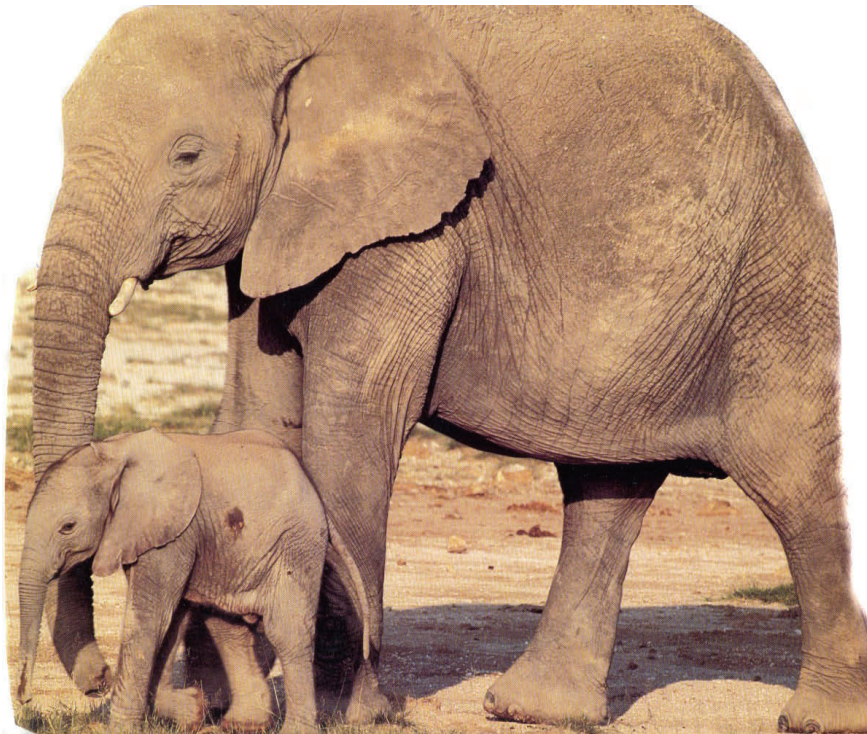


PI-OHI ParaEducator Guidelines



"A person who is severely impaired never knows his hidden source of strength until he is treated like a normal human being and encouraged to shape his own life."

—Helen Keller

Compiled by: Jim Lóser, Planner/Monitor & via Ionia County Intermediate School District

Revised 7-13-2009

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ParaEducator Job Description & Duties

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JOB DESCRIPTION for PARAEDUCATORS

Definition: ParaEducators are employees:

- whose positions are instructional in nature and/or who deliver other direct services to students;

—AND—

- who serve in a position for which a teacher or other certified staff have the ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional programs and student progress.

Legal and Ethical Duties of ParaEducators:

ParaEducators MUST:

- Maintain confidentiality;
- Respect the legal and human rights of children, youth, and their families;
- Follow district policies for protecting the health, safety and well-being of children and youth;
- Demonstrate an understanding of distinctions in roles of various education personnel;
- Follow the directions of teachers, therapists, and other supervisors;
- Follow the chain of command for various administrative procedures;
- Demonstrate dependability, integrity, respect for individual differences and other standard ethical conduct;
- Demonstrate a willingness to participate in training activities to improve performance.

ISD Job Description

ParaEducator for (check one):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative to Alternative | <input type="checkbox"/> Autism Spectrum Disorder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitively Impaired | <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Severely Emotionally Impaired | <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive P.E. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physically Impaired | |

Reports to:

Assigned ISD Administrator and/or Professional

Revised:

12/17/2007

Definition:

The ParaEducator works under the direction of certified staff to support the needs of students with disabilities.

Replacement Qualifications:

- A. High school diploma, or equivalent, with advanced training preferred;
- B. Motivation to work with students with disabilities;
- C. Interpersonal skills which promote positive personal relationships with students, parents, staff, and community.
- D. Physical ability to safely lift students as needed: 50 pounds, or up to 100 pounds with assistance and/or with proper equipment.
- E. Ability to bend at the waist, kneel, stand for extended periods of time, and push and pull heavy objects such as wheelchairs.
- F. Ability to learn disability related information presented by supervisors and to follow the direction(s) of the student's support team.

Job Goal (check one):

- A. Cognitively Impaired, Severely Emotionally Impaired, Alternative to alternative, Physically Impaired: To effectively and efficiently assist the certified staff person and/or classroom teacher in implementing educational and/or behavioral programs for each assigned student in the areas of cognitive, psycho-motor, and affective development or to support classroom programs through emotional monitoring, educational accommodations, and physical assistance to the student.
- B. Autism Spectrum Disorder: To effectively and efficiently assist the certified staff person and/or classroom teacher in implementing social, communication, and/or behavioral programs for each assigned student in the areas of cognitive, psycho-motor, and affective development or to support classroom programs through emotional monitoring to the student.
- C. Early Intervention: To effectively and efficiently assist the professional staff of *SHARE* special education, *Early On, Begin with Babies* program, and *Start Smart* program with all aspects of implementing educational programs and playgroups.

Performance Responsibilities:

- A. Provide individual and group instruction to students as directed by the classroom teacher or itinerant professional staff member.
- B. Implement teacher or professional staff planned activities in a manner that assures optimum learning experiences as well as physical and emotional well being of the student(s).
- C. Assist the teacher/professional in preparing instructional materials, and/or assistive technology equipment, operating A.V. equipment, and assessing student performance.
- D. Complete various clerical duties in an efficient and appropriate manner including, but not limited to: typing, maintaining files, completing database work, copying materials, maintaining and organizing resources, and assisting in preparing state required reports.
- E. Demonstrate competency in behavioral management and maintain control of students assigned to his/her care. Cope with unpredictability.
- F. Demonstrate ability to apply behavior plan developed by the student's team.
- G. Provide supervision and assistance to students as appropriate and necessary during the boarding and unboarding of buses, at mealtime, recess, in lavatories, and on field trips.
- H. Ability and willingness to feed, toilet, and provide for the health needs of students who are motoric and/or require assistance in the bathroom setting.
- I. Ability to monitor student behavior during classroom activities

- J. Assume initiative in providing input to professional staff relative to students' performance and general program ideas.
- K. Communicate relevant work-related information to other staff, and to various others as requested by the teacher or supervisor.
- L. Understand and follow appropriate channels of communication; avoid work-related gossip.
- M. Carry out individual training responsibilities as assigned by the teacher/ professional or building principal.
- N. Perform tasks assigned by occupational, physical, and/or speech therapists as well as any other staff providing related services.
- O. Conduct self in an appropriate manner and maintain a positive image during the work day and at all work-related activities.
- P. Demonstrate excellent attendance, punctuality, and dependability; self-disciplined and a self-starter.
- Q. Abide by all district policies and procedures.
- R. Attend planning and staffing meetings as requested by supervisors.
- S. Attend staff development meetings as directed by supervisor and assume responsibility for learning new skills and implementing new techniques and strategies.
- T. Maintain professional relationships with students and their families and co-workers.
- U. Maintain confidentiality rights of both the student and the student's family.
- V. All other related duties as assigned by the appropriate professional and/or building principal.

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

Non-Instructional Duties the ParaEducator May NOT Perform:

- A. Shall not assume full responsibility for supervising and planning activities.
- B. Shall not take children to clinic, dental, and/or medical appointments unless permission is granted by authorized personnel.
- C. Shall not prescribe educational activities and materials for students.
- D. Shall not regulate pupil behavior by corporal punishment or similar means.

Terms of Employment:

In accordance with master agreement for support staff.

Evaluation:

Performance will be evaluated by ISD administrator and assigned professional in accordance with provisions established by administration/contract.

Approved By:

Supervisor/Title

Date

Reviewed and Agreed to by:

Employee

Date



ATTITUDE

Other's perception of your attitude often is developed from verbal and nonverbal cues. The success of the ParaEducator is often tied to others' perception of attitude. A positive attitude can be conveyed in many ways. For example, just remembering to smile and being friendly toward others can make a difference as well as looking for ways to assist others. When working with students, having a sense of humor, praising their positive efforts, and using positive statements show students that you care about them and that you enjoy what you are doing.

Be willing to take initiative. Show responsibility by looking ahead at what needs to be done and not forcing the teacher to always plan tasks for you. Become eager to assist the teacher, don't sit back and watch. Listen to directions and follow them. If unclear about what is being asked, ask questions!!! Never resort to your own methods unless discussed with the teacher first. Work only on teaching concepts the teacher has planned for the student. If unclear, ask questions. Never show disapproval in a task assigned to you in front of the student or students. Go ahead and perform the task or teaching concept, then discuss it with the teacher after school.

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

Chain of Command

When problems arise (and they will), it is important for you to deal with the conflict directly. In other words, resolve the issue with the person you are having conflict with, and not with other uninvolved coworkers. If the situation is complex, then it would be appropriate to consult with the PI-OHI supervisor for advice.

Because the ParaEducator is given direction from a variety of professionals:

Delegates to ParaEducator:

- Supervising Teacher (both General Education & Resource Teacher),
- Therapy Staff (OT, PT, Speech, VI Specialist, Social Worker, etc.),
- PI-OHI Mentor: Kathy Foote
- PI-OHI Supervisor: Jim Lóser
- Building Principal

it is important for the ParaEducator to adhere to the following Chain of Command:



Chain of Command:

1. Supervising Teacher(s)
2. PI-OHI Mentor (Kathy Foote) and/or Therapists
3. Supervisor: Jim Lóser



Attendance

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



Working with Students

Become aware of the specific needs of the student you are assigned to. Understanding program goals (IEP) helps eliminate confusion and provides a better understanding of what the expectations are for the student. It is important to know specifically what the student's limitations are. At the same time, however it is equally important to know what the student's abilities are. It is very important for our students to be as independent as they can possibly be. Hovering over them and doing too much for them can hinder their progress toward independence.

You are always encouraged to give verbal praise to children or "high fives" for good work. Do be very careful in regard to age appropriate hugging and touching. Grabbing student's arms or hands or any physical reprimanding should never occur unless you have been trained and you have prior approval from your supervisor. Also, never verbally berate a child or call them negative names. If in doubt, ask your teacher.

HOURS/BREAKS/LUNCH

Hours are determined by the needs of the student and program hours of the classroom. On occasion, additional time is required due to meetings or extenuating circumstances. In such cases, an "Altered Work Day" form is to be completed. Classroom teachers are asked to sign the ParaEducator's timesheet every two weeks to verify hours worked. According to the ISD ParaEducator contract, full-time employed ParaEducators are allotted two paid 15 minute breaks and one half hour duty free lunch break. Anyone working less than five hours on a given day, is entitled to one paid 15 minute break. Any additional break time is considered unpaid and should be noted on the timesheet.

PROCEDURES FOR CALLING A SUBSTITUTE



If you need a substitute for when you call in sick, etc., you will need to call the SEMS line (527-6013) to report your absence. The SEMS system will assign a substitute.

When using the SEMS system make sure you complete all the steps and are assigned a SEMS number. Do not hang up when the system gives you your number; follow the voice commands of the system. **IF** you do hang up your call will not record your absence.

ALSO make sure you record your SEMS number on your timesheet, and that the hours that you have called in for match the hours on your timesheet. If you will be taking any time off that you know of in advance please contact Jim Lóser x 1404.

Be sure to call SEMS for monthly PI-OHI ParaEducator Meetings (called in as “business”)

As soon as you have established a weekly routine, be sure to write out your daily schedule and send in to Kathy Foote.

NOTE: Student Absences

On days that your student is absent the ParaEducator will work his/her regular hours and be available to assist in the classroom as needed. If the student is absent for an extended period of time, **PLEASE call Jim Lóser X1404 to be reassigned after the second consecutive day of the student’s absence.**

Substitute Folders



Should include the following items:

- ◆ Student’s Schedule (be specific)
- ◆ ParaEducator’s Schedule, including breaks, etc.
- ◆ Fire & Tornado Plan
- ◆ Detailed Map & directions to other rooms in the building that the student may travel to;
- ◆ Contact person and phone number for questions;
- ◆ List of “down time” activities when the student’s needs are met and the sub has nothing to do;
- ◆ Back-up plan for the TEAM as to what should happen if a sub does not show up to

his/her assignment.



