cues
- Have the student supply missing words in sentences
- Provide the student with a list of discussion questions prior to reading a selection
- Have another student read aloud or use small groups
- Allow the student to listen to an audiocassette prior to the materials being read in class
- Provide a list of vocabulary words in advance
- Assist the student to make connections with prior knowledge and experience
- Use a bookmark, index card, a transparency strip or have the student underline to help him/her keep the place. Let the student use a finger or a pencil as a pointer.
- Provide a glossary prior to the start of the chapter
- Highlight essential information in content area subjects
- Question the student often as s/he reads

## Understanding Language

- Provide visual cues
- Simplify language
- Chunk information
- Repeat / rephrase questions and information
- Check for understanding
- Increase wait time before student must respond

## Spelling

- Use a small note book for the student to list spellings of frequently misspelled words
- Give the student a list of the frequently used rules (You can laminate these rules on index cards)
- Help the student to identify common spelling patterns
- Group words into similar families or those with the same prefix and suffix. Highlight to aid with discrimination.
- Allow the student to select from several words. (You can vary the levels of similarity)
- Review or provide a list of commonly used words
- Have the student spell orally, instead of writing For silent letters – cue student with the number of letters in the word
- Provide a spelling dictionary or other aid for writing tasks

# On-the-Spot and Basic Adaptations

## Written Expression

- Brainstorm or provide a list of words that are relevant to the topic
- Cut the paragraphs apart and have the student sequence them correctly
- Use graphic organizers or webs
- Provide a list of alternatives to overused words
- Brainstorm topics with student
- Give the student a group of related words to use in making sentences or a paragraph
- Allow student to dictate response (but check with the teacher first)
- Provide a proofreading check list

## Mathematics

- Apply real-life situations to more abstract concepts.
- Highlight similar math operations on the page to help the student focus on the operation
- Use manipulatives for computation — e.g.:counters, number line, yardstick
- Box each problem or fold the page in half or quadrants
- Frequently review and reinforce previously taught skills
- Use color coding — for the place value, operations, or thr the number that has-been regrouped
- Encourage the use of think aloud strategies
- Draw lines between the problems. Fold the paper into sections (thirds, quadrants) to limit the number of problems the student can see at a time.
- Draw lines between columns to assist recording in the correct column. Put a paper with dark lines, turned vertically, underneath the student’s paper to create vertical lines for columns.
- Enlarge or highlight the operation sign
- Reduce the amount of copying
- Use flash cards for practicing math vocabulary/facts

## Word Problems

- Number the steps in word problems and identify the operation in each step. Rewrite to simplify vocabulary. Use pictures to describe the problem
- Have the student s write their own word problems
- Have the students restate the problem in their own words
- Word problems - circle key words, box the numbers and underline answer words
- Have the student identify the primary question
- Use pictures to describe the problem
- Simplify the vocabulary for word problems

## Routines/Transitions

- Insure the student understands the routine
- Encourage requests for clarification
- Provide advance notice when there will be a change
- Expect completion within a reasonable amount of time for the student to be successful
- Encourage requests for clarification Provide visual or auditory cues
- Use a timer
- Post routines on the desk or on a laminated card

## Handwriting

- Use student’s non-dominant hand to secure the paper
- Sit 90-90-90. Child’s back straight against back of chair, upper body at 90 degree bend to lower body, knees at 90 degree bend, feet flat on floor
- Mark a starting place with a dot or happy face. If not sufficient, make a green line down the left and a red at the right for “go” and “stop”
- Check with the teacher or therapist as to the proper paper
- Encourage proper pencil grip — but first check with the teacher as to whether she/he can hold it appropriately
- Determine if the task requires writing; change the mode of response to dictating
- Have the student put his/her finger between words as a space
- Do recording for the student or provide copies of notes (check with the teacher first)
- Provide extra space for writing
- Allow student to underline answers

## Staying on Task

- Reduce distractions — seating location, materials on/near the desk. Provide only what is necessary.
- Vary the activities
- Focus attention on critical information
- Praise on-task behavior
- Use a behavior management system (with the guidance of the team)
- Use manipulatives where possible
- Create a secret signal with the student
- Build in breaks
- Assign the student a helper role — passing out materials, papers
- Seat the student near peers who are more independent workers.
- Check to assess the student’s understanding of task expectations.
- Allow the student to select alternative tasks
- Structure the time so that the student knows how ‘long he/she must work
- Some children need to have something in their hands; try clay or a tension ball.
- Use post-it notes on assignments to alert students to specific sections
- Let students use post-it notes to mark information they need to remember
- Shorten task length



## Study Guides / Worksheets

- Provide page numbers referenced to the readings
- Make sure questions are in the same order as the reading material
- Select or mark materials
- Provide a word bank
- Break material into smaller parts
- Allow student to work with a buddy
- Remove an individual page from a workbook or packet

## Completing 'Work on Time

- Reduce amount of work
- Periodically remind student of the time
- Help the student plan the use of time (schedules)
- Specify exactly what needs to be done for the task to be complete
- Develop checklists
- Use a timer
- Assist student in prioritizing tasks
- Help the student keep a calendar

## Getting Started

- Relate the lesson to things the student already knows or has experienced
- Use cues to begin work
- Give work in smaller amounts
- Provide encouragement
- Sequence work with easier tasks first
- Make sure student knows exactly-what is expected
- Check progress often in the first few minutes
- Give clear directions
- Provide a checklist of the steps involved
- Encourage peer buddies
- Ask the student to help someone else
- Use material the student finds relevant or interesting
- Provide questions prior to beginning reading

## Keeping an Organized Notebook

- Assign a notebook buddy from the class
- Check the notebook frequently
- Have the student number all the pages
- Require the student to keep one notebook for each subject; or use one large ring-binder with a divider for each subject
- Color code pages or notebooks by subject or area. Try to link a meaningful association for each color.
- Have student immediately file pages
- Have student keep a hole punch device

## Keeping Track of Assignments / Materials

- Have materials in the same place all of the time. Teach students to do the same
- Help student keep a calendar in the homework folder to remind them of upcoming projects. Break the project down into tasks with due dates.
- Provide a checklist of the items that need to be taken home each day. This can be on a laminated card for reuse.
- Use a color-coding system for organizing different subjects. The notebooks and folders should be the corresponding color. Try to make the colors meaningful; let the student help in determining the association. (i.e.: social studies is blue because it is the color of the oceans.
- Help student develop a self-checklist monitoring tasks required
- Require an envelope for a big project or one with parts
- Provide nonverbal cues to remind the student to self-check
- Keep extra supplies available
- Ask the student what materials are needed
- Make sure all returned papers are immediately put in the notebook
- Use Post-It notes to mark assignments in textbooks

*This page was adapted from: The Paraeducator's Guide to Instructional and Curricular Modifications, by Wendy Dover. © The MASTER Teacher, Inc., 2001  
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# Be Prepared!

