Engineering an Effective Team for Teachers and Paraprofessionals

Kira Austin, Ph.D.
VDOE’s T/TAC at VCU
10 Things Every Paraprofessional Needs You to Know

1. I need to know the laws.
2. I am responsible for many roles and responsibilities.
3. I need a written job description specific to your classroom.
4. I need you to support me in my role.
5. I need you to structure the environment.
6. I need direct supervision from my teacher.
7. I need orientation specific to your classroom.
8. I need on-the-job training to learn new skills.
9. I need direct, regular communication.
10. I need you to lead conflict resolution.
1. I need to know the laws.
No Child Left Behind

NCLB Mandates

- Obtained an associate’s degree (or higher)
- Completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education
- Met a rigorous standard of quality and demonstrate knowledge (formal State or local academic assessment)
- May NOT provide instruction unless working under direct supervision of teacher

NCLB provides the federal definition of the term paraprofessional
“Direct supervision of a teacher...”

What does this mean?
House Bill 325 – April 2012

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted by adding a section numbered 22.1-298.3 as follows:

§ 22.1-298.3. Students with autism spectrum disorders; training required of personnel.

By September 1, 2014, each school board shall ensure that aides assigned to work with a teacher who has primary oversight of students with autism spectrum disorders receive training in student behavior management within 60 days of assignment to such responsibility. School boards may provide such training to other employees, including transportation employees. The Board of Education shall provide training standards that school divisions may use to fulfill the requirements of this section.

2. That the Board of Education, in consultation with Virginia Commonwealth University, shall develop online training that school divisions may use to fulfill the requirements of § 22.1-298.3 of the Code of Virginia. Such training shall be made available to local school divisions free of charge.
Training Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Virginia Department of Education, January 2013

Adopted by the Virginia Board of Education January 10, 2013

Training Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

**General Autism Standards:**

1. Lists and explains the defining characteristics of autism (communication, patterns of stereotypical behavior, socialization, and social skill development) and the impact on the individual as defined by the Virginia Department of Education.

2. Lists and explains the associated characteristics commonly present in autism (e.g. difficulties in sensory processing, motor skills, theory of mind, and imitation) and the impact on the individual.

3. Lists and explains the associated cognitive characteristics and learning styles commonly present in autism (e.g., difficulties in executive functioning, attention, planning, abstract thinking, problem solving) and the impact on the individual.

4. Describes the continuum of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the range of characteristics, abilities, and learning needs that may be present.

**Behavior Standards:**

5. Defines the term interfering behavior and identifies when interfering behavior is or is not present and when intervention is warranted.

6. Explains the components of the behavior chain (setting event, antecedents, behavior, and consequences) and the impact on interfering behavior and identifies examples with students with ASD.

7. Describes the relationship between communication and interfering behaviors and identifies examples with students with ASD.

8. Lists the potential functions of interfering behaviors and identifies examples with students with ASD.

9. Lists and describes the components of a positive behavior support plan and explains how each component can reduce interfering behavior while promoting the dignity and respect of the student.
2. I am responsible for MANY roles and responsibilities.
Who is a Paraprofessional?

- School employees who assist in supporting students under the supervision of a licensed professional such as a teacher.
Paraprofessional Roles

1. Implementing teacher-planned instruction
2. Supervising students
3. Providing behavioral supports
4. Providing communication and social supports
5. Supporting individual student needs
6. Providing personal care
7. Completing clerical/general duties
3. I need a written job description specific to your classroom.
Specific Classroom Job Description

The following duties and expectations are in place to provide the most effective instruction for the students in _______________.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of the Supervising Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. I need you to support me in my role.
Roles of the Teacher