Other Relevant Items:

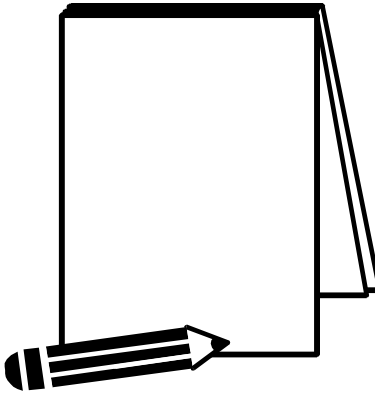
- ◆ Be sure to mark all equipment, especially toileting items in the bathroom, with the student’s name.
- ◆ Be sure to write the word “Confidential Information” on your sub folder with a note for the sub to leave it in the classroom.
- ◆ Let your supervising teacher know where you keep this folder.
- ◆ Ask your substitute to leave a note as to how the day went.



Guidelines for Communication with Student’s Parents

As situations arise, communication with parents should be the responsibility of the general education teacher, resource room teacher, therapist, psychologist, and/or PI-OHI supervisor. These include the following:

- ◆ Student’s educational status;
- ◆ Student’s behavioral status.



Be careful not to position yourself in circumstances in which you would be relaying information to a parent(s), which should be coming from the student’s teacher(s) and/or therapist(s). The best way to handle questions and/or concerns that a parent may address directly to you, would be to redirect them to the teacher(s)/therapist(s) involved with that student. For example, if a parent asks you, “How is Peter doing in reading?” redirect that parent by replying with, “You will need to speak to Mrs. Smith.”

In addition, the following procedures should be part of your daily routine:

- ◆ Be sure to notify assigned teacher(s)/therapist(s) of issues as they arise; keep your supervising teacher informed!
- ◆ If you are asked to write in a home-school notebook, be sure to have your supervising teacher/therapist preview what you have written before it goes home to the student’s parent(s). This is to protect you, as well as the teacher and/or parent(s) from any misunderstandings.



- ◆ Do not call the parent unless you are asked to do so by your supervising teacher/therapist. For situations that you feel uncomfortable calling the parent, you might say, “I don’t feel comfortable calling about that. Would you mind calling him/her?”

Additional considerations/precautions:



- ◆ Do not email parents!
- ◆ Do not allow students to travel in your vehicle unless you have had made arrangements with your ISD administrative supervisor.
- ◆ Do not socialize with your assigned student outside of school (i.e., taking them out to eat, to the movies, etc.)
- ◆ Do not make changes to student’s equipment or school-day procedures without consulting with the team. Examples include:
 - ◆ Do not make changes to wheelchair, communication devices, etc.
 - ◆ Do not use hooyer lift without any training, direction, or supervision;
 - ◆ Do not make changes to student’s feeding unless directed by his/her doctor (i.e., oral feeding student who is tube-fed).

Ethics, Confidentiality, & Professionalism

1. Ethical standards
2. Relationship with the teacher and school
3. Confidentiality
4. Professionalism

Ethical Standards

What Are Ethical Standards?

ParaEducators often face situations where their own interests, a student's interest or the school's interests may conflict. Ethical standards help us to become aware of the correct course of action with regard to a variety of perspectives other than just our own. We need to consider the ethical implications of the decisions that we make and the potential impact on students and other school staff.

Ethics are particularly important because ParaEducators and teachers are placed in a position of authority over students. Students are often vulnerable and have limited influence, relying on ParaEducators, teachers and parents to protect their best interests. ParaEducators are obligated to be as fully prepared as possible to function ethically, as well as legally, in the school environment. Ethical standards provide a framework for reflecting on appropriate behavior.

General Ethical Considerations for Working with Students with Disabilities

As an integral part of the educational team, ParaEducators have a commitment to maintain ethical standards of behavior in their relationships with students, parents, their supervisor, and other school personnel. Teachers have a responsibility to help the ParaEducator develop ethical responses to situations that arise. A code of ethics, such as the one provided below, can establish guidelines for appropriate behavior.

Accepting Responsibilities

- Engage only in non-instructional and instructional activities for which qualified or trained.
- Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students, or others to your teacher or supervisor.
- Recognize that the supervisor has the ultimate responsibility for the instruction and behavior management of children and follow the directions prescribed by him/her.

Relationship with Students and Parents

- Discuss a child's progress, limitations, and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher in the appropriate setting.
- Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel, and only when students are not present.
- Refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a student's handicap, race, sex, cultural background or religion.
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and staff members.
- Present yourself as a positive adult role model.
- Use behavior management strategies which are consistent with standards established by the local school district and classroom teacher.

Relationship with the Teacher

- Recognize the role of the teacher as supervisor.
- Express differences of opinion only when students are not present.
- Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher.
- If issues are not resolved, then discuss concerns only with the teacher's supervisor.
- Do not discuss teacher problems with students, other teachers, ParaEducators or parents.
- Follow the behavior management approach as established by the teacher.

Relationship with the School

- Accept responsibility for improving skills.
- Become familiar with school policies and procedures.
- Represent the school and its programs in a positive manner.
- When problems cannot be resolved utilize the grievance procedures outlined by the local school district.
- The ParaEducator should refrain from:
 1. airing school problems and confidential matters, including personalities, outside of school circles;
 2. discussing administrative, interdepartmental and interschool problems in the presence of pupils; and
 3. gossiping about problems with those who cannot assist in the solution.Ultimately these ethical guidelines mean that both the teacher and the ParaEducator must take responsible action to insure that the best interests of individual students are being met. The ethical responsibility for the proper use of ParaEducators rests with the special education teacher and administrator. The ParaEducator must be specifically prepared to uphold the ethics of the teaching community.

Ultimately these ethical guidelines mean that both the teacher and the ParaEducator must take responsible action to insure that the best interests of individual students are being met. The ethical responsibility for the proper use of ParaEducators rests with the special education teacher and administrator. The ParaEducator must be specifically prepared to uphold the ethics of the teaching community.

Confidentiality

One of the most important aspects of ethical behavior for ParaEducators is the handling and disclosure of confidential information about students and their families. During the normal course of daily activities the ParaEducator comes in contact with a wide variety of information about students. Information may include test scores, behavior, attendance, family problems and many other kinds of personal information. School personnel, including ParaEducators, are required by law to keep this information confidential.

Confidentiality Laws

Confidentiality is an important ethical and legal issue in providing services to students. Both state and federal laws regulate access to information about students with disabilities. The Family Rights and Privacy Act (Rule 51), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Nebraska Administrative Code all address issues regarding the privacy of students and their parents. Confidentiality issues directly affect ParaEducators who have access to records and information as part of their job responsibilities.

Federal Law: P.L. 90-247: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

This federal law addresses the issues of parents' rights, and controls access to records and the confidentiality of those records. Its intent is to protect the privacy of parents and students. These rights are automatically granted to parents (unless there is evidence of divorce, separation, or custody). Under this law:

- Parents have the right to inspect and review school records.
- Parents have an opportunity for a hearing to challenge records.
- Access to personally identifiable information is strictly controlled. Personally identifiable information is defined but not limited to information which includes:
 - student name;
 - names of parents or family members;
 - social security number, etc;
 - personal characteristics;
 - any information which could be used to identify the student.
- Written consent is required for release of information.
- Transfer to third parties is limited after release.
- Rights are transferred to students over the age of 18.

These laws affect the role of the ParaEducator who works or has access to confidential information. Information about a student is confidential and should only be shared with teachers and staff who directly work with the student. ParaEducators who type, collect, and store educational records need to be aware that the written data is confidential and should not be shared with persons outside the educational team.

State Law: Michigan Rule 161

Michigan Rule 161, which provides the guidelines under which special education programs must operate, also addresses the handling of student information. As in the federal law, parents' access to records is guaranteed. The rule also limits those who have access to information to employees of the school. Information can only be provided to other persons with the written permission of the

student's parents. Schools must establish procedures to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the records, identify a person who is responsible for their safekeeping, and provide training for staff members who have access to the records or information.

ALL THESE RECORDS ARE CONFIDENTIAL, except for directory information. If parents do not want this information published and distributed in school directories, parents have the right to request that their child or any portion of the directory information be kept confidential and not included.

DISPOSITION: Originals may be microfilmed and disposed of upon the student's graduation or after a three year continuous absence from school.

Records Not Permanently Retained:

- ◆ Result of standardized achievement, aptitude, ability, interest, and intelligence tests
- ◆ Protocols of tests administered to the class or student body as a whole
- ◆ Psychological examination reports
- ◆ Diagnostic education evaluations
- ◆ School social workers' case study reports
- ◆ School Educational Specialists reports
- ◆ Disciplinary action reports
- ◆ Truancy reports
- ◆ Final report of non-school special consultants
- ◆ Correspondence concerning students
- ◆ Educational, medical, and familial histories, and data specific to individual students
- ◆ Data summary reports
- ◆ Transcripts of school hearings concerning students
- ◆ Parents' written consent permitting special examination of their child
- ◆ Copy of annual notification of parents of their child's placement under programs for children with disabling conditions and the return requested certificate
- ◆ Anecdotal records

Bottom Line Regarding Confidentiality:

- ◆ **Why must confidentiality be maintained?**
 - Federal laws, state regulations, and local policies require it!
- ◆ **Who may have access to written and/or oral information about students and their families?**
 - ONLY teachers and other personnel **RESPONSIBLE** for the design, preparation, and delivery of education and related services; and/or personnel with responsibility for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of a student.
- ◆ **Who should NOT have access to information about the performance level, behavior, program goals and objectives or progress of a student?**
 - Teachers and other personnel **NOT RESPONSIBLE** for the design, preparation, and delivery of education and related services; and/or personnel with responsibility for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of a student.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism is one of the most important points to understand about the role of the ParaEducator. It is the understanding that everything you do has an effect on the development of the student. It is very impor-



tant to plan and think about the things we say and or/do in the classroom. That does not mean that mistakes are not made.

However, it is the act of constantly thinking about what is said and done to promote

the optimum positive learning environment and therefore, eliminating poor modeling and negative learning. The ParaEducator is part of the professional team that has one of the highest responsibilities given to people: the development of young minds (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

Teacher & ParaEducator Roles & Responsibilities

1. Benefits to using ParaEducators
2. Role clarification
3. Instructional duties ParaEducators may NOT perform
4. Examples of responsibilities
5. Decision making & duties of ParaEducator
6. Evaluating student work
7. Team concept
8. Staff relationships and teaming
9. Information to ask the supervising teacher
10. Classroom "Don't"s

Teacher & ParaEducator Responsibilities

Benefits of Using ParaEducators

A ParaEducator is an individual who serves under the direction of a teacher as an assistant in the educational process. ParaEducators are being employed in increasing numbers as a means of extending services to students both with and without disabilities. The impact of the ParaEducator is especially significant because of the primary role they play in delivering learning activities to students. ParaEducators are a viable means of enriching services to students if programs are systematically planned and personnel are properly trained.

A ParaEducator can provide:

- additional positive role models for students,
- increased student learning opportunities,
- more individualized instruction,
- more individual attention to students,
- additional teacher time for planning, instruction, and evaluation,
- greater consistency in delivery of instruction, and
- better monitoring and evaluation of students' educational progress.

Additional benefits which may result from the use of ParaEducators include:

- improved pupil self-concept,
- increased positive pupil attitudes toward learning and school,
- increased appropriate student behaviors in the classroom,
- improved teacher morale,
- improved parent-school relations,
- improved teacher and educator adult-to-adult interpersonal and management skills, and
- increased involvement and understanding of the community within the educational process.