You might want to have the following items available for use when implementing on-the-spot adaptations:

High lighting Pens

Colored Markers - *color color coding*

Red markers or Pens

File Folders - *use to make frames or strips for tracing when reading*

Black Thick Tip Markers

Pencils

Index Cards

Hole Puncher

Assorted Lined Paper

Highlighting Tape

Post It Notes

Post It Flags

Erasers

Ruler

# Maintaining Learner Involvement

Quality learning activities not only increase the amount students learn but also reduce behavior problems and create happier students. Strategies for increasing and maintaining active learner involvement are important to establishing an effective classroom. Students who are actively involved in learning activities benefit more from learning time.

## Increasing Students' Active Involvement In Learning Activities:

- Give complete and specific instructions.
- Provide practice at the appropriate levels of difficulty.
- Make sure the student's learning efforts are correct.
- Actively involve the students in the lesson.

## When Giving Directions:

- Make sure you have the student's attention before giving the directions. Ask for a response from the student to make sure he/she is listening.
- Review as necessary prior to giving directions. Provide a connection to past lessons. P:3 Be simple and specific. The directions must include all necessary information without including extra information.
- Use positive directions; tell students what you want them to do rather than what you don't want.
- Include examples and modeling of the behavior or activity.
- Be ready to reinforce the student when he/she follows the directions. Use praise more frequently when teaching a new task or behavior.
- Directions followed by a reason – As students remember the reason and forget the directions, give reasons first and then directions.

## Practice At The Right Level

- Provide work that is challenging, but not too difficult.
- Do not give unnecessary "busy work" to occupy time. Develop additional activities that are relevant learning activities.

# Avoiding Boredom

Maintaining student interest in learning activities is a key factor in learning involvement. Students may tire of activities before they have mastered the skill. To avoid students losing interest in learning activities:

## 1. Provide a Feeling of Progress:

- When work is difficult or new, more frequent feedback and positive reinforcement may be necessary.
- Make goals accessible; show the intermediate steps to the goal.
- Make it easy to see progress.

## 2. Provide Challenges:

- Find the right level of difficulty. Providing information to the teacher is especially important in this area.

## 3. Adjust To Meet Individual Student Needs:

- Vary the amount of praise.
- Vary the order of presentation.
- Vary the amount of practice at each step. Provide time for questions.
- Monitor each student's knowledge.

While a lesson is being presented, the TA can use a number of strategies to help keep all students actively engaged in the learning activity.

- Make sure that students understand the activity and have all materials necessary before beginning.
- Quickly provide assistance to students who are making errors or who do not know how to proceed.
- Reinforce student learning often.

## Assisting Students During Seatwork

- Move randomly around the room (or in an unpredictable pattern).
- Start with the students most likely to need assistance.
- Stop to correct errors.
- Stop only a short time.
- Monitor other students when you stop.

# Giving Directions

You need to provide clear, concise verbal directions that are appropriate for the individual student.

*Techniques to keep in mind include:*

- Ensure that the student is attending.
- Select vocabulary that is appropriate for the student.
- Explain the purpose of the lesson.
- Present only one step of the assignment at a time.
- Ask questions or have the student repeat what s/he has been told as a check for understanding.

## Modeling

The objective of modeling is to demonstrate to the students what they are expected to do in the lesson. For example, if a student is expected to fold and number her/his paper a specific way, then the TA may model this to the student by doing it as s/he gives the directions.

## Requests for Help

The way in which “Requests for Help” are dealt with can enhance rapport with students and affect learning outcomes. Helping at the appropriate time prevents a student from becoming frustrated with the activity, but additional direction sometimes distracts the student from the task. The TA needs to understand the difference between providing the answer for the student and effectively guiding the student to find the answer independently.

## Questioning Procedures

- The purpose of questioning is to determine the student’s level of mastery in order to proceed with new instructional activities. Good questioning practices involve:
  - Asking open-ended questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer
  - Ordering questions sequentially to guide a student toward the conclusion
  - Varying the levels of questions
  - Helping organize ideas into generalizations

**There are different levels of questioning which may be used in determining a child’s understanding of materials.**

- *Literal questions ask for specific information*
- *Interpretative questions require a student to use his/her own opinions and thoughts.*
- *Analytical questions are the highest level, and require a student synthesize and apply information in an abstract way.*

# Questioning for Quality

Following are different ways to ask questions of students. These can be used as on-the-spot modifications, to direct attention to the important details, to increase understanding and to develop critical thinking skills.

<b>Recalling</b>	<b>Who, what, where, when, how</b>
<b>Comparing</b>	<b>How is ... similar/different from ...</b>
<b>Identifying Attributes</b>	<b>What are the characteristics of</b>
<b>Ordering</b>	<b>Arrange... Into sequence according to...</b>
<b>Representing</b>	<b>In what other ways might we show / illustrate_</b>
<b>Identifying Main Idea</b>	<b>What is the main issue in ...</b> <b>Retell the main idea in your own words</b>
<b>Identifying Errors</b>	<b>What is wrong with ...</b>
<b>Inferring</b>	<b>What might we conclude from ...</b> <b>What do you think will happen and why?</b>
<b>Predicting</b>	<b>What might happen if ...</b>
<b>Elaborating</b>	<b>Give an example of...</b>
<b>Summarizing</b>	<b>Can you summarize ...</b>
<b>Verifying</b>	<b>What information supports...</b> <b>How might we prove ...</b>

*Project PARA- University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at <http://www.para.unLedu>*

## Questions That Help Get YOU Going with the Lesson

- What is the topic?
- What activities will the students be involved in?
- What instructions were given before the activity?
- What key words and concepts are important for the instruction or activity?

*Adapted from the TA's Guide to Instructional and Curricular Modifications.*

# Making the Language of Instruction Accessible to Students

1. Tell students what you expect them to learn.
2. Explain concepts and key vocabulary words before performing tasks.
3. Model / demonstrate what you want the student to do.
4. Individualize and simplify language as necessary.
5. Ask-the-student to explain the directions he/she has just heard.
6. When giving multi-step directions, provide mental organizers (The first step you need to do is... The second step is...).
7. Encourage the student to ask questions to clarify the task.
8. Build in thinking / processing time after giving directions. Provide additional strategies where necessary (e.g.: written directions, providing a checklist).
9. Check for understanding: Tell me what you are going to do first. Why is it important to learn about gravity?"
10. Be cautious in Use of idioms, figurative language and words with multiple meanings.

## Organizational Cues—prompt students to prepare or sequence information

- The topic is....
- To review ...
- The main ideas to be discussed are...
- To summarize....
- To go back over....
- As a result....

## Emphasis Cues—prompt students to pay attention to important information

- You need to know...
- Please note....
- This is important....
- Let me repeat....
- Remember this next point...
- Listen carefully ....
- I would encourage you to think about...
- Repeat the word or phrase for emphasis
- List words on the board, overhead or student's paper
- Stress certain words
- Use a different tone of voice

from Robi Kronberg 6/00

# Reinforcing Students

Reinforcing students during instructional activities is an important component of your interactions with the student. The reinforcement should focus on the student's demonstration of appropriate behavior or completion of a specific task. Depending on the age and skill level of the student, various techniques can be used. Often verbal reinforcement is appropriate, while other students respond better to stickers, free time, or edible rewards.