Supporting

- Determine skills student is to work on
- Plan instructional activities
- Determine structure/ modifications / accommodations
- Design reinforcement (what, when, how much)
- Determine sensory strategies (with support of OT)
- Determine communication / social skills
- Design the data collection system
Build a Routine and Create a Schedule
# COMPREHENSIVE AUTISM PLANNING SYSTEM (CAPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time / Person</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Skills/ STT</th>
<th>Structure/ Modifications</th>
<th>Reinforcement</th>
<th>Sensory Strategies</th>
<th>Social Skills/ Communication</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Generalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-8:40</td>
<td>Morning meeting</td>
<td>Ms. Graves</td>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>Verbal praise</td>
<td>Sit in chair</td>
<td>Follow circle time rules (same as peers)</td>
<td>Data sheet 1-5 for circle time</td>
<td>Keeping hands to self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow two and three step directions</td>
<td>Token system - 5 tokens = reward menu</td>
<td>Silky pen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher observation</td>
<td>Follow directions during all activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visual schedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visiting/ greeting peers at recess time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visual schedule and example of name above lunch count</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer Buddy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5-point Scale, Circle time rules posted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. I need you to structure the environment.
Utilize Appropriate Instructional Formats

—Consider groupings and instructional formats so student instructional time is maximized

• Whole Group
• Small Group
• Individual
• Collaborative
• Independent
6. I need DIRECT supervision from my teacher.
Roles of the Teacher

Supervising

- Communicate with the paraprofessional
- Provide pertinent information to the paraprofessional
- Direct and schedule the activities of the paraprofessional
- Provide training to the paraprofessional
In relation to other adults, I see supervision as....
What Does Supervision Look Like?

Is...
- Descriptive
- Specific
- Behaviors
- Feedback

Is Not...
- Evaluating
- Hovering
- Dumping
- Befriending
Results of Poor Supervision
7. I need orientation specific to your classroom.
Introducing Paraprofessionals to your Classroom

(Gerlach, 2003)

1. Take time to interview the paraprofessional and get to know their strengths, weaknesses, and skills.

2. Allow the paraprofessional to spend at least one day observing you and other teachers and students.

3. Provide an initial orientation to your classroom, including:
   - Daily routines
   - Daily and weekly schedules
   - Instructional procedures
   - Classroom rules
   - Lesson plan format
   - Procedures for handling student assignments
4. Explain the activities that take place at the beginning of each class, such as:
   - Attendance
   - Warm-up routines
   - Lunch counts
   - Special services

5. Explain your class policies regarding:
   - Classroom procedures
   - Room organization and clean-up
   - Dismissing the class and small groups
   - Student rules
   - Bathroom rules
Introducing Paraprofessionals to your Classroom
(Gerlach, 2003)

5. Explain your class policies regarding: (continued)
   • Incomplete work, late or missing work, and make-up work
   • Parent and family communication
   • Other

6. Discuss the plans of the students with whom the paraprofessional works

7. Provide a place for the paraprofessional to put his or her things and access email
8. I need on-the-job training to learn new skills.
In your classroom, how do paraprofessionals learn new skills?

I don’t have any formal training for the position but I’ve read all the relevant Wikipedia articles.
Back-mapping
(Mathur, Griller, Clark, & Schoenfeld, 2009)

1. Analyze student behavior data
2. Identify target development areas (e.g. social skills, learning positive behaviors)
3. Identify evidence-based interventions that align with target areas
4. Implement professional development
5. Evaluate professional development
9. I need direct, regular communication.
“EACH OF YOU HAS BEEN GIVEN A SIMPLE, YET POWERFUL TOOL...”
Why is Communication Important?
Communication Strategies

• Set a time or strategy for communicating about student progress and needs
  – Meeting time - face-to-face communications are needed but sometimes having a other tools can fill the day-to-day need for updates and feedback
  – Communication tools - notebook, computer, telephone, bulletin board, cell phone - have a plan for emergency communication needs
Communication Strategies

• Discuss what is important to share with teacher

• Ensure paraprofessionals know their schedule and responsibilities
  – Written schedules and lesson plans help to ensure common understanding and expectations

• Make sure paraprofessionals understand their role in communicating with parents and other team members
10. I need you to lead conflict resolution.
The Costs of Unresolved Conflict

• Less focus on students
• Lost work time and productivity
• Lost employees / high turnover
• Damage to your reputation
• Lowered job motivation
Conflict Management

- How do you work with staff who aren’t implementing what they should be?
- How do you work with staff who are in conflict with each other?

I want a clean fight
What Makes an Effective Team?

Be Clear!

• Clear Goals
• Clear Expectations
• Clear Communication
Teacher Tools for Supervision and Training
Thank You!

Questions or Comments?

Kira Austin, Ph. D.
VDOE’s T/TAC at VCU
kmaustin@vcu.edu