These benefits are based on a number of assumptions regarding the use, preparation, and supervision of ParaEducators. Unless these assumptions are met, most educators would not endorse the use of noncertified personnel in school programs. A basic philosophy about the utilization of ParaEducators might include these tenants:

1. The primary benefit of ParaEducator use is the improvement of instruction and services to students.
2. ParaEducators play a significant role in the delivery of instructional activities to students.
3. Teachers serve as managers of instruction and behavior.
4. Adequate preservice, inservice, and on-the-job training protects students and maximizes the effectiveness of ParaEducators.
5. The instructional outcomes are the responsibility of the teacher, not the ParaEducator.
6. Teachers require both preservice and inservice training to utilize ParaEducators effectively. Training should focus on the roles of decision makers and managers of the educational environment.
7. Teachers play a significant role in contributing to policies concerning ParaEducator use, selection, assignment, training, supervision, and evaluation.

8. School programs must be organized to allow for regular and systematic communication with and supervision of the ParaEducator.
9. ParaEducator programs are centered at an individual school level. Individual schools should develop specific policies regarding their programs. Teachers should further develop and implement these policies in their own educational setting.

ParaEducators provide a viable and powerful means of delivering services to students if they are properly prepared for their duties and provided with adequate support and supervision.

Role Clarification: The ParaEducator and the Supervising Teacher

A clear delineation of roles of the teacher and the ParaEducator is an important element of a successful program. Identification of teacher and ParaEducator roles insures adherence to ethical and legal requirements and serves as a guide in supervision and evaluation. Actual delivery of instruction to the student may be carried out by the ParaEducator under supervision of the instructor.

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Assessing the student's entry level performance;
- Planning instruction for individual students;
- Implementing the goals and objectives of the individualized educational plan;
- Supervising and coordinating work of ParaEducator and other support staff;
- Evaluating and reporting student progress;
- Involving parents in their child's education; **and**
- Coordinating and managing information provided by other professionals.

The teacher also has a number of roles to fulfill in the proper utilization of the ParaEducators in the classroom. Heller and Pickett (1983) have identified specific teacher responsibilities and roles involved in managing ParaEducators:

- Set an example of professionalism in execution of teacher responsibilities;
- Establish the criteria for acceptable job performance of the ParaEducator at the beginning of the school year;
- Provide consistent feedback to assist the ParaEducator in refining skills;
- Communicate the needs of each student to the ParaEducator;
- Establish and communicate the ParaEducator's role in behavior management;
- Assign the ParaEducator responsibilities which facilitate the teacher's ability to provide more direct student instruction; **and**
- Assist the ParaEducator in defining his/her position as an authority figure.

Role of the ParaEducator

Various factors influencing the specific responsibilities assigned to ParaEducators include: characteristics and personalities of teachers, ParaEducators and students; interpersonal skills of both teachers and ParaEducators; the skill level of the ParaEducators; and the physical environment of

the classroom. Individual teachers may vary the responsibilities of the ParaEducators to enhance the program of instruction.

The following list illustrates instructional and administrative duties which could be assigned to the ParaEducator:

- Assist individual students in performing activities initiated by the teacher(s).
- Supervise children in the hallway, lunchroom, and playground.
- Assist in monitoring supplementary work and independent study.
- Reinforce learning in small groups or with individuals, while the teacher works with other students.
- Provide assistance with individualized programmed materials.
- Score objective tests and papers and maintain appropriate records for teachers.
- Perform clerical tasks, i.e., typing and duplicating.
- Assist the teacher in observing, recording, and charting behavior.
- Assist the teacher with crisis problems and behavior management.
- Assist in preparation/production of instructional materials.
- Carry out instructional programs designed by the teacher.
- Work with the teacher to develop classroom schedules.
- Carry out tutoring activities designed by the teacher.
- Operate and maintain classroom equipment including film projectors, overhead projectors, etc.

The following set of guidelines is taken from *Guidelines for Training, Utilization and Supervision of ParaEducators and Aides*, published by the Kansas State Department of Education, Topeka, Kansas in 1977. The list is provided to illustrate more specifically activities which the ParaEducator could undertake in the classroom.

The ParaEducator may perform these instructional duties:

1. Assist in organizing field trips.
2. Read aloud or listen to children read.
3. Assist students in performing activities that have been initiated by the teacher.
4. Hand out papers and collect paper work.
5. Assist with supplementary work for advanced pupils.
6. Provide special help such as drilling with flash cards, spelling, and play activities.
7. Assist in preparing instructional materials.
8. Reinforce learning with small groups.
9. Assist children in learning their names, addresses, telephone numbers, birthdays, and parents' names.
10. Supervise free play activities.
11. Prepare flash cards and charts.
12. Prepare art supplies and other materials.
13. Hear requests for help, observe learning difficulties of pupils, and report such matters to teachers.
14. Score objective tests and papers and keep appropriate records for teachers.

Instructional duties the ParaEducator may NOT perform:

1. Be solely responsible for a classroom or a professional service.
2. Be responsible for the diagnostic functions of the classroom.

3. Be responsible for preparing lesson plans and initiating instruction.
4. Be responsible for assigning grades to students.
5. Be used as a substitute for certified teachers unless he or she possesses the appropriate substitute teacher certificate and is hired as a substitute.
6. Assume full responsibility for supervising assemblies or field trips.
7. Perform a duty that is primarily instructional in nature.
8. Be assigned to work with the most "difficult" students the majority of the day.

Non-Instructional duties the ParaEducator may NOT perform:

1. Shall not assume full responsibility for supervising and planning activities.
2. Shall not take children to clinic, dental, or medical appointments unless permission is granted by authorized personnel.
3. Shall not prescribe educational activities and materials for children.
4. Shall not grade subjective or essay tests.
5. Shall not regulate pupil behavior by corporal punishment or similar means.
6. Shall not transport a student in the ParaEducator's vehicle, unless permission is granted by authorized personnel and appropriate paperwork is completed and signed by the student's parent(s).

Examples of Responsibilities Associated with Teacher/ParaEducator Roles

The teacher and ParaEducator represent a differentiated team. The following comparison highlights the differences in the roles of the teacher and the ParaEducator in various aspects of the program.

Activity	Teacher Role	ParaEducator Role
Classroom Organization	Plans weekly schedule, lessons, room arrangements, learning centers, and activities for individuals and the entire class.	Implements plan as specified by the teacher.
Assessment	Administers and scores formal and informal tests.	Administers informal tests.
Setting Objectives	Determines appropriate objectives for groups and individual children.	Carries out activities to meet objectives under the direction of the teacher.
Teaching	Teaches lessons for the entire class, small groups, and individual children.	Reinforces and supervises practice of skills with individual and small groups as directed by the teacher.
Behavior Management	Observes behavior, plans and implements behavior management strategies for entire class and for individual children.	Observes behavior, carries out behavior management activities as directed by the teacher.
Working with Parents	Meets with parents and initiates conferences concerning child's progress.	Participates in parent conferences when appropriate.
Building a Classroom Partnership	Arranges schedule for conferences, shares goals and philosophy with ParaEducator, organizes job duties for ParaEducator.	Shares ideas and concerns during conferences and carries out duties as directed by a teacher.
Communication with Parents	Teacher and/or appropriate therapist (s) is solely responsible for communicating any academic, behavioral, health, and/or safety concerns.	Keeps teacher/therapist(s) informed as issues arise. ParaEducators are NOT to write, email, and/or call parents. If a concern arises, it should immediately be shared with the supervising teacher/therapist(s).

DECISION MAKING & DUTIES

Prioritized Responsibilities (not necessarily in order of importance):

- Student's paperwork, equipment, devices, etc., should be "set-up" well in advance; before teacher is ready to teach the lesson;
- Help student practice skills previously presented by teacher;
- Programming assistive devices (e.g., *Dynamo*, laptop computers, etc.) according to teacher's request(s) and student's needs (well in advance of lessons to be taught);
- Follow-through with prescribed speech/language therapy goals as directed by Speech Therapist;
- Follow-through with prescribed Occupational Therapist (O.T.) & Physical Therapist (P.T.) goals as directed by O.T./P.T.;
- Help student with assistive devices (i.e., braces, wheelchairs, etc.) as appropriately needed;
- Positioning of student;
- Assisting student in learning self-help skills;
- Toileting and/or assisting student to learn to use the toilet;
- Feeding student as appropriately needed;
- Supervising student during recess, or to and from school bus as appropriately needed;
- Assist teacher with behavior management program for student and/or other students in regular education classroom;

If, **AND ONLY IF**, the above tasks (a-l) have been addressed and the students needs are currently being met, then any of the following activities would be appropriate:

- Requests from teachers or tasks other than working with your assigned student(s):
 - Bulletin boards;
 - Preparation of classroom materials (e.g., cutting/pasting/coloring, etc.);
 - Correcting papers;
 - Xeroxing/making copies, etc.
 - Work with other students

Evaluating Student Work



When checking work, it is very important to understand each teacher's system of reinforcement and rewards. Some rules that are probably universal with all teachers are as follows:

- All papers must be corrected accurately. The paraprofessional needs to ask the teacher if there are any questions about how a paper should be corrected.
- Evaluate papers according to the topic area. That means that it is alright to correct errors in spelling on a math paper, but those errors should not count in the evaluation of the math paper.
- Always remember that every mark that you make is a model for the student. When you print, use your best printing as well as your best grammar. Try also to constantly think about neatness. You cannot expect students to be neat if neatness is not modeled in the classroom. It is also good to remember that students' papers are read by parents. This is good public relations for the team and directly related to the success of the classroom. The teacher should always review all papers corrected/graded by the paraprofessional.
- It is always good to think about the evaluation from the student's point of view. It is very easy for people to make judgments from an adult standard. The evaluation should be a learning experience for the student without causing alienation (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

TEAM CONCEPT



The classroom ParaEducator is a member of a team made up of several different individuals (i.e., teacher, student, parent, O.T., P.T., Speech Therapist). The teacher is the team captain and determines the educational environment and how learning will take place. The

ParaEducator needs to remember that there are many different teaching and learning styles as well as many different educational environments. Some learning environments are very open while some are more structured. The ParaEducator has to change and adjust every year to each teacher's teaching style and educational environment; some ParaEducators have to make these types of changes daily if they work with more than one teacher. It is essential that a ParaEducator be flexible to these changes as well as become a team member of each new teacher's classroom. Research has demonstrated that there are many kinds of environments and teaching styles that support learning. The most successful environments and teaching styles are the ones in which teachers believe in and are positive about what they are doing. Therefore, it is just as important that the ParaEducator be positive as well as believe in what is done in the classroom. Many people believe that the best classroom should be exactly like the one in which they were educated. Be very careful not to let yourself slip into the belief that there is only one best way to learn; being a positive team member will only add to the success of a classroom and/or student (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

Staff Relationships and Teaming

ParaEducators play a valuable role in assisting teachers, and most teachers welcome the help that ParaEducators can provide. ParaEducators are part of a team and a valuable part of the school staff.

Working in a team situation requires frequent and open communication between the teacher and the ParaEducator. Having a ParaEducator in the classroom is an asset, but also requires more work on the part of the teacher. The teacher needs to be able to communicate responsibilities and roles effectively by supervising. The more skills that you can bring to the classroom, the more valuable you will be. These skills are enhanced by a good working relationship between the teacher and the ParaEducator. The ultimate goal of utilizing a ParaEducator in a classroom is to permit the teacher to improve instruction in the classroom.

The ParaEducator should assist the teacher in implementing instruction and following school policies. The ParaEducator should also recognize the position of leadership between the ParaEducator and the students, as well as between the teacher and the ParaEducator. When you accept the assignment of ParaEducator, you also accept the leadership of the teachers to whom you are assigned. ParaEducators are obligated to accept decisions that teachers are required to make, just as they are obligated to back you up on classroom and hallway, playground, and lunchroom decisions that you are required to make. It is necessary that ParaEducators and teachers learn to get along with each other if they are going to work as a team.