## Reasons for Utilizing Reinforcement:

- Provides clear feedback on correct responses
- Provides immediate feedback
- Redirects incorrect responses through questions in a positive manner
- Praises learner for working independently
- Supports and encourages learner throughout the tutoring process

The teacher should explain and demonstrate the method of reinforcement that has been selected for each student. Some students may have specific behavior plans that state when and what types of reinforcement should be used. Be sure to check with your supervising teacher about these types of plans.

## Characteristics of Effective Praise:

Praise can be made more effective by observing the following:

1. Praise must follow the **“if-then rule”**. Praise students only if they are doing what you want them to be doing.
2. Include the **student name** in your praise. It helps to be specific.
3. The praise should be **descriptive**. It should let the students know what they are doing correctly.
4. The praise must be **convincing**. You should use a tone of voice and body language that convey that the praise is genuine.
5. The praise must also be **appropriate for the age and grade** level of the student.
6. The praise is more effective if it is **varied**.
7. The praise **should not disrupt** the class or the lesson.



# Strategies for Praising Students

- Acknowledge and attend to positive behavior while ignoring minor problems.
- Move among students so that you can monitor their work and behavior. Movement should be at random and should include all students.
- Take the opportunity to stop to attend to students and provide praise as you move around the room.
- Scan the room frequently from wherever you are.
- Praise students who are on-task and students who are following the rules and procedures. If a student is not on.. task, first praise the students near him/her who are. ‘
- When you need to remind a student to be on-task, observe the student and follow-up with praise when he/she is back on-task.

**The reinforcement used should be appropriate to the age level of the student. When reviewing the suggestions provided below, you must consider whether you are working in an elementary or secondary school.**

## Examples of Nonverbal Reinforcement

- Smile at the student
- Nod your head
- Give a thumbs-up sign

## Verbal Reinforcement

- “I knew you could do ...”
- ‘Way to go with your ..!”
- “Good job with the ...”
- “I like the way you did ...”
- ‘Wow! I’m very proud of ...”
- “That’s another one you got right!”
- “You have improved on...”
- “Your handwriting is-much neater then before.”
- “You’re doing much better with...”
- “You are really becoming expert at ...”
- “I like the way you are sitting quietly and listening.”

## Other Reinforcement

- Stickers
- Free Time
- Pencils
- Computer use
- Edible rewards
- Help other students
- Extra recess time
- Homework passes

*These are more appropriate for younger students.*

# Every Behavior Serves a Purpose



## **Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers**

### **Different Values and Eras**

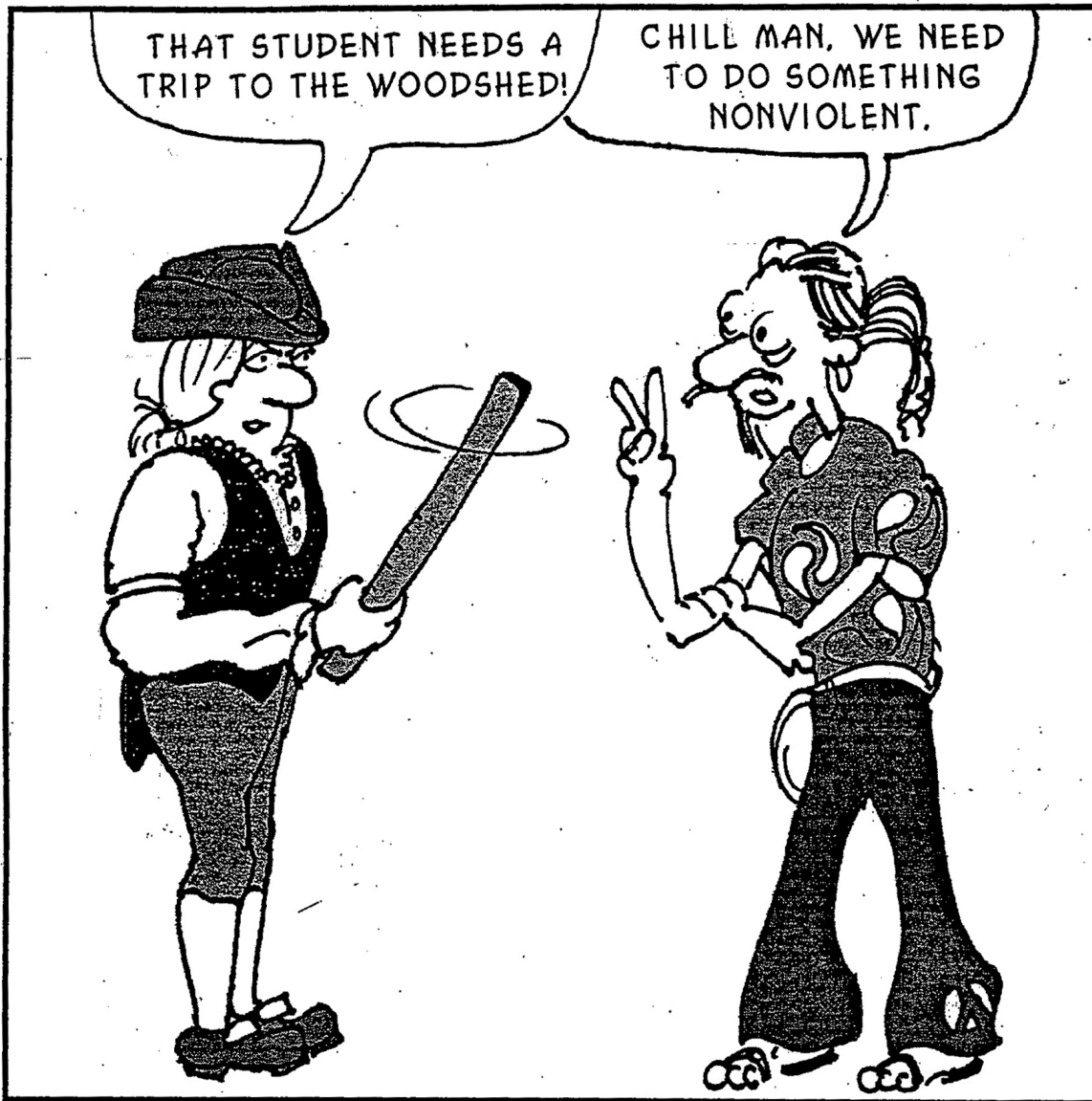
from: Giangreco, Michael

#### **Teaching Old Logs New Tricks - page 91 (see cartoon on next page)**

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Purchasing the book would allow you to use the cartoon for training in accordance with the following, as stated in the publication:

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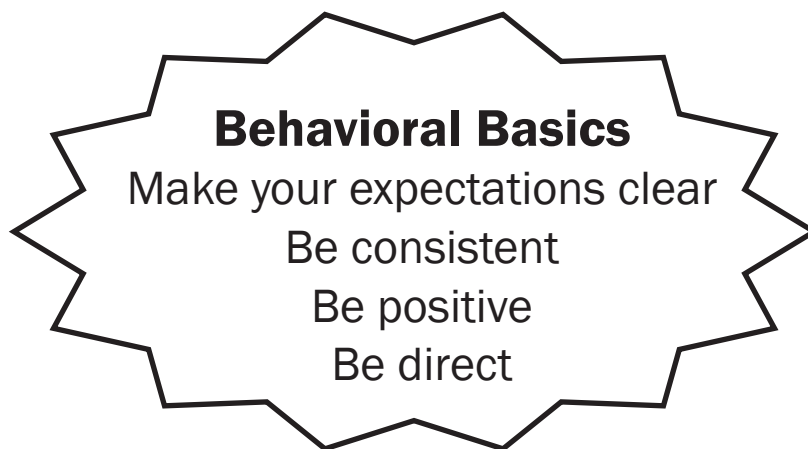
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SCHOOL STAFF FIND IT  
CHALLENGING TO DEVELOP A  
COHERENT BEHAVIOR PLAN WHEN  
THEIR PRACTICES ARE REFLECTIVE  
OF DIFFERENT VALUES AND ERAS.