Staff Relationships

Most likely the school staff will be made up of many individuals with different working styles and different styles of managing ParaEducators. ParaEducators and teachers who are committed to working as a team should demonstrate mutual respect and good will for one another, as well as towards the students.

The following suggestions can help the ParaEducator develop a positive role in working with teachers.

1. Ask questions about assignments.
2. Attend meetings together.
3. Compliment each other about work that is well done.
4. Do not take each other for granted.
5. Show a sincere interest in one another's work.
6. Adhere to the teachers standards of classroom behavior.
7. Be loyal to teachers, students, administrators, and ParaEducators.
8. Discuss problems with the appropriate personnel.
9. Know and observe the school rules.
10. Avoid criticizing other ParaEducators or teachers.
11. Offer your services to the teacher.
12. Develop a friendly attitude

Information to Ask the Supervising Teacher



- Clarify your hours and days you will be working—ask for a school calendar.
- What records are you responsible for keeping?
- What schedules are you responsible for following?
- When do students arrive and depart?

- What are the playground rules and regulations?
- Where are the supplies kept and how are they obtained?
- How much time will you spend in the general education classroom? How much time in the special education classroom (if appropriate)?

What should you do if you feel that you do not have enough work to do?

TIPS:

- Share in the responsibility of discipline.
- Be patient with both your supervising teacher(s) and your student.
- Share with your supervising teacher your interests, hobbies, background, and experience. You may be able to contribute much to class projects and interest centers.
- Support your assigned school district verbally, enthusiastically, and actively by your involvement in school-related events whenever possible.
- Support your supervising teacher in every way possible!!!

Classroom "DON'Ts"

- 1) Don't talk to another ParaEducator or adult in the back of a classroom during instruction. This will usually draw student attention away from that instruction.
- 2) Unless arrangements have been made with the supervising teacher(s), don't bring pop, coffee, tea, etc., into the classroom or drink and eat anything in front of the student(s). It is rude to the students. The ParaEducator along with the teacher always needs to model appropriate manners.
- 3) Don't discuss a student's health in front of him/her. Often times speaking of a student's health (i.e., "S/he looks sick today") within his/her hearing range can make it difficult to motivate the student if s/he is really not sick. Remember, we are always trying to reinforce to exceptional students this concept: "being handicapped is not a disease or illness (or excuse).
- 4) Don't use a loud voice in the classroom. The ParaEducator should think of themselves as a "guest" in the classroom, not a "disturbance" or "seeker of attention." The teacher's voice should be the loudest voice in the classroom.
- 5) Don't discuss a student's progress or behavior with anyone outside the classroom. Period!
- 6) Don't complain about a problem. Anyone can identify problems and complain about them. Instead, discuss the problem with the supervising teacher and suggest ways to solve the problem.
- 7) When running copies or errands for the supervising teacher, be careful not to leave for long periods of time. The exceptional student who depends on you for toileting might not be able to wait (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).
- 8) Cell phone protocol:
 - Use only during breaks and when not at work;
 - Keep your cell phone on vibrate mode at all times;
 - **NEVER** use your cell phone while in **ANY** classroom.

Emergency Procedures & Other Health/Safety Related Information

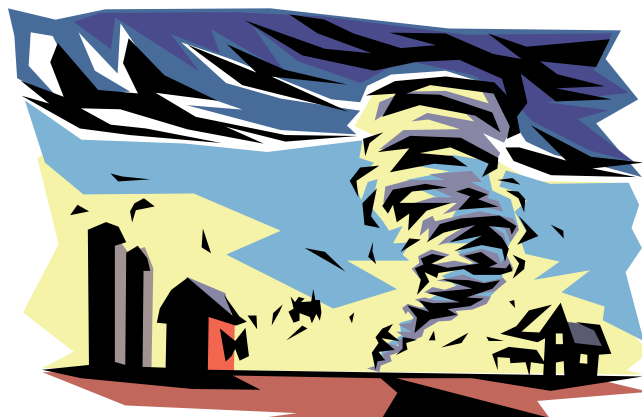
1. Fire & Tornado
2. Universal precautions
3. Seizures
4. Medications, feeding, & wheelchair use
5. Toileting

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Below are general guidelines on how to react to fire and tornado emergencies. Because each PI-OHI student's needs are unique and vary from student to student, specific procedures should be delegated by the Occupational and/or Physical Therapist assigned to that student. Every procedure should also be reviewed and authorized by the building principal.

TORNADO:

Two staff people (one or two additional in case of absences) should be assigned to each PI-OHI student. You will need to complete a *Tornado Plan* form, in which you will need the input from the physical therapist and signatures from the following: the PT, assigned teacher, and principal. Copies of plan should be given to the assigned teacher, the principal, and the PI-OHI supervisor. In addition, one copy should be placed in your sub-folder.



FIRE:

One staff person (one or two additional in case of absences) should be assigned to each PI-OHI student. You will need to complete a *Fire Plan* form, in which you will need the input from the physical therapist and signatures from the following: the PT, assigned teacher, and principal. Copies of plan should be given to the assigned teacher, the principal, and the PI-OHI supervisor. In addition, one copy should be placed in your sub-folder.

Be sure student is belted in wheelchair before maneuvering him/her. If in a powerchair, put it in manual position. PI-OHI student is NOT to drive chair out of building unless either the PT or the PI-OHI supervisor has approved it. Staff person(s) should push student out of building according to emergency pathways designated by building principal.



When maneuvering any wheelchair out an exit in which the door swings out to the outside of building, it is better for the staff person to pull the chair out backwards so that they are able to open the door with their back.

Universal Precautions

In the school setting, it is not possible to know who may be a carrier of an infectious disease and what germs may be present. Persons with infections do not always have outward signs and often are not aware of being infected. However, you should always use “UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS” while you are at school and in other situations that will help protect you from all infectious diseases. Universal precautions included the actions listed below:

- ◆ Hand washing is the single most important technique for preventing the spread of infection and should be done frequently. Wash hands with soap and running water at regular times during the workday. Hands should be washed:
 - ◆ Before and after using the restroom.
 - ◆ Before and after drinking and eating.
 - ◆ Before and after handling food.
 - ◆ After caring for any student, especially those with nose, mouth, or ear discharges.
 - ◆ After contact with body secretions such as blood, urine, feces, mucous, saliva, or drainage from wounds.
 - ◆ After handling soiled diapers, garments, or equipment.
 - ◆ Before and after assisting or training the student in toileting and feeding.
 - ◆ After removing disposable gloves.

- ◆ Common infectious diseases (colds, flu and bacterial infections) may be contracted from dirt and waste encountered in the workplace.

- ◆ Wear disposable gloves before handling blood or body fluids. Wash hands thoroughly after removing gloves, making sure that any blood or body fluids that may be on your hands are completely washed off. Gloves should be used only once. Dispose of the gloves properly after use.

- ◆ Clean room surfaces that have blood or body wastes on them immediately with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved disinfectant or a 1:10 solution of household bleach and water (for example, mix 1 cup bleach to 10 cups of water; the solution should be prepared daily to ensure proper strength.)

- ◆ Carefully dispose of trash that contains body wastes and sharp objects. Use containers with plastic liners for disposal of refuse that contains blood or for any body spills that may contain blood. Always dispose of sharp objects using containers that cannot be broken or penetrated.

- ◆ If the position calls for any administration of first aid, it is recommended that you take a First Aid and CPR class which includes modification of first aid needed to protect the rescuer from infection.

- ◆ Employees whose primary job duties included first aid and/or related health care may receive the Hepatitis B Vaccine at no cost. This immunization is highly effective and given in 3 injections over a 6 month period. For information, contact your supervisor.

Using Universal Precautions will protect you from HIV, Hepatitis B and many other infectious diseases. Using routine hygienic practices will result in fewer illnesses for you and those around you.

Seizures

Tonic-Clonic (Grand Mal) seizures:

The person loses consciousness; the body stiffens, and then falls to the ground. This is followed by jerking movements. A blue tinge around the mouth is likely. This is due to irregular breathing. Loss of bladder and/or bowel control *may* occur. After a minute or two the jerking movements should stop and consciousness may slowly return.

Do...

- Remain calm/provide privacy;
- Time the seizure. Note details;
- Protect the person from injury; help them lie down - (remove harmful objects from nearby);
- Cushion their head;
- Loosen any tight neckwear;
- Look for an epilepsy identity card or identity jewelry (if unfamiliar with person);
- Aid breathing by gently placing them in the recovery position once the seizure has finished;
- Be calmly reassuring; talk him/her through the seizure;
- Stay with the person until recovery is complete.

Don't...

- Restrain the person or interfere with their movements;
- Put anything in the person's mouth;
- Try to move the person unless they are in danger;
- Give the person anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered;
- Attempt to bring them round.



Call for an ambulance if (check with school principal first)...

- You know it is the person's first seizure;
- The seizure continues for more than five minutes;
- One tonic-clonic seizure follows another without the person regaining consciousness between seizures;
- The person is injured during the seizure;
- You believe the person needs urgent medical attention.

Seizures involving altered consciousness or behavior:

- **Simple partial seizures** Twitching, numbness, sweating, dizziness or nausea; disturbances to hearing, vision, smell or taste; a strong sense of déjà vu.
- **Complex partial seizures** Plucking at clothes, smacking lips, swallowing repeatedly or wandering around. The person is not aware of their surroundings or of what they are doing.
- **Atonic seizures** Sudden loss of muscle control causing the person to fall to the ground. Recovery is quick.
- **Myoclonic seizures** Brief forceful jerks which can affect the whole body or just part of it.

The jerking could be severe enough to make the person fall.

- **Absence seizures (Petit Mal)** The person may appear to be daydreaming or switching off. They are momentarily unconscious and totally unaware of what is happening around them.

Do...

- Guide the person from danger;
- Look for an epilepsy identity card or identity jewelry;
- Stay with the person until recovery is complete;
- Be calmly reassuring;
- Explain anything that they may have missed.

Don't...

- Restrain the person;
- Act in a way that could frighten them, such as making abrupt movements or shouting at them;
- Assume the person is aware of what is happening, or what has happened;
- Give the person anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered
Attempt to bring them round.

Call for an ambulance if (check with school principal first)...

- You know it is the person's first seizure;
- The seizure continues for more than five minutes;
- One seizure follows another without the person regaining consciousness between them;
- The person is injured during the seizure;
- You believe the person needs urgent medical attention.

Health & Safety Concerns Related to Medications, Feeding, & Use of Wheelchair

Medications:

State and federal laws prohibit the delivery of medications to students by an adult in the school unless the adult has had specific training under the supervision of a nurse. ParaEducators seldom hold the responsibility for delivering medication at some point, and the responsibility should be regarded seriously. Medications should not be carried by students or kept in classrooms.

Assisting students with eating:

Some students with disabilities require assistance with feeding. This may include completely feeding a student who is unable to feed him/herself; preparing food and giving minimal physical prompts; or visually monitoring students during meal times. In particular, students with cerebral palsy may lack the mouth, head and trunk control, sitting balance, hand function and eye-hand coordination for adequate feeding skills. Many of these students will have individualized feeding programs in which an occupational therapist, speech pathologist or supervisor will provide training. The following, however, are general guidelines for feeding students:

1. Review the Heimlich maneuver, and ask about the maneuver specific to the size of the student being fed.
2. Ask what procedures are used for a student who uses a wheelchair who might be choking.
3. It is recommended that persons who feed students be trained in first aid and CPR.
4. Use disposable non-latex gloves when direct skin contact with saliva is expected.
5. Hand washing is important before and after feeding.
6. Seat the student as upright as possible
7. Sit at eye-level with the student
8. Talk to the student while feeding. Mealtimes are typically social times. Be conversant and pleasant, and do not ignore the student by talking to others. Focus attention on the student.
9. Tell the student when a bite of food is offered and identify the food item.
10. Use a metal spoon, or adapted spoon prescribed for the student. Do not feed the student with a plastic spoon. Do not use a fork, unless directed to do so.
11. Use small amounts of food, approximately ½ teaspoon-size bites. Cut meats and other chewy foods into small pieces. Hot-dogs should be cut lengthwise to avoid a cylindrical shape which may cause choking.
12. Make sure food has been swallowed before delivering the next bite.
13. Place food on center of tongue, press down gently and remove spoon with movement that will encourage the student to clear the spoon with his/her upper lip.
14. Give a few swallows, 1-2 of liquid at a time.

WHEELCHAIR SAFETY:

Placing students in a wheelchair can be a complicated procedure and should be discussed with a supervisor or therapist before attempting to do so. Unless a therapist has a specific procedure that is followed, the following guidelines should be helpful for most students who use a wheelchair:

- 1) Always set wheelchair brakes before placing a student in or removing from a wheelchair.
- 2) Typically, students should be placed in a wheelchair with their buttocks as far back in the seat as possible, so as to encourage upright posture.
- 3) Fasten hip or seat belts first, secure to a snug position after making sure that student is seated as far back in the seat of the chair as possible.
- 4) Fasten shoulder straps and foot straps next.
- 5) Check feet to make sure that they are placed securely in foot rests before fastening straps.
- 6) When escorting or pushing a student using a wheelchair, discuss the destination with the student. Do this regardless of the severity of their handicapping condition.
- 7) Always set the brakes when coming to a stop for more than a few seconds. When outdoors and pushing a student using a wheelchair, turn the chair around and go backwards down short inclines and over curbs. Watch for grating in the sidewalk that front wheels could easily fall into and cause the chair to tip over or forward. Proceed across grating at an angle.



Toileting

Many students with disabilities require assistance using the restroom. This assistance may include:

- ◆ Changing diapers;
- ◆ Assisting students to and from the toilet;
- ◆ Physically assisting a student with pulling pants up or down before and after using the toilet;
- ◆ Visually checking to make sure a student has successfully used the restroom or just reminding a student that it is time to use the restroom.

While assisting with any of the listed procedures that require physical contact, wear disposable gloves. If the student requires a diaper change, request demonstration and supervision the first time. The larger a student is, the more complicated and sometimes difficult the procedures may be. Remember the dignity of the student must be regarded and respected at all times. Even though this aspect of the ParaEducator's job may be perceived as difficult and unpleasant, it still needs to remain a dignified, personal process for the student.

One of the hardest duties of the ParaEducator working with students with physical im-

pairments, is toileting. When assigned a new student, the ParaEducator needs to meet with both the OT and the PT to identify correct lifting and positioning procedures as well as what the goals are for building the student's level of independence. Even for those "experienced" ParaEducators, it will be necessary to consult with the PT and OT every now and then to keep up with any changes and/or progress.

Each student's individual needs and development will vary from the need for maximum assistance to needing minimal assistance. This is one of the areas where the ParaEducator must be patient and positive. This is a very emotional and personal experience for the student (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

Communication & Conflict Management

1. Basic strategies for clear communication between teachers, therapists, & ParaEducators
2. Self-esteem
3. Communicating with students
4. Communication & behavior
5. Tips for interacting with a person with a disability
6. Disability etiquette
7. Managing student behavior
8. Avoiding and resolving conflict



Communication

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

When concerns are voiced, leave visiting with parents and school personnel to your supervising teacher or other staff members. When asked, a simple response is, "You'll need to visit with Mrs. _____ about that."

What kind of communicator are you?

Do you...

- Maintain eye contact while listening?
- Maintain forward posture while listening?
- Use non-interruptive acknowledgements, such as head nodding?
- Display positive genuine facial expressions to demonstrate interest?
- Avoid cutting off individuals who are speaking?
- Use appropriate voice, tone and loudness in conversations?
- Avoid leaning back with arms crossed while listening?

Basic Strategies for Clear Communication —Between— Teachers, Therapists & ParaEducators



There are a number of elements that must be present in any situation to assure clear channels of communication. Some are commonplace and things we take for granted. If the members of the team are not careful and/or do not pay attention, positive communication can be inhibited. Here are some suggestions:

- The attitudes and feelings of both the teacher and the ParaEducator need to be known, respected, and understood. When feelings are not shared and openly communicated, the nature of the relationship will not grow and the team will be less effective. They need to deal openly with their attitudes and feelings toward:
 - Their roles and duties;
 - The students they work with;
 - Instructional styles and management;
 - The value of the other person's contributions.
- An understanding of the similarities and differences among the people involved on the TEAM must be recognized and understood. They may include different points of view about educational strategies, different values, different cultural and religious heritages, different levels of education and experience, and other factors that can affect the working relationship.
- ParaEducators must be willing to ask questions for clarification and/or ask for assistance if the assignment is not understood.
- The team must actively work to create a climate of cooperation, trust, respect, and loyalty by meeting regularly to discuss procedures and techniques that will establish and maintain open channels of communication.

"Self-esteem means knowing that you have value as a person, believing that you're worth something—to yourself, to your friends and family, and to the outside world. It's self-confidence in the tru-



est sense—not a mask of superiority put on to impress other people, but a deep-down feeling of inner worth. It's that voice inside of you that says, 'I like myself. I'm good. I'm capable. I have something positive to offer myself and other people.'"

(Burns, 1990)

Communicating with Students



Talking with Students:

1) Posture:

- Mirror posture of student
- Have your shoulders squared with student's
- Position yourself at their eye level/face-to-face
- Slightly forward lean toward student

2) Eye Contact: Shows that you are interested

3) Facial Expression: Match your expression with student's emotion

3.

4) Distance:

- Not too close or too distant
- About 3-4 feet is the average
- Too close can make student feel uncomfortable
- Too far away can indicate disinterest

5) Distracting Behaviors: Avoid behaviors such as playing with your hands, starting out the window, looking at your watch, etc.

6) Voice Quality:

- Your tone should match the student's
- A quiet voice is calming and draws the listener in

7) Other suggestions:

- Establish a positive relationship with student
- Encourage rather than control
- Speak positively; avoid "putting them down"
- Think before speaking; take your time
- Use the student's name
- When giving directions, get the student's attention first
- Let the student know why the topic is important
- Use questions to involve student

- Avoid discussing student's personal problems if you are uncomfortable with it
- If frustration, anger, or boredom occurs, stop
- Reinforce and support students for listening

Accepting Language of Student:

- Important in fostering relationship with student
- Can open a student up and make them feel more comfortable and at ease
- More likely to see growth

Initiating and Directing Student Responses:

1) Pause effectively before and after asking a question:

- This gives you time to phrase your question
- Allows student to think about their response

2) Use open ended questions rather than closed ones:

- A closed-ended question is answered with a "yes/no" response
- Open-ended questions encourage the student to elaborate

3) Use meaningful questions

4) Check for understanding:

- Ask student to repeat directions, questions, or summarize what was said
- Ask questions to confirm understanding

Communication & Behavior

First it is important to remember that all behavior is communication. Many times the very behaviors that we want to change are the ones that are occurring because the child desires to communicate a want or need to us but is unable to do so with speech. This section is on the dos and don'ts of communication. The don'ts are based on things we have seen being done that were not successful for the child and the do's are based on things we have seen have great success for children.

DON'T:

- ∅ Talk about the child as if they were not there.

Example: right in front of the child heard a child psychologist say, "He's not very bright is he?" I beg to differ whose IQ is lower at the moment. I believe that we always make the assumption that the child

understands all language spoken and unspoken in the room.

- ∅ Bark commands to the child as if they were a dog.
- ∅ Use vague concepts they don't understand. Be happy vs. Show me a smile.
- ∅ Forget to make eye contact with the child even if they aren't making it with you. They will glance your way at times and its best if your eyes are on them.

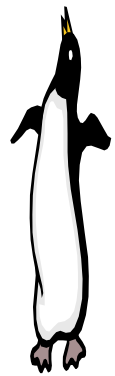


When you are talking to them, **DO**:

- ♥ Use a lilt in your voice.
- ♥ Smile when you talk to them.
- ♥ Make eye contact whenever possible without forcing them to look at you.
- ♥ Talk to them as if they understand every word you say.
- ♥ Break requests into progressive steps: (make sure they have 10 consecutive correct responses at each level before you move to the next)
 - One step commands first (stand here please)
 - Two step commands (go get your shoes and bring them to me)
 - Three step commands (go get a bowl, put it at the table, and sit down for snack)
- ♥ Label all appropriate behavior:
 - "I like the way you are sitting up straight and tall."
 - "You walked down the hallway next to the wall so well."
 - "You did such a good job of keeping your hands at your sides."

(Riffel, L.A., PBS for Bus Drivers)

Communication Tips for Educators Interacting With a Person Who Has a Disability



General Interactions:

- Offer assistance whenever you feel it appropriate but be graceful when others decline to accept offers of help.
- Remember to respect the dignity of all people.
- Remember that a majority of persons with disabilities function at the same intellectual level as the general public. Do not assume that because a person is in a wheelchair, has a visual, hearing, or physical disability, that they are mentally impaired.
- Most persons with disabilities have the same kind of interests and enjoy the same types of activities as persons who do not have disabilities. However, due to limited facility and activity access, persons with disabilities may not have participated with their nondisabled peers.
- Be sensitive about staring at persons with disabilities. Offer an accepting gesture that shows you respect them. Smile, introduce yourself, and offer assistance when needed.
- Take leadership in your own community for promoting access for persons with disabilities. Look critically at restaurants, movie theaters, social events, and other facilities: are they accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Advocate for changes so that persons with disabilities can have access to more places in the community.

Persons in Wheelchairs:

- When communicating with persons in wheelchairs, arrange to converse at their level.
- Face-level communication is best so that they don't have to extend their necks, which can be uncomfortable.

Disability Etiquette

Communicating with and about individuals with disabilities:

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put the person first. Many people still view persons with disabilities as individuals to be pitied, feared, or ignored. These attitudes may arise from discomfort with individuals who are perceived to be different or simply from a lack of information.

Listed below are the "Ten Commandments of Etiquette for Communicating with Individuals with Disabilities" to help you in communicating with individuals with disabilities. We must look beyond the disability and look at the individual's ability and capacity- the things that make each of us unique and worthwhile.

1. When talking with an individual with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or interpreter.
2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)
3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
5. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
6. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on or hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulders.)
7. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding. (You may ask them to spell the word if you don't understand them.)
8. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
9. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly,

and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you are facing the light source and keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking.

10. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you use accepted common expressions, such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?", that seem to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

Access Center for Disability Accommodations & Adaptive Technology
<http://www.mscd.edu/~access/resources/etiquette.htm>

Conflict with Students: Managing Student Behavior



Help the student feel a sense of control over his/her environment:

- 1) Provide choices:
 - Within an activity (e.g., what materials to use: “Would you like to use the glue or the paste?”)
 - Between activities (e.g., what s/he wants to do now: “Would you like to play with the blocks or play in the kitchen area?”)
 - Who s/he wants to work with (e.g., “Would you like to work with Meghan or Becca?”)
 - Where s/he would like to complete an activity (e.g., “Would you like to finish reading at your desk or in the bean bag chair?”)

- 2) Schedules: A specific, daily schedule allows a student to know the flow of activities. Allowing the student to put his/her day together through words or pictures and having him/her cross off activities once they are completed gives him/her a sense of control.

- 3) Provide concrete activities:
 - Visual
 - Tactile



Avoiding and Resolving Conflict: Which do you do?