Giangreco, Michael, F. *Old Logs, New Tricks*, Minnetonka, Minnesota, Peytral Publications, 2000

May Not Be Further Reproduced

**Teasing, screaming, yelling, fighting, tattling, calling out . . . behaviors that challenge even the most seasoned teacher. Why do these behaviors occur? Better yet, what can be done to manage, reduce, or even stop these behaviors?**



## **General Tips**

• **If a student is demonstrating an unwanted behavior, you can:**

### **1. Offer no attention**

Do not look, speak or even touch the student. Offer no negative or positive attention. Act as if the behavior is not happening at all.

### **2. Redirect**

Distract the student, give him/her something to look at, refocus him/her to the activity.

### **3. Praise those students who are demonstrating the desired behavior**

However do not compare their behavior to the behavior that is being ignored.

### **4. Reinforce anything close to the desired behavior**

Catch the student “being good”, and then praise him/her.

*Portions adapted from (1.) ©Doyle, MB.- Paraprofessionals as Members of the Team in Supporting Students with Behavior Difficulties (reproduced with the permission of the author) and (2.) McVay, Patti, MESD*

# Guidelines for Effective Praise

One of the most powerful strategies is providing praise for appropriate behavior. Although the planning of how and when to use praise is the teacher's responsibility, this is a strategy that either the teacher or TA may implement.

## 1. Define the appropriate behavior while giving praise.

Be specific about the positive behavior that the student displays.

Comments about behavior should focus on what the student did right.

The praise should include exactly which part of the student's behavior is acceptable. This serves to clearly communicate to the student what was good. The probability of any misunderstanding of which behavior meets with approval is then lessened.

**Situation:** The teacher would like to see seatwork done quietly.

**Example:** "That is great that you did your seat work so quietly today."

**Nonexample:** "You didn't disturb others today."

## 2. Praise should be given immediately and used consistently.

The sooner an approving comment is made about appropriate behavior, the more likely the student will repeat the desired behavior.

Students learn more quickly when they are always praised for desirable behaviors.

Consistency between TAs and teachers is important in order to avoid confusion about behavioral expectations.

## 3. The statements used as praise should vary.

When students hear the same praise statement used over and over, it loses its value.

The praise should be in a language that is at their level so they clearly understand which behavior is appropriate.

However, if they feel they are being "talked down to," it is likely the praise will be discounted.

## 4. Praise should not be given continuously or without reason.

If praise is given too frequently or without stating what the student is doing that is "good", then praise loses its value for the student.

## 5. Be sincere with your praise.

Students will notice if you do not mean what you say.

Be aware of your nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and posture.

The praise will not be effective if the student perceives that it is not sincere.

# Praise vs. Punishment

## Why Praise Works

- Praise is readily available as reinforcement for positive behaviors.
- Praise can be administered immediately after the desired behavior.
- Praise can be used over and over again if praise statements are varied.
- Praise may be used in combination with other strategies to increase behaviors.
- Praise can be tailored to a variety of behaviors by being specific about the activity.
- Praise works if the relationship between the student and the person giving the praise is a positive relationship.

## Why Punishment Does Not Work

- Punishment is a less effective means of dealing with unacceptable student behavior.
- Punishment gives attention to the wrong behavior.
- When the TA or teacher pays attention to inappropriate behaviors, those behaviors frequently increase. The student may repeat the behavior just to get attention. For some students, attention of any kind is desirable.

# Instead of Saying...

## **“Don’t run....”**

- Walk.
- Walk, please.
- Thank you for walking.
- You can run outside.
- Walk slowly.
- “Walking feet”.
- We walk in the hallways.
- I like the way \_\_\_\_\_ is walking down the hall.

## **“Stop fidgeting**

- Keep your hands in your lap.
- Let’s stop and take a little stretch.
- Take a deep breath.
- It’s time to sit quietly now.
- Give the student an opportunity to move – i.e.: sharpen a pencil

## **“Stop tapping your pencil....”**

- I’m having a hard time hearing the teacher.
- Please clear your desk.
- Put your pencil away / down.
- (Speak with the teacher. Some students have a need for movement. In this situation, the pencil tapping may need to be modified, such as putting felt on the desk edge so the student can tap quietly, or replace this with another form of movement.)

## **“Stop talking....”**

- Listen.
- Susan is really paying attention. I like that.
- Just 5 more minutes; then we will do something different.

*Adapted from P. McVay, MESD*

6-6



# How to avoid power struggles

- Avoid arguing with a student
- Avoid insisting you are right
- Avoid having the last word
- Avoid getting side-tracked
- Avoid asking questions
- Avoid cornering a child
- Give the student time and space
- Focus more on what the child is doing appropriately
- State the appropriate behavior first

## “No Win” Strategies

**These may work for the day...but we lose tomorrow!**

Yelling

Physical force

Degrading comments

Insulting comments

Humiliation

Put downs

Use of sarcasm

Threats

More negative interactions than positive

Using tense body language, rigid posture, clenched hands

Acting superior

Preaching

Blaming the family

Work that's too easy or too difficult

Mimicking the child

*Students need to be listened to, taken seriously, accepted and respected.  
They deserve to feel genuinely needed for their own personal  
worth, contributions and significance.*

*Adapted from P. McVay, MESD*

6-7

## Non-Intrusive Support Strategies

Strategy	Example
State the Expectations	Remember to tell the student what to do and how you want him/her to do it.
Proximity	Stand closer to the student who is engaged in inappropriate behavior. Do not look at the student; rather keep your focus on the teaching at hand.
Gentle, Kind Touch	Touch the student's shoulder while maintaining focus on the instruction.
Non-Verbal Cues	Smile, nod, make a thumbs-up sign to reinforce inappropriate or appropriate behaviors.
Indirect Verbal Cues	"I like the way Sue is raising her hand."
Direct Verbal Cues	In a quiet and private manner, tell the student exactly how you want him/her to behave. End the statement with a "thank you." Step away from the student. During the interaction act calm and dispassionate, regardless of how you actually feel.
Offer a choice	If the behavior continues, offer the student a choice where the consequences are incompatible with continuing the behavior. For example, "Either put your pencil on your desk or on my desk."

©Doyle, Mary Beth, *Paraprofessional Roles in Supporting Students who Experience Challenging Behavior*

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## Some Final Thoughts.....

Behavior management should be viewed as an opportunity for teaching and not as an opportunity for punishment.

The teacher and TA should attempt to use similar management criteria and techniques.

Consider the impact on the student's best interests.

Avoid embarrassing students.

Suggestions should be in the form of constructive criticism, given in private.

Never engage in a power struggle. Strive for win/win.

Thank students when they are trying to improve. Use praise immediately, consistently and sincerely.

Do not touch a student who is upset

Keep teachers informed.

Documentation should be objective and free of emotion.

Recognize your own feelings and frustrations about tough students. Try not to take their behavior personally.

"Catching" kids being good can make a big difference. Think about how nice it is to get some praise for something you've done; nice, isn't it!

*Adapted from Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at <http://www.para.unl.edu>*

6-9

## **Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers**

### **Terrorless Learning**

from: Giangreco, Michael

### **Flying By The Seat of Your Pants - page 81**

The above referenced cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However, we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restrictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

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# Functional Behavioral Assessments for Students with Behavioral Problems

**First of all, based on research and practice, there are four assumptions about behavior that we know are important:**

## **1. Behavior is purposeful.**

In general, all behaviors have some reason or function for occurring. The most common function of behavior is to obtain something or to avoid something or someone. What complicates this process is that the same behavior can be used for both. Therefore, it is important to determine the purpose of the behavior in order to effectively program for eliminating it. If the function of the behavior can be identified, the student can be taught a new, socially acceptable response to obtain the same results.

## **2. Behavior is learned.**

We know that children learn inappropriate or maladaptive behaviors, and with that premise, we can understand that a learning trial process must be implemented so they can learn more appropriate behaviors.

## **3. Behavior is predictable.**

We know that students establish patterns of behavior and part of our analysis should be to analyze the past. Anticipating behavior problems in the school environment demands keen knowledge and familiarity with patterns of student behavior. Increased anxiety, noticeable change in normal behavior, reluctance or refusal to begin new tasks, defiance of authority, striking out, seeking to fail academically, etc., are all examples of behaviors of disruptive students that can be anticipated based on analyses of what had previously occurred.

## **4. Behavior is interactive.**

It is important to evaluate the interactive message that is being communicated. It is the relationship that you create with the child that can make the most significant difference.

*From Eric Hartwig, behavior expert, Marathon County (Wis.), Special Education Department  
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Part 200 NYS Regulations of the Commissioner of Education  
provides the following definition

**FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT** means the process of determining why' a student engages in behaviors that impede learning and how the student's behavior relates to the environment.

The functional behavioral assessment includes, but is not limited to:

- the **identification** of the problem behavior,,
- the **definition** of the behavior in concrete terms,
- the identification of the **contextual factors**, such as environmental, physical, instructional approaches or other events, that contribute to the behavior, including:
  - **cognitive** - memory, problem-solving ability, ability to plan, initiate and/or inhibit behavior, ability to monitor behavior, attention, perception, organizing processes - and
  - **affective factors** — emotional factors such as mood swings, depression, frustration tolerance
- **a hypothesis** regarding the general conditions under which a behavior occurs and probable consequences that serve to maintain it.

Once a functional behavioral assessment has been conducted, a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) for that behavior must be developed and implemented. The BIP must be based on the results of the FBA and, at a minimum, must include:

- a description of the problem behavior
- global and specific hypotheses as to why the problem behavior occurs.
  - *A specific hypothesis is a statement that specifies the events of factors that trigger the behavior and the function that the behavior serves for the student.*
  - *A global hypothesis identifies those broad influences in the student's life, such as health, routines, relationships and student skills that relate to the behavior, and*
- intervention strategies to address the behavior.
- intervention strategies should consider the FBA, the student's strengths and the concerns of the parent.

The behavioral intervention plan should include:

- positive strategies to address the events/situations that trigger a behavior,
- instruction in alternative skills,
- consequences,
- long-term prevention.
- supports needed-by-personnel to implement those strategies. and
- an evaluation tool to measure the plan's effectiveness.

# Purposes of Data Collection and Behavior Observation

Data collection and behavior observation are important activities in the special education classroom. One of the ways in which special education programs provide more intensive services to students with learning difficulties is by more carefully monitoring and adjusting the learning teaching process. The TA can play an important role in gathering and organizing information about student progress. This information is particularly important when the TA is providing all or part of the instruction during a 1:1 or small group format.

## Data-collection and observation provides:

- An objective basis for making decisions and documenting student behaviors and performance.
- More frequent information on student progress.

## Important factors in observing and evaluating student behavior

- One of the problems associated with observing and evaluating student behavior is the accuracy of the results
- In order to be accurate, the observation procedure must be consistent from one observation time to another and from one observer to another.
- A key element in making the observations consistent is the definition of the exact behaviors being observed.
- The accuracy of the observation is improved if the behaviors being observed are defined in an observable and measurable manner. This enables the observer to accurately count the number of times a behavior occurs or determine when a behavior begins and ends.

## Observable Behavior

- Can be noted through one of the senses (seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt).
- Is usually described by action words such as touching, walking, saying, or writing.
- Does not include feelings or intentions, which are inferred from other behaviors.

## Measurable Behavior

- In order to be measurable, a behavior must first be observable.
- An observer must be able to clearly determine whether the behavior is occurring, count the occurrences of the behavior, and/or time the duration of the behavior.
- The easiest behaviors to measure are those that have a discrete beginning and ending.

## EXAMPLES:

1. Johnny talks to other students during silent reading.

This is both observable and measurable. We can hear and see Johnny talking and we can count the number of times Johnny talks or time the length of time that he spends talking.

2. Johnny has a poor attitude toward school.

It is not possible to determine exactly what Johnny is thinking. The teacher who believes this is true must identify exact behaviors that infer Johnny's feelings about school.

*Adapted from Project PARA*

# Activity

**For each statement listed below, indicate whether it is observable and/or measurable or neither. You may work as a group.**

**Observable Behavior** - Can be noted through one of the senses (seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt) and are usually described by action words such as touching, walking, saying, or writing.

**Measurable Behavior** - In order to be measurable a behavior must first be observable. An observer must be able to clearly determine whether the behavior is occurring, count the occurrences of the behavior – and/or time of the behavior.

Behavior	Observance	Measurable	Neither
Johnny calls Mary Lou stupid.			
William is out of his assigned seat.			
Alvin does not understand a concept presented by the teacher.			
Dewaine writes six correctly spelled words.			
Irv is unhappy on the playground.			
Barbara speaks without permission.			
Toni raises her hand to ask for additional help from the teacher.			
Janet doesn't like to work with other students in classroom.			
Donna enjoys reading.			
Lee hits Sheldon in the face.			
Jill taps her pencil on the desk.			
Allen does not complete his worksheet within the class period.			
Charlie participates in class discussion.			
Karen cries during reading class.			
David takes Mary's paper off her desk.			
Reece leaves the room.			