The following are responses to conflict:

Avoidance Behaviors	Behaviors of Resolution
Avoid the person	Try to reach a compromise
Change the subject	Try to understand the other person's point of view
Admit that you are wrong, even if you are not	Try to find a new solution both of you will find acceptable.
Give in	
Pretend you agree	
Be persistent and wear down the opposition	
Use your authority and order the person to obey you	
Use sarcasm or ridicule	
Defend your position	
Use your power to win your position	
Whine or complain until you get your way	
Play the martyr: give in, but let the other person know how much you are suffering	

Strategies for dealing with conflict:

- 1) Accept constructive criticism for what it is;
- 2) Use the "I" message formula: "I feel (description of feeling) when (objective description of the event) because (how the behavior affects me)."
 - Example: "I feel anxious when you arrive late to relieve me for my break because then I either don't get my full break or I end up being late to the classroom."
- 3) Use the "Problem Solving Model:"
 - Step 1: Identify the problem
 - Step 2: Determine the cause of the problem
 - Step 3: Identify potential solutions
 - Step 4: Evaluate each potential solution
 - Step 5: Choose a solution
 - Step 6: Evaluate the results
- 4) Avoid power and control struggles .

Strategies for Working with Students

1. Building independence
2. Tips to build effective relationships with children/youth
3. Positive motivation
4. Individual & small group instructional strategies
5. Accommodations & adaptive strategies
6. Tutoring

BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

The main goal of the ParaEducator is to build independence in the exceptional student. Let them do their own work. Regular students make mistakes; they are not always correct on everything they say or do. One of the basic processes of learning



is through our own mistakes. “Real failure” and “real success” are very important in helping the teacher make adjustments to meet the needs of exceptional students. “False success” can sometimes be as fatal to a student’s real progress as repeated failure can be. The building of independence sometimes begins at a very, very low point in certain areas. This point can sometimes be so far below the regular student and adult

standards that teachers do not want to accept it. Once this acceptance occurs, then real progress can begin (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

TIPS PARAEDUCATORS CAN USE to BUILD EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS with CHILDREN & YOUTH



As members of the education team, ParaEducators play important roles in the lives of the children and youth they work with. There are many ways they can help students practice effective communication, social, and problem solving skills, learn how to stand up for their own rights, build self-esteem, develop and maintain friendships and cope with peer pressure.

Here are just a few:

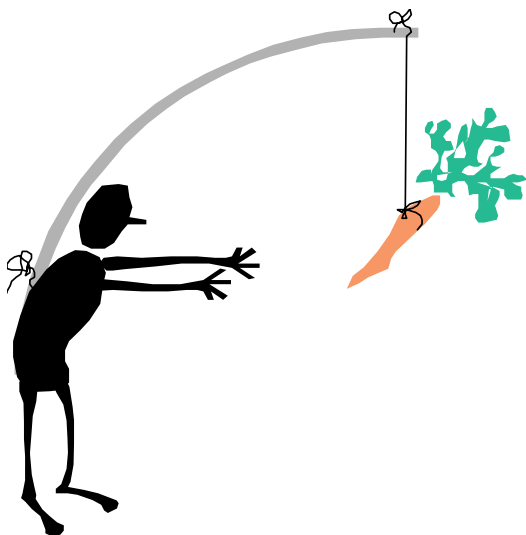
- 1) Respect the human rights and individuality of all children and youth.
- 2) Reach out to students. Learn what they like and dislike, how they prefer to spend free time. Look for and share information about sports, music, recreation activities and special events individual students enjoy.
- 3) Use positive communication. Listen carefully, maintain eye contact, ask questions, respond to the ideas, concerns, and needs students share with you.
- 4) Treat children and youth in the ways you want them to treat others. Be fair, kind and polite. Do not yell or use abusive language. Carefully use humor; do not use sarcasm or make fun of others.
- 5) **Encourage the development of independence, autonomy and individuality by providing opportunities for student to make choices.**
- 6) Encourage children and youth to assist each other when help is needed.
- 7) Reinforce the use of appropriate social skills. Model and teach methods children and youth can use to strengthen their ability to monitor and control their behavior, share emotions/feelings, make and maintain friendships, and cope with peer pressure.
- 8) Promote the legal rights of students. Maintain confidentiality, report signs of abuse to teachers.

POSITIVE MOTIVATION

Many exceptional students start out as underachievers. Therefore, another important job of the ParaEducator is to help the teacher motivate their student(s). In order for the exceptional student to achieve his/her potential, motivation needs to be executed in a positive way. This is done by eliminating the use of the word **"NOT"** and any of its contractions. For example, instead of using the phrase, "You're not working," use the phrase, "You need to work harder." Adults occasionally need to be firm and serious but always in a positive way.

The following is a list of phrases used by successful, competent teachers, which may be helpful to borrow when needing to motivate the exceptional student:

- a. "You need to get busy. I'm going to mark where you are and come back in a minute to see how you are doing."
- b. "Wow, look at John over there. He's working and already has number one done! Maybe you should get busy too."
- c. "Where is your work? What have you been doing?"



The ParaEducator also needs to watch the supervising teacher's use of motivational techniques. Anything that is used to motivate a regular student can be used to motivate an exceptional student. The teacher's written feedback, notes, stickers, etc., are all very important (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

Individual & Small Group Instructional Strategies

Individual Instruction:

- **Preparation:**
 - Learn the proper pronunciation of the student's name
 - Learn about the student's interests, goals, and academic and emotional needs
 - Be familiar with the lesson in advance of the session
 - Request that the teacher/therapist explain the activity
 - Organize necessary instructional materials
 - Prepare the location for the session
- **Appropriate Attitude:**
 - Set an example by being courteous and respectful
 - Be supportive and provide encouragement
 - Communicate that learning is an important and worthwhile task
- **Delivery Skills:**
 - Follow the schedule of activities established by the teacher
 - Follow the instructions for teaching outlined by the teacher. When unsure, ask the teacher
 - Set realistic expectations to facilitate success
 - Use open-ended questions
 - Utilize good listening skills
 - Pay attention to nonverbal cues
 - Provide feedback
 - Use motivating reinforcements
 - Follow the behavior plan, if one is in place
 - Be consistent, follow rules, and provide structure
- **Small Group Instruction:**
 - Involve all students in the group
 - Acknowledge that students have preferences
 - Encourage students to make their own choices
 - Provide time to work independently
 - Reinforce or compliment often
 - Identify individual needs and adapt materials and methods to the needs of the group/student
 - Do not plan separate activities for group members
 - Encourage cooperation
 - Encourage communication
 - Provide experiences using the "real" thing
 - Provide real-life situations
 - Establish a routine
 - Use natural consequences
 - Encourage proper posture
 - Use appropriate verbal prompts, gestures, modeling, and demonstration techniques
 - Eliminate distractions

ACCOMMODATIONS & ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

Two key attributes to be effective in working as a team are flexibility and creativity. For so many students who fail at learning under conventional classroom conditions, even relatively minor adjustments in their learning environment can make major differences with their academic success or failure. For all of the accommodations and adaptive strategies, the ParaEducator must remember any changes implemented should be accomplished in concert with the supervising teacher. Good communication among staff is essential to enable any of these suggestions for changes in instruction to achieve their maximum benefit for the student.

The ParaEducator will most likely not be responsible for prescribing accommodations for students or developing specific modifications in the general or special class. It is important for the ParaEducator to understand the possible accommodations that might be provided and specifically how teachers might implement modifications and adaptive strategies for appropriate learning to occur.

The following are a collection of accommodations covering a wide range of environments and issues, adaptive strategies for the general classroom and specific strategies to facilitate the Teaching/Learning Process.

Environmental Strategies:

- ◆ Provide a structured learning environment.
- ◆ Adjust class schedules and assignments.
- ◆ Provide note takers.
- ◆ Modify nonacademic times such as lunch and recess.
- ◆ Modify physical education.
- ◆ Change student seating.
- ◆ Provide use of as study carrel.
- ◆ After location of personal or classroom supplies for easier access or to minimize distraction.
- ◆ Provide visual cues (poster, blackboard directions, work area arrangements).
- ◆ Block out extraneous stimuli on written material.
- ◆ Use room dividers.
- ◆ Provide headsets to muffle noise.
- ◆ Provide timeout areas.
- ◆ Put desk close to the blackboard.
- ◆ Provide computer areas for writing tasks.

Organizational Strategies:

- ◆ Use a study guide.
- ◆ Rearrange student groups (according to instructional needs, role models, etc.).
- ◆ Provide anticipation cues and teach key direction words.
- ◆ Provide pencil grips.
- ◆ Tape paper to the desk.
- ◆ Number and order assignments.
- ◆ Modify test delivery.
- ◆ Use tape recorders, computer-aided instruction, and other audiovisual equipment for both directions and student responses.
- ◆ Select modified text books and work books.
- ◆ Tailor homework assignments.
- ◆ Use of one-to-one tutorials.
- ◆ Seat near a model student.
- ◆ Provide peer tutoring with frequent review.
- ◆ Set time expectations for assignments.
- ◆ Teach self-monitoring.
- ◆ Provide cues such as clock faces indicating beginning and ending times.
- ◆ Use timers to show allocated and used time.
- ◆ Provide tests in segments so that student finishes one segment before receiving the next part.
- ◆ Highlight main ideas, supporting details or relevant words featured in the book.
- ◆ Have the student summarize at the end of each lesson.
- ◆ Use behavioral management techniques.
- ◆ Implement behavioral/academic contracts.
- ◆ Utilize positive reinforcements (rewards) and vary them.
- ◆ Use specific rather than general praise.
- ◆ Utilize negative reinforcements (consequences).
- ◆ Use tangible reinforcers.
- ◆ Confer with the student's other teachers.
- ◆ Establish a home/school communication system for behavior monitoring.
- ◆ Post rules and consequences for classroom behavior and review frequently.
- ◆ Write a contract for student behavior.
- ◆ Offer social reinforcers (i.e. praise) for appropriate behavior.
- ◆ Establish daily/weekly schedules and progress reports for the student.
- ◆ Establish routines for handing work in, heading papers, etc.
- ◆ Provide critical vocabulary list for content material.
- ◆ Collect notebooks frequently.
- ◆ Use raised line paper.
- ◆ Provide calculators.
- ◆ Circle the math computation signs.
- ◆ Use the honor system.
- ◆ Use varied verbal cues, loudness, and pauses when presenting them.
- ◆ Provide organizers for desk material.

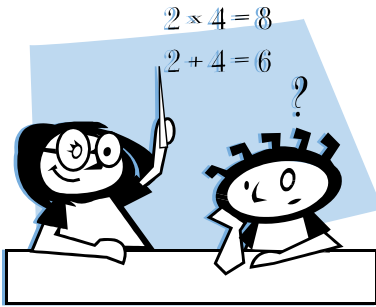
- ◆ Teach at varied rates.
- ◆ Provide content/lecture summaries.
- ◆ Implement self-recording of behaviors.
- ◆ Give fewer and simpler directions.

Methodology Strategies:

- ◆ Repeat and simplify instructions about in-class and homework assignments (such as one task at a time).
- ◆ Supplement oral instructions with visual instructions.
- ◆ Change instructional pace.
- ◆ Change instructional methods.
- ◆ Provide functional tasks familiar to the student.
- ◆ Reduce items required on a task.
- ◆ Use advanced organizers.
- ◆ Help students develop their own strategies.
- ◆ Tape lessons so the student can listen to them again.
- ◆ Provide photocopied material for extra practice (i.e., outlines, study guides).
- ◆ Require fewer drill and practice activities.
- ◆ Give both oral and visual instructions for assignments.
- ◆ Provide for oral testing.
- ◆ Ask student to repeat directions/assignments to ensure understanding.
- ◆ Arrange for a mentor to work with student in his or her interest area or area of greatest strength.
- ◆ Ask frequent questions.
- ◆ Change the wait time for answers.
- ◆ Vary the method and place of lesson/activity/presentation:
 - * lecture
 - * small groups for cooperative learning
 - * large groups
 - * use audio visuals (i.e., filmstrips, study prints)
 - * peer tutors or cross-age tutors (i.e., take notes, monitor assignments, read aloud, listen)
 - * demonstrations
 - * experiments
 - * simulations
 - * games
 - * 1-to-1 instruction with another adult
 - * presentation sequence
- ◆ Adapt test to change required response mode:
 - ◆ provide directions in sequence
 - ◆ provide discussion questions before reading
 - ◆ use word markers to guide reading
 - ◆ enlarge or highlight key words on test items

Curriculum Strategies:

- ◆ Change instructional materials with much repetition.
- ◆ Utilize supplementary materials.
- ◆ Assess whether student has the necessary prerequisite skills. Determine whether materials are appropriate to the student's current interest and functional levels.
- ◆ Implement study skill strategies (survey, read, recite, review). Introduce definition of new terms/vocabulary and review to check for understanding.
- ◆ Limit amount of material presented on a single page.
- ◆ Provide a sample or practice test.
- ◆ Be aware of student's preferred learning style and provide appropriate instruction/materials.
- ◆ Use primary typewriter.
- ◆ Use peer checkers to review completed work.
- ◆ Provide essential fact list.
- ◆ Use manipulatives.
- ◆ Change criteria mastery level.
- ◆ Use picture directions.
- ◆ Provide guided practice.
- ◆ Provide more practice trials.
- ◆ Increase allocated time.
- ◆ Use a strategy approach (such as using memory aids).
- ◆ Provide error drill.
- ◆ Use firm-up activities.
- ◆ Use hand signals to cue behavior.
- ◆ Use self-correcting material.
- ◆ Use dotted lines to line up math problems to show margins.
- ◆ Provide transition directions.
- ◆ Provide daily and weekly assignment sheets.
- ◆ Use graph paper to aid in number alignment.
- ◆ Incorporate popular characters/themes in assignments.
- ◆ Develop tests from simple to complex.
- ◆ Use color coding.
- ◆ Vary length of tasks.