# “A.B.C.” Chart

**Definitions:**

**Antecedent** – The event that happens before the behavior or response occurs.

**Behavior** – Any observable or measurable act of the student.

**Consequence** –The event that happens to the student after the behavior/response has occurred.

**Target behavior** –A desired behavior that does not occur or that occurs infrequently, which we wish to establish or increase. In a behavioral reduction program, it is the inappropriate behavior that is to be decreased or eliminated.

<b>ANTECEDENT</b>	<b>BEHAVIOR</b>
<i>What happened before? Who was there? When did it occur?</i>	<i>Describe the behavior.</i>
<b>CONSEQUENCE</b>	
<i>What was the consequence? How did the adults and children respond?</i>	

**Some Possible Triggers/Antecedents\***

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Difficult Task             | Noise Temperature, space                  |
| Directive or request to... | Interruption in routine                   |
| Unstructured activity      | In close proximity to....                 |
| Transistioning             | Health/Medical (allergies, fatigue, etc.) |
| Unstructured setting       | Negative social interactions              |
| Instructional Pace         |   |

**Some Possible Consequences\***

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Behavior ignored            | Time out                    |
| Reprimand/warning           | Peer attention              |
| Adult attention from...     | Communication with the home |
| Loss of privilege (specify) | In-school suspension        |
| Removal from class          | Out-of-school suspension    |

*\*You may indicate other antecedents or consequences that are not listed above.*

# Helping or Hovering



*Title from: Giangreco, M.F., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T.E., & MacFarland, S.Z. (1997). Helping or hovering?*

## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### **Helping or Hovering**

from: Giangreco, Michael

### **Ants in His Pants - Page 74**

The above referenced cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However, we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restrictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

Purchasing the book would allow you to use the cartoon for training in accordance with the following, as stated in the publication:

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# Fostering Student Independence

## The Helicopter TA

Like a helicopter, hovering over a field site, these TAs hover over their students at all times and in all activities. This is not due to a sense of self-importance; rather Helicopter TAs are selfless in their mission to be all things to all students in their charge. However, the hovering support **hinders**, rather than facilitates learning, by creating **learned helplessness** and prompt **dependency** in students with special needs.

**Learned Helplessness** - the students who are always told how to do things or have things done for them learn not think for themselves and lose confidence in their own ability.

**Prompt Dependency** - the students come to rely on the TAs physical or verbal prompts, rather than their own ability to generate a response.

Even though well intentioned in most cases, unnecessary support does little to facilitate independence and efficacy in the student with special needs. Moreover, it conditions the student to “drop-out” and wait for the assistance or prompt – be it verbal or physical – a situation that is not conducive to promoting competence in these students.

The level of dependency of the student upon the TA will vary, depending on context and circumstance. Consequently, different levels of TA support will be required at different times. The same holds true for behavioral intervention. In an unstructured, distracting situation, Mary would probably need more intensive educational support than she requires to perform the same task in a low stimulation, distraction free environment. Mary may likely need more intensive behavioral support in the less structured situation. Similarly, different levels of skills require different levels of TA support, depending on student variables (i.e. interest or motivation). Hence, the student may require virtually no support to work on a preferred computer activity; whereas he/ she may need more intensive support for a written essay, if this is an area of considerable difficulty for him/her.

**Bottom Line:** TA support for both skill development and behavior must be necessarily fluid and should vary based upon student needs and environmental conditions.

*from How to Be a Para Pro © (with a few additions)  
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May be reproduced as handouts for training sessions.*

An important part of supporting students in a classroom is to discern when you are helping too much. The TA is there to develop independence, not interdependence. Therefore, the classroom teacher, special educator and TA should meet regularly to discuss this issue.

**Think about our goals and our roles in this regard:**

- Our goal is for students to be independent as possible to become self-sufficient adults.
- The ongoing presence of an adult interferes with students' ability to interact with peers.
- It also contributes to making students look "different" or stand out in the educational environment.
- TAs who work closely with students need to fade back prompts. There is a fine line between the appropriate amount of support and too much.
- 

**Stress the importance of the students gaining independence. Constantly ask yourself:**

- What am I doing for the student that s/he can do for himself?
- Am I hovering around the student?
- Am I allowing the student to learn by making mistakes?
- When was the last time the student was able to make a mistake?
- Am I fading back my prompts, or am I moving too quickly?
- What does the student need to learn to do next to become more independent?
- Does the student have independent time to make friends?
- Does the student view him or herself as an integral part of the classroom?
- Does the student participate in group learning without support?
- Am I always standing in close proximity to the student?

The TA must ensure that the student becomes an independent learner. Some TAs think that the student must never make an error. Running to a student's side to avoid making an error hinders learning. Sometimes you must allow the student to make mistakes.

**Some Final Thoughts....**

This may be the most important part of your discussion regarding a student's learning.

*\*-from Doyle and Lee - Quick Guides to Inclusion*

# Activity

## Basic Assumption: At some time we all have “hovered”.

- How many of you are parents?
- Has there ever been an instance where you “hovered” over your own children?
- Parents sometimes hover...Teachers sometimes hover... TAs sometimes hover.
- Our goal is to recognize those responses in ourselves, even if it is after the fact, and think of ways that we could make the student more independent.

**Instructor should:** Provide each table with two different colors of post-it notes.

### Instructions:

1. On one color write: List any ideas for ways you have used, or can think of, for promoting student independence. You may indicate the specific situation. Some possible situations:

- lunch room
- taking care of the student’s materials/supplies
- writing down homework/assignments
- dealing with requests for assistance
- specific academic areas

2. On the other color write: Think of a situation in which you or another individual you have observed has “hovered”. Describe it. In thinking about that situation, what suggestions would you now have for promoting student independence?

3. You may either complete this activity in writing or discuss it as a group.

# Activity

Listen to the scenarios, and think about the following questions. (You can either do this as a whole group or hand out different scenarios to the groups at each table.)

- **What is your initial reaction to the situation as described? Are the TA's actions appropriate?**
- **What else would you want to know in order to decide?**
- **Why is this helpful or not helpful to the student?**
- **What could be done to promote student independence?**

1. The teacher is reading a story out loud. The TA is simultaneously reading the story into Sam's ear, in a loud voice. When it comes time for the students to answer questions on a worksheet, the TA reads the questions and helps Sam find the answers.

2. The class is starting a writing activity. Mary's area of weakness is written expression. As the teacher is explaining the directions, the TA immediately starts jotting down notes on her pad about what Mary could be writing. When the assignment is given out to the class, Mary looks to the TA for direction. The TA reads the assignment to her and suggests, from his/her notes, what the student could write. Mary then paraphrases what the TA has said, while the TA scribes what Mary is saying.

3. The teacher writes the homework assignment on the board. The TA immediately begins copying the assignment onto a paper for Susan. Susan takes the paper and shoves it into her backpack.

4. The students arrive in the class. Johnny goes with Mrs. Jones (the TA) to the back of the room. Mrs. Jones unpacks his backpack, puts his homework and lunch in the appropriate bins and hangs up his jacket.

5. Steven is a ten year old with an attention deficit disorder. The teacher hands out worksheets to the students. As this is occurring, the TA leaves the room. Five minutes pass. The other students begin the task, however Steven does nothing until his 1:1 TA returns. Upon prompting from the TA, the student immediately begins the worksheet and

Initial Reaction	Want to know....
Helpful or Not Helpful	Ideas for promoting independence

# Promoting Independence - Task Analysis

Monitor your interactions with a student over a period of several days. Describe all support provided to the student, recording your actions as specifically as possible. Then brainstorm alternatives that could be tried to encourage more independence. You may want to try this again several times during the course of the school year. An increase in student independence is a reflection of the success of the team's efforts in this regard.

EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED FORM.  
A BLANK CAN BE FOUND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

STUDENT: JOHN DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Task	Describe actual support provided	What is the next step for the student to be more independent? What else could be tried?
<b>Arrival Routine</b>	Accompanied John from the bus to the classroom. Physically assisted him in taking off his coat while giving him verbal cues.	1. Peer buddy to accompany him from the bus, with aide in the vicinity. 2. Model taking coat off and give verbal prompts.
<b>Homework Assignments</b>	Provided him with a written copy of his homework. Checked folder to make sure all homework from the day before had been completed.	1. Provide an outline format on which he can write the assignment. 2. Color - code books and folders and work with him to check that all items are completed.
<b>Classroom Routines</b>	John is verbally prompted for each transition.	1. Picture of schedule /visual prompts 2. Encourage him to watch what his peers are doing. 3. Allow wait time for him to follow or respond.
<b>Reading</b>	Sitting next to him while the teacher is reading. Pointing him to the location on the page. Pointing to pictures that will help in his answering questions.	1. Peer buddy. 2. Move around the room, checking on him periodically. 3. Show him pictures and provide key questions prior to reading.
<b>Mathematics</b>	Class is working on addition and subtraction of double digit numbers.  Student is asking for help and will not work independently.	1. Color code operation signs. Complete all problems of one operation first. 2. Decrease the number of problems. 3. Provide manipulatives or simplify so student can have some initial success.
<b>Writing</b>	John generates his ideas for writing verbally, while the adult scribes.	1. Provide a graphic organizer. 2. Have him work in a small group. 3. Have him generate ideas. TA writes down key words for him to use in writing simple sentences.
<b>Departure Routines</b>	Adult packs up backpack	1. Provide a pictorial list of items needed. 2. Provide verbal prompts of the sequence.
<b>Other</b>	Lunch – He asked for his milk container to be opened for him and his orange cut.	1. Ask his OT what he is capable of doing independently and also for suggestions. 2. Screw top milk – Loosen the top; then have him finish



# Promoting Independence - Task Analysis

Monitor your interactions with a student over a period of several days. Describe all support provided to the student, recording your actions as specifically as possible. Then brainstorm alternatives that could be tried to encourage more independence. You may want to try this again several times during the course of the school year. An increase in student independence is a reflection of the success of the team's efforts.

STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Task</b>	<b>Describe actual support provided</b>	<b>What is the next step for the student to be more independent? What else could be tried?</b>
<b>Arrival Routine</b>		
<b>Homework Assignments</b>		
<b>Classroom Routines</b>		
<b>Reading</b>		
<b>Mathematics</b>		
<b>Writing</b>		
<b>Departure Routines</b>		
<b>Other</b>		

*This should help in making a student becoming as independent as possible.*

# Outside the Classroom



## Now You're the Supervisor

Para-professionals are sometimes required to supervise large numbers of students in open areas of the school, such as playgrounds or cafeterias. Bus duty and hall duty are other non-teaching activities often assigned to teacher aides. Such assignments can present a challenge because there are many more students to monitor and the area to watch may be very spacious. Although these may be difficult assignments, they can provide a great deal of information about the students who may act differently in unstructured settings. The para-professional will also benefit by becoming familiar with other students in the building and may develop a trusting relationship with all of the students because of the more Informal setting.

In order to perform these jobs effectively, para-professionals should receive some guidelines regarding the nature of their responsibilities, emergency procedures, and strategies to use to ensure appropriate student behavior. Very often, teacher aides do not receive such information or training from their supervisors, and they have to rely on another, more experienced para-professional. In this situation, it is important to identify who is your supervisor so that you can bring your unanswered questions to him/her. The most important concern is student safety. The para-professional is entrusted with many more students in this role and must do his/her best to protect all of them.

Adapted from Para Pro: Supporting the Instructional Process

©2000 by Randy Sprick, Mickey Garrison, Lisa Howard, Sopris West Publishing Company

# 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.....

Effective supervision can be achieved by adhering to the following guidelines:

- Be at your post prior to student arrival.
- Be positive in your interactions in order to reduce possible misbehaviors.
- Smile and greet the students in a friendly manner preferably by using their first names.
- Seek out students who have had previous behavior problems and greet them personally in order to develop a good rapport.
- Actively monitor the area by scanning frequently, about every 30 seconds.
- Scan all of the areas even if someone else is assigned to part of the area, as the other aides may need assistance.
- Circulate frequently because physical proximity is effective in preventing misbehavior.
- Use different paths when circulating so that students cannot predict where you will be.
- Anticipate problems and stay in those areas for longer periods of time.
- Be alert to telltale signs of possible misbehavior and try to intercede before an eruption occurs.
- When monitoring students who are lined up, circulate up and down the line and interact with the students to develop relationships.
- Never get involved in conversation with another aide because this will deter you from your primary responsibility-the students.
- Be aware of potential emergencies such as a stranger on the playground or a health crisis.
- Never be wary about calling for a supervisor or school nurse if you are faced with an emergency.
- Model appropriate behaviors by performing the same task you are requesting of the student (i.e. picking up papers).
- Treat students with respect in order to gain their esteem.
- Always try to provide positive attention to students by interacting on a personal basis and by reinforcing responsible behavior.

- Do not embarrass older students by praising them in front of their peers; instead compliment them privately.
- Compliment large groups of students rather than singling out individual children.
- Use frequent non-verbal gestures such as a smile, nod and thumbs up.
- Interact more frequently with students who are behaving appropriately than with those who are misbehaving, because students will learn that they receive more attention when acting positively.

Even when all these guidelines are followed there will be times when students misbehave and corrective actions must be taken. During these unstructured periods students are often encouraged to break the rules because of the informality of the setting. It is human nature for people to push the limits even if they are children.

### **General Tips For Responding to Misbehavior**

- Do not act upset.
- Move toward the problem area.
- Say something positive to students near the problem area.
- When correcting a student for misbehavior, do it in private.
- Ensure s/he is facing away from the crowd and you are off to the side of the student.
- Never ask students to tattle on others.
- Use reprimands in a quiet tone or ask the student to state the rule.
- Never get into a debate with the student.
- Ask the student to stand by you for a brief amount of time and think about the broken rule (about 10 seconds). Then ask what s/he could have done differently.
- Make the location of the misbehavior off limits for the rest of the time period.
- Assign a short time-out.
- Have the student stay with you rather than return to her/his peers.