TUTORING

The ParaEducator sometimes needs to be a "one-on-one" tutor, and may be asked to tutor regular education students as well.

The following is a basic "recipe" for becoming an exceptional tutor:

- a) Have needed materials ready to go;
- b) Model good time management by sticking to the point;
- c) Speak slowly and clearly;
- d) Be patient when waiting for an answer; do not interrupt;
- e) Tell the student(s) when s/he is right;
- f) Praise the student(s) for correct answers;
- g) Praise the student(s) for trying;
- h) Allow the student(s) to make mistakes, but then go back and review their errors after they have made them;
- i) Set a good example for the student(s) by paying attention to the work and showing him/her that you like the subject matter (no matter how "boring" it may be to you);
- j) When a wrong answer is given:
 1. Repeat the question or direction and let them try again;
 2. Break the problem into smaller parts and give clues;
 3. Finally, if all else fails, give them the correct answer and have them repeat the correct answer to you;
 4. Explain to the student(s) how you got the answer or offer them an "easy" way to remember the correct answer (i.e., there are 3-Es buried in the word "cemetery");
- k) Near the end of the session, "review" with the student(s) what s/he has learned during the session, and praise them for having worked hard (Rosenthal & Rosenthal, 1992).

PI-OHI

1. Common characteristics
2. Behavioral strategies
3. Support staff
4. Students with mobility impairments
5. "Do's & Don'ts"
6. Parent perspective (letter)

Physical Impairment & Otherwise Health Impaired

Physical Impairment (PI)

R 340.1709 "Physical impairment" defined; determination.

Rule 9. (1) "Physical impairment" means severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance. (From the Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education, June 2002)

Common Characteristics:

- Mild, moderate and severe physical needs
- Perceptual problems
- Distractibility
- Needs assistance with problem solving
- Poor fine motor coordination
- Poor gross motor skills
- Physical limitation of limbs
- In some cases, learning disabilities, common emotional difficulties, attention deficit disorders
- Medical/health problems
- Vision problems
- Speech impairments
- Mental impairments
- Poor organization skills

Behavioral Strategies:

- Expect students to reach all classroom goals.
- Make classroom rules appropriate.
- Make adaptations for physical management not for behavioral expectation.
- Do not become over-protective.
- Promote positive reinforcement.
- Establish behavior management programs.
- Provide verbal repetition/description.
- Communicate with students to encourage their sharing of feelings.

Support Staff:

- Internist
- Neurologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Orthopedic Surgeon
- Pediatrician
- Physical Therapist
- School Nurse
- Teacher Assistants
- Teacher Consultant
- Teacher Consultant for PI
- Teacher Consultant for Visual Impaired
- Teacher of PI
- Teacher of Speech and Language Impaired

(Frazier, 1987; Michigan Dept. of Ed & Office of Special Ed., 2002)

Students who have Mobility Impairments

Students Who Have Mobility Impairments:

People with mobility impairments engage in the same type of activities that you do: dating, getting married, having children, shopping, traveling, bowling, and playing tennis and golf. As a group, they are no less intelligent than any other group of people.

Most persons with a mobility impairment will answer legitimate questions, such as "How do you manage the equipment?" or "Do you use the equipment in any special way?" A non-legitimate question is curiosity-based and usually borders on the personal, such as "How long have you been in a wheelchair?" or "Are you able to have children?" Terms such as "walk", "run", "have a seat", or "stand there" are acceptable.

Wheelchairs are used for a variety of reasons: paralysis, muscle weakness, nerve damage, stiff joints, low energy levels, and severe breathing problems. Falls, car accidents, gunshot wounds, and sports injuries are some of the major causes of paralysis. Some other causes are strokes, tumors, polio, muscular dystrophy, and multiple sclerosis.

Not all wheelchair users are paralyzed. Many can walk with the use of other mobility aids, such as canes, walkers, and crutches. Speed and ease of mobility are increased with the use of a wheelchair which is why many prefer to use one.

If it looks as if a person with a mobility impairment needs assistance, offer to help. If the person needs help, your offer will be accepted. If the assistance needed is technical, let the student tell you what needs to be done.

Recommended Strategies:

Classroom/Lectures/Labs.

- Try to maximize the physical accessibility of the classroom/lecture hall by keeping it uncluttered and not rearranging desks and chairs unnecessarily.
- When speaking to the student individually, sit down, if possible, so you are at eye level.
- Note taking is an important but occasionally impossible task, due to paralysis or tremors in the hands, arms, or fingers. Students in the class should be asked if one or two of them would volunteer to share their notes. The volunteer students could use no-carbon-required (NCR) paper, carbon paper or could photocopy their notes

for the student with disabilities. If possible, the note-takers' notes should be checked by the instructor for accuracy at the beginning of the course. The student may also wish to tape record the lectures to act as a back-up source of information for the notes.

- If a field trip is a requirement of the course, arrangements should be made to allow the student with a mobility impairment to participate, or, you might provide an alternate way for the student to meet the field trip requirements.
- Most non-ambulatory students prefer to remain in their wheelchair rather than risk injury attempting to transfer to a desk. This means that tables with space clearance for wheelchairs should be a minimum of 70 cm (27 ½ inches) high and 81 cm (32 inches) wide. (If the student has high function, they may only need a lap desk or a clipboard on which to write, whereas others may need a table.)
- If a person has a muscle spasm in the leg, the leg may start jerking and often just moving around may stop the spasm. There is nothing you can do about curtailing the spasm. If you see the person's foot off the footrest of the wheelchair, ask if they are aware that it is off and if assistance is needed in repositioning it.
- Ask, if the student needs assistance to open a door. If not, do not insist. If yes, go through the door first, then stand behind the opened door while the student goes through. Do not hold the door open while you stand in the door opening. This forces the student to go under you ("London Bridge" style) and may result in your toes being crushed.
- Allow the student to board an elevator first and permit turn-around room. No one likes facing the wall. Never assume that the student cannot or will not press the elevator button for you as well. When unloading, remain behind and press the "open" button. Allow the student to leave first. Do not hold your arms across the elevator doors in an attempt to keep them open. This does not permit the individual enough room to maneuver.

(<http://www.unb.ca/current/special/mobility.html>)

THE DOs & DON'Ts of WORKING with Students with Physical Impairments

Just as every "able-bodied" individual is unique in his/her physical and emotional make-up, so is everyone who is an exceptional student. Therefore, when inquiring about a student with special needs, one should focus on the student's behavior and physical and/or cognitive potential rather than solely on their "disability."

Regardless of their disability, many, if not all, exceptional students exhibit similar behaviors. These "behaviors" are not unlike those of their able-bodied peers. However, as in the case of students who are physically impaired (PI), many adults may struggle in working with these students; they may react to the PI student with pity and sympathy.

Every disabled person has two major psychological tasks: 1) to understand the nature of his/her disability; and 2) to become as independent as possible. Attached is a list of ten "DOs and DON'Ts" that may be helpful for anyone (parent, ParaEducator, teacher, or administrator) working with a student with special needs.

1) Student with special needs see their disability through the eyes of others.

DO...perceive the student as worthwhile and "able."

DON'T...perceive the student as "helpless."

2) Successful "risk-taking" will encourage the special needs student to explore his/her environment and will enhance his/her sense of "safety."

DO...encourage "testing-out" of the special needs student's environment—allow them to fail.

DON'T...over-protect them from making mistakes. ["Watchfully Ignore!"]

3) Allow autonomy, independence, and self-reliance to grow.

DO...allow him/her to take as much responsibility for self-care as s/he can manage. Provide many opportunities for making decisions.

DON'T...control the special needs student by completing activities that s/he can func-

tionally complete independently. Sometimes it may seem easier and faster to "help" him/her. However, "if they develop an excessive psychological dependence on those who give them physical assistance, they may not develop a healthy independence and sense of self-sufficiency and thereby hinder the growth of self-esteem."

4) High frustration tolerance is important in meeting life's challenges.

DO...allow the special needs student to experience frustration. S/he should be able to think of him/herself as a person who can fail without losing self-esteem.

DON'T...overprotect the special needs student. If the special needs student learns to depend on adults for protection, s/he will never attain the skills necessary for coping with life's challenges.

5) Autonomy and independence, which grow with the freedom to express one's views, are invaluable to the developing self-concept.

DO...allow the special needs student his/her own thoughts, feelings, and attitudes.

DON'T...speak and/or think for the special needs student.

6) Respect for others is a reflection of respect for self.

DO...encourage consideration for the rights and feelings of others. S/he can learn respect through imitation, identification, and practice.

DON'T...allow the special needs child to believe that since s/he is "disabled" s/he has the authority to demand things from others.

7) Success does not mean a perfect performance but a task completed to the best of the student's ability.

DO,,,set reasonable limits on behavior; develop appropriate expectations for achievement. Because some physically challenged students may work at a slower rate due to their physical limitations, it is suggested that the quantity of work be reduced rather than its quality (e.g, if there are 20 math problems, require the POHI student to be responsible for the odd numbered problems.)

DON'T...accept outcomes that are below that of the student's potential; expecting too little often leads to over dependence and feelings of helplessness and resignation;

—AND—

don't expect more than a student can accomplish--this can lead to frustration and a sense of failure and inadequacy.

8) Special needs students are likely to remain independent on others longer than their able-bodied peers.

DO...support and encourage the special needs student's attempts at independence.

DON'T..."help" them unless there is an obvious need. Helping the special needs student do things s/he can accomplish is neither necessary nor adaptive. If unsure, ask if they need help.

9) Special needs students must have reasonable limits set that are consistently enforced.

DO...require that the special needs student follows the same "rules of the classroom" as those that are enforced with their able-bodied peers.

DON'T...be taken in by their "handicap" and fall into that stereotypical custom of "feeling sorry" for him/her. All children, regardless if they are disabled or not, will try to control and manipulate. Manipulation is a result from an inadequate sense of mastery, inadequate control over self, and/or an inability to achieve goals by one's own efforts.

10) Be aware of the issues surrounding the student's "handicap." Acknowledging limitations and having realistic expectations will nurture psychological health and develop a positive self-concept.

DO...understand that the special needs student is a unique person who happens to have a particular "handicap."

DON'T...accept from anyone, including the special needs student, the philosophy that s/he is unique because of his/her disability.

"Hindsight is 20/20"

(A letter from a parent)

Our daughter was injured 13 years ago as a very young child. She is now 18. As I look at how I dealt with her, I can see a lot of things I did wrong. But I did what I thought was right at the time. I wish I had done things differently because of how things have turned out. So I am passing on to you what I have learned in hopes that it may help you.