## Dealing with Cafeteria Problems

- Work the cafeteria line to avoid pushing and poking.
- Separate students who are having problems arguing or pushing by creating bigger spaces or sending one of them to the end of the line.
- Talk to them about their lunch choices for the day to distract them and to move the line faster.
- Establish a signal for silence or immediate attention.
- Encourage the use of polite terminology such as please and thank you and compliment those who do.
- Follow the procedures for dismissal from the cafeteria and allow those who comply to leave first.
- Know where students are to go in bad weather.
- Get training in dealing with students who are choking.

## Playground Supervision

Playground supervision can be the most difficult task a para-professional is asked to fulfill because of its potential for safety problems. This type of duty, however, enables the TA to observe students in a more relaxed setting and to witness social skills, athletic ability and peer acceptance. The following management tips will assist the TA in maintaining safety and compliance on the playground:

- Be aware of playground boundaries and be prepared to stop students from going into off-limits areas
- Know the rules for games and equipment and keep a written list of rules.
- Report any suspicious strangers to the office as soon as possible.
- Make games off limits for those who fight, argue, or bully during competitive games.
- Praise those who stay calm and play fairly.
- Assist students who are bullied with strategies for handling aggressive children.
- If bullying persists report this to the supervisor and consider a referral to the guidance counselor or psychologist.
- Maintain a transition area where students can line up before they are dismissed to go into the building. Interact with the students on line, giving them positive feedback as appropriate.

- After dismissal walk with the stragglers and model for them how to get back to the building quickly. Keep the “slowpokes” with you at the beginning of the recess period for the same amount of time if they waste time going back to the building. Time them with a stopwatch to encourage awareness of dawdling.
- Use effective one-liners for dealing with misbehavior such as:
  - This game is off limits today.
  - Take a time out for 3 minutes and then tell me what you need to do.
  - That looks like fun, but it could be dangerous and you must find something else to do.
  - Either play appropriately or choose another game.
  - Show me the correct way to ...
  - Stand here- I’ll talk to you as soon as I can.
  - Do you think you can rejoin the game now without causing a problem?



# Supervising Hallways and Bathrooms

The supervision of hallways and restrooms is usually not as difficult as cafeteria and playground duties because the area is more confined. There are some specific tips, however, for managing this type of supervision.

- Arrive in the hall prior to the students in order to avoid trouble.
- Stand in the middle of the hallway so that you are visible and you can monitor walking on the right side of the hall.
- Interact with the students by greeting them and using non-verbal body language such as a nod, a smile, or a wave.
- Establish positive communication by intervening immediately when there are signs of horseplay, pushing, loud voices, or disrespect.

Use some standard one-liners such as:

- It's time to go to class
  - Class begins in 30 seconds
  - Keep moving, please
  - Hands, feet, objects to yourself please
- 
- Check hall passes and escort students who do not have passes back to their classroom.
  - Check to determine if visitors have a visitor badge, and ensure that they go to the office if they do not have one.
  - Inquire about the policy for entering restrooms, especially those of the opposite sex.
  - Listen at the door for any sign of inappropriate behavior such as horseplay, smoking, vandalism, messes, and graffiti. Find out if and when you may enter the bathroom to check on students.
  - Know how to follow up on reporting of damage or other problems.

## Final Words of Advice

- Be sure to check with your supervisor regarding specific procedures for handling emergency situations.
- Keep calm and never leave the students unattended. In an emergency, send some students to get the nurse or an administrator.
- Don't try to move a student who appears badly hurt.
- Act the way you expect your students to behave.
- When students are highly agitated speak in a lower voice in order to de-escalate their anger.
- Wear comfortable walking shoes when supervising large areas because you are expected to circulate frequently.
- Treat the students the way you expect them to treat you – with respect.
- Step in immediately at any sign of a problem before it escalates.
- Enjoy the informality of being out of the classroom where you are in charge!

# Final Advice and Bibliography

## Best Advice...

In ending, we would like you to think about the “best advice” you would give someone who is just beginning his or her journey as a TA in a classroom. This list of “Best Advice” was developed by TAs working at Nassau BOCES.

- Learn to be flexible. Don't take anything personally.
- Treat all students as individuals.
- Be kind and consistent.
- Never back a student into a corner.
- Be a good listener.
- Be prepared for everything and anything.
- Always have good sense and a good attitude about your job.
- Tender loving care is more important than frigid discipline.
- If you know a student has a history of being abused, do not touch him or her physically.
- Show the students that you care about them and you will gain their confidence.
- Keep your sense of humor and maintain a good perspective on everything.
- Use common sense in all situations.
- Always be yourself and be honest with the students.
- Have as much patience as possible.
- Give the students much encouragement and praise.
- Don't say anything that you are not prepared to follow-up on.
- Think carefully before you act.
- Keep your eyes and ears open; don't be afraid to report what's happening if you think it is necessary.
- Know where all students in your class are and what they are doing.
- Try to understand the background of each student. When needed, be compassionate.
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
- Look for the good in each student.
- Keep open good lines of communication with your teacher.
- Remember to call for help when you need it and to answer a call for help when you can.
- Always ask for help if you are unsure what to do.
- Know as much about a student as possible, particularly if s/he has any health problems.
- Always leave a student a way out of a situation.

*Nassau BOCES "Teacher Aide Handbook"*

## Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

### Clearing A Path

from: Giangreco, Michael

### Teaching Old Logs New Tricks - page 100

The above, referenced, cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restraints. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

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## Bibliography

\* - Indicates resources that were used for this manual

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These resources are generally available from one or more of the following companies:

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Peytral Publications, Inc.            | 877-PEYTRAL  |
| 2. National Professional Resources       | 800-453-7461 |
| 3. Disability Resource for Professionals | 800-543-2119 |
| 4. Sopris West Educational Services      | 888-819-7767 |
| 5. The Master Teacher                    | 800-669-9633 |

Author or Publisher	Title	Vendor
Dover, Wendy	The Training Video Series for the Paraprofessional	1, 2
Lasater, Johnson & Fitzgerald	ParaEducators: Lifelines in the Classroom Training Modules	3
Morgan, Jill & Ashbaker, Betty	A Teacher's Guide to Working with Paraeducators and Other Classroom Aides	1, 2
Sprick, Randy	Playground Discipline (video and guidebook)	4
Sprick, Randy	Cafeteria Discipline (video and guidebook)	4
Sprick & Colvin	Bus Discipline (video and guidebook)	4
Video Series for Paraprofessionals:	Video 1: Where Do I Start	5
Video Series for Paraprofessionals:	Video 2: Working With Students in the Inclusive Classroom	5
Video Series for Paraprofessionals:	Video 3: Working with Other Adults in the Inclusive Classroom	5
Video Series for Teachers:	Video 1: All About Paraeducators	5
Video Series for Teachers:	Video 2: Preparing for Your Paraeducator	5
Video Series for Teachers:	Video 3: Getting the Most Out of Your Paraeducator	5
Video Series for Teachers:	Video 4: Planning and Evaluating	5