First of all, don't be so overprotective. I think it is a natural instinct to try and protect our children from harm. But when they have been hurt or disabled in some way, I think we have a tendency to be even more so. Let them make some of their own decisions as long as it doesn't interfere with their safety. If they learn to make good decisions when they are younger, they may tend to make better choices when they are older. It may seem OK to be over protective when they are young, but all it does is hurt them in the long run because we have not allowed them to make good choices and learn from their poor ones.

Secondly, let them learn to fail. Let them learn from a young age. Don't be so quick to run in and rescue them. Don't tell them not to do something and then when they get hurt, say they should have listened to you. Let them know it is OK to make mistakes and to fail...that is how we learn. If they don't learn that it is alright to make mistakes and fail at an early age, that it is a process that we all go through and learn from, the bigger the problems and the harder they will fall when they fail as they grow older.

I'm not saying this is the answer to all the problems that a head injured child [or any child with a disability] has, but taking some positive steps in parenting [and teaching] will hopefully enable them to cope with life in the real world as they get older.

Positioning & Lifting

1. Benefits to proper positioning
2. Lifting, handling, & transferring students
3. Five rules to lifting
4. Manual & powerchair

Why is Positioning so Important?

Known & Potential Benefits of Positioning Related to Education:

- * Conserves energy and decreases stress
- * Improves attending behaviors
- * Increases motivation to perform
- * Improves respiration which in turn can improve the quality of speech
- * Improves self-feeding and drinking/oral motor skills
- * Increases visually directed hand function activities
- * Increases speed during motor performance tasks
- * Facilitates completion of testing and tasks
- * ¹Improves cognitive/psychological test scores

¹Miednaner & Finuf (1993): studied the effects of adaptive equipment on 12 children with spastic cerebral palsy when given the *Bayley Scales of Infant Development*. It was found that adaptive positioning enabled children to perform fine motor tasks included in the tests. Implications: Improved postural stability increases eye-hand coordination.

Lifting, Handling, & Transferring Students

Some students have physical needs so significant that an adult must move them from place to place. Lifting, carrying, and transferring children are all potentially dangerous activities. Most adults, in their lifetime, will experience some degree of lower back pain due to improper lifting. An unsafe transfer could inadvertently and accidentally put a child in danger, as well as the person doing the lifting. Methods of moving children such as carrying them, or using wagons, carts, or strollers are not advised in school and present a strong liability for potential injury to staff and students. Correctly using adaptive equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, standers, and specialized strollers) is the safest way to move children in school. To prevent injury, it is important to learn how to safely transfer students. To safely transfer a student from one location to another, determine correct lifting procedures.

It is important that foresight and planning occur prior to all attempts to transfer a child, even a very small child. **Lifting a child, alone, who weighs more than 1/3 of your body weight is dangerous and should be avoided. With large students, two-person lifts must be used. Always avoid transferring large students down onto the floor.** A raised mat or changing table should be provided at school so placing large students on the floor would not be necessary.

ALWAYS GET HELP if it is the first time lifting a certain student or anytime there is a question about how to lift safely. The physical therapist or the PI-OHI supervisor, prior to any attempts at transferring students, should provide training. If, after training, there are concerns regarding the safety with lifting or positioning, always tell the therapist or PI-OHI supervisor.

NEVER presume to deal with this issue alone. There are probably others who have the same concerns. The goal is to maximize staff and student safety. ParaEducators who are under the care of a physician and have physical restrictions for lifting, must notify their supervisor or therapist prior to participating in training, lifting, and/or transferring students. Additional resources are available with training provided by the physical therapist.

Five Rules of Lifting

Good Preparation

- 1) Stand with your feet apart
- 2) Knees slightly bent
- 3) One foot forward
- 4) Keep your head and trunk in proper alignment (maintain normal curves)

Carry Weight Close to You

- 1) To conserve energy & maintain stability, carry weight as close to your center of gravity as possible
- 2) Lower hips to the level of the floor by bending hips and knees (NOT your back!!)
- 3) Keep things between hips and shoulders

Know Your Limits

- 1) Do NOT attempt to lift alone if you have any doubts
- 2) Do NOT lift alone anything heavier than 1/3 of your weight
- 3) If you need help, ASK!!!

Lift with Your Legs

- 1) Keep legs in a position which allows them to supply most of the force for shifting the position of your trunk
- 2) Do NOT attempt to lift with your back alone (no matter how insignificant you THINK the weight is!)
- 3) Set all muscles to be used (legs, abdominal, back, arms) BEFORE lifting
- 4) Synchronize movements with your lifting partner by counting to three ("1—2—3—lift")

Do NOT Twist

- 1) Avoid rotation of your spine at all times
- 2) Shift your feet to turn
- 3) Be sure to position location A close to location B

Additional Resources & Information

- 1. Acronyms in special education**
- 2. Description of support staff**
- 3. Positioning at the computer**
- 4. 100 ways to praise a child**

Acronyms Commonly Used in Special Education

Categories of Special Education:

Acronym	Description
AI or ASD	Autistic Impaired or Autism Spectrum Disorder
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
CI	Cognitive Impairment (formerly MI)
ECDD	Early Childhood Developmental Delay (formerly PPI)
EI	Emotionally Impaired
HI	Hearing Impaired
LD	Learning Disabled
MiCI	Mildly Cognitively Impaired
MoCI	Moderately Cognitively Impaired
OHI	Other Health Impairment
PI	Physically Impaired
SCI	Severely Cognitively Impaired
SLI	Speech & Language Impaired
SXI	Severely Multiply Impaired
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VI	Visual Impaired

Evaluation & Placement:

Acronym	Description
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IEPT	Individualized Education Planning Team (formerly IEPC)
IFSP	Individual Family Service Plan
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
MEAP	Michigan Educational Assessment Program
MET	Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation Team
MMC	Michigan Merit Curriculum
MME	Michigan Merit Exam
PLAAFP	Present Level of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance
WISC	Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children

Staff in Special Education:

Acronym	Description
AUD	Audiologist
CRC	Curriculum Resource Consultant
O & M	Orientation & Mobility Specialist
OT	Occupational Therapist
Psych	School Psychologist
PT	Physical Therapist
SSW	School Social Worker
TC	Teacher Consultant
TSLI	Teacher of Speech & Language Impaired

Other:

Acronym	Description
ADL	Activities of Daily Living
APE	Adapted Physical Education
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
CBI	Community Based Instruction
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CF	Cystic Fibrosis
CIL	Center for Independent Living
CIMS	Continuous Improvement Monitoring System
CMH	Community Mental Health
CP	Cerebral Palsy
ELA	English Language Arts
FAPE	Free & Appropriate Public Education
FIA	Family Independent Agency
FTE	Full Time Equivalency
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MD	Muscular Dystrophy
NCLB	No Child Left Behind

Other (continued):

Acronym	Description
Part B	Special Education (under IDEA 2004)
Part C	Early On (under IDEA 2004)
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
SSI	Supplementary Security Income
SPSR	Service Provider Self Review
SRSD	Single Record Student Database
USDoE	United States Department of Education

Resources/Organizations:

Acronym	Description
CAUSE	Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education
ISD	Intermediate School District
LEA	Local Education Agency (i.e., Ionia Public Schools)
MAASE	Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education
MAF	Michigan Alliance for Families
MDE	Michigan Department of Education
MSD	Michigan School for the Deaf
MSRP	Michigan School Readiness Program
OSE/EIS	Office of Special Education & Early Intervention Services
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
OSI	Office of School Improvement
PAC	Parent Advisory Committee
P & A	Protection & Advocacy
SBE	State Board of Education
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee, Part B State Advisory Panel
SICC	State Interagency Coordinating Council, Part C State Advisory Panel
SOAHR	State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules

(CAUSE: <http://www.causeonline.org/spedacronyms> & MDE & OSE/EIS)

Description of Educational Support Staff

Audiologist

The audiologist assesses the student to determine the amount of hearing loss on speech discrimination. The audiologist also provides direct or consultative services in the area of language habilitation, auditory training, speech reading (lip reading), speech conversation, creation and administration of program prevention of hearing loss, the determination of the student's need for group and individual amplification, selecting and fitting appropriate hearing aid, and evaluating the effectiveness of amplification.

Hearing Impaired Specialist (HI-TC)

The HI teacher consultant evaluates students with hearing impairment and helps adapt classroom materials so the visually impaired student can be successful in the classroom.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

The occupational therapist evaluates and provides treatment for skills, which focus on the development of readiness abilities, fine motor control, gross motor control, and functional skills.

Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O & M)

The orientation and mobility specialist assess each student with severe visual impairments to determine his/her ability to move freely within the environment. This specialist also makes recommendation for orientation and mobility training.

Physical Therapist (PT)

The physical therapist evaluates and provides treatment for gross motor control, basic mobility, and balance. The physical therapists' services are based on a prescription from a physician.

School Nurse

A registered nurse is the only licensed, certified school professional that is qualified to interpret medical data and information. The nurse provides a variety of services for students, such as monitoring the health and safety of students, administering medication, and consulting with regard to student health needs; (catheterization, seizures, removal of health related barriers, illness and injury prevention, emergency care and physical assessments of students).

School Psychologist

The school psychologist evaluates a student referred as potentially qualifying for special educational programs and services. The psychology administers tests, which

measure intelligence, achievement, personality, and perceptual motor skills. The psychologist also interprets psychological and other diagnostic data for parents, educators, students, and others. In addition, other functions may include educational intervention, curriculum, and management and teaching strategies.

Teacher of Adaptive Physical Education

A teacher of adaptive physical education provides direct and consultative service to students with disabilities whose needs preclude integration into the general physical education classes. They may provide support services to general physical education teachers and classroom teachers who have students with disabilities

Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP)

A professional in the area of speech and language disorders evaluates students who may qualify for special education programs and services due to a disability in the areas of language development, articulation, voice, and fluency. In addition, the speech and language pathologist provides students direct service and consults with educational staff, parents, and community agencies relating to the areas of speech and other communication disorders.

Vision Impairment Specialist (VI-TC)

The VI teacher consultant evaluates students with visual impairment and helps adapt classroom materials so the visually impaired student can be successful in the classroom.

One Hundred Ways to Praise a Child



Hey, I love you! * Way to go * You're special * Outstanding * Excellent
You are fun * You're a real trooper * You're on target * Outstanding
performance * Great * Looking good * You brighten my day ☺ Good
Well done ♥ Remarkable * Super * I knew you could do it * Nice work
What an imagination * I'm proud of you 🎵 Super star * Fantastic
You're on top of it * You're catching on * Now you've got it * How smart
Good job * You are the clever one * You are just delightful *
That's incredible * Remarkable job * You're Beautiful ♥ You're a winner
You make me happy * Dynamite * Hip, Hip Hooray * You're important
Magnificent ◦ Beautiful * Super job 🎵 You're the best ☺ You're on your way
How nice * You're Spectacular * You are a Darling * Beautiful work
Good for you ● Nothing can stop you now * You're fantastic * Wow
You're a legend ♥ Great Discovery ♦ You've discovered the secret
Fantastic job ● You're a champion * Awesome * You're precious
Marvellous * You are responsible * Terrific * You are exciting *
You're growing up * You tried hard ♥ Neat * You figured it out 🎵🎵🎵
You're unique * What a good listener * You're a treasure * Super work
You mean a lot to me * You're a good friend * You deserve a big hug
You are an absolute gem * You're incredible ♥ I like you ♥ Now you're flying
I respect you * You're sensational 🎵 Phenomenal * Hooray for you * You care
Creative job * You belong * You made my day * You are nice to be with
You mean the world to me * You're important * You've got a friend
You're a joy * You make me laugh ● You're A-OK * You're my buddy
I trust you ☺ You're perfect * Bravo * You're wonderful ☺
A big kiss ♥ Exceptional performance 🎵 That's correct * Hey, I love you!

♥ PS Remember a HUG is worth 1000 words! ♥



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