The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals:

A Partnership

June 2005

July 2005

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Published by:

Virginia Department of Education
The Division of Special Education and Student Services
P. O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120
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Introduction

We believe that the climate and quality of a school and the success of its students is greatly affected by the relationships among the adults who work in and operate the school. This idea is the basis of *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership.* The guide was developed to provide teachers, related service personnel, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents, and other individuals charged with assisting in the development of Virginia's paraprofessional workforce with information and strategies to build strong, effective, supportive teams to ensure successful educational services for all students. In addition, we hope that the information contained in this guide will help create programs of training, preparation, and recruiting of high-quality professionals and enhance Virginia's paraprofessional workforce to improve student academic achievement.

Paraprofessionals: Who are they?

A paraprofessional is a school employee who works under the supervision of a licensed staff member to *assist* in providing instruction and other services to children, youth, and their families (Adapted from A.L. Pickett, Director for the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, City University of New York, 1997). The prefix "para" means "along side of." Therefore, it is correct to assume that a paraprofessional works along side of an educator (teachers, related service providers, etc.). In the early 1960's, there were approximately 10,000 paraprofessionals working in schools, primarily in noninstructional areas. Currently, due to the increase in student population and diversity, the estimated number of paraprofessionals is between 500,000 and 700,000 nationwide performing a variety of instructional *and* non-instructional roles, from helping students in classrooms, supervising playgrounds, to performing as health assistants. These paraprofessionals work in several learning environments from infant care and family respite to adult vocational sites.

The provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA), which required schools to serve students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, also contributed to the rising use of paraprofessionals in schools today. Paraprofessionals are often utilized in educational settings to provide direct and indirect services to students with disabilities. The increasing use of instructional support staff and other paraprofessionals and the corresponding expansion of their duties and responsibilities have created the need for increased professional development of these critically important members of the school community. Recognizing that the majority of paraprofessionals possess intimate knowledge of school and community but often lack formal training, state and federal legislation, such as IDEA (1997) and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB Act), have affirmed the need for high-quality professional development and training. Additionally, these federal laws emphasize the need for adequate supervision of paraprofessionals, which in the past has been a gray area for school personnel many of whom are unsure of who actually supervises the paraprofessional - the special educator, the related service provider, the general education teacher, or the building principal.

State and Federal Legislation

Accountability is critical in all areas of public education today. Until recently, there were few regulations surrounding the employment of paraprofessionals. Due to the increased reliance on paraprofessionals, state and federal mandates have been adjusted to guide the training and supervision of paraprofessionals. For example, state education agencies (SEAs) must now provide leadership in the development of standards to ensure that ALL personnel, including paraprofessionals, are adequately and appropriately supervised (No Child Left Behind, 2001).

Provisions of the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997) and new proposed federal special education laws specifically identify the need for paraprofessional training and supervision. According to statutory language in these federal special education laws, states need to address the identified needs of professionals and paraprofessionals for in-service and pre-service preparation to ensure that all personnel who work with children with disabilities (including both professional and paraprofessional personnel who provide special education, general education, related services, or early intervention services) have the skills and knowledge necessary to improve early intervention, educational, and transitional results for children with disabilities.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), places major emphasis upon teacher quality as a factor in improving student achievement. The NCLB Act, Title II, Part A, Improving Teacher Quality State Grants, asserts that paraprofessionals play a critical, often daily, role in educating the next generation of American leaders, and that these important educators are part of the largest teacher quality improvement effort in American history (NCLB, 2002). Therefore, both the local educational agency (LEA) and state education agency (SEA) (Section 1119(a)(2), (a)(3) will be held accountable and must report annually, beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, on their progress in meeting annual measurable objectives for ensuring highly qualified paraprofessionals to help all students succeed academically to the fullest extent.

The NCLB Act additionally recognizes the importance of teacher mentoring and supervision for paraprofessionals. NCLB states that paraprofessionals, functioning in supportive instructional roles, must work under the direct supervision of highly qualified teachers. Three stipulations are voiced in relation to a paraprofessional's supervision by an educator. The act notes that (1) the teacher plans instructional activities, (2) the teacher evaluates achievement of students with whom the paraprofessional works, and (3) the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity of the teacher.

In response to federal special education laws and the NCLB Act, state and local education agencies have intensified efforts to design effective paraprofessional development programs and strategies for adequate supervision for paraprofessionals.

Organization of Manual

The purpose of *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* is to assist local educational agencies in providing teachers and administrators with guidance on the supervisory relationship with paraprofessionals. This manual is intended to offer suggestions for dealing with the changing nature of schools and specific services they provide, including special education. Many educators can use the information contained in this manual as a foundation for preparing them for their new role as supervisor and supporter of paraprofessionals.

In this manual, we describe and discuss principles of supervision, tools for the educator, and recommended paraprofessional competencies from The Council for Exceptional Children. Topics included in the manual were obtained from a literature search, discussions with stakeholders, and data from a Virginia Department of Education 1999 survey. The survey was conducted to learn more about the professional development and career advancement needs of paraprofessionals. More than 7,000 surveys were completed and returned by paraprofessionals and supervisors. Results from this survey found that approximately 42 percent of current paraprofessionals were interested in becoming a teacher or other educational professional. High-quality professional development based on topics in the manual can be one means to assist these individuals in achieving their educational goals.

The manual is divided into six user-friendly sections. Although the first four sections focus primarily on the supervision of paraprofessionals assisting teachers in the classroom, the supervisory principles can also be applied to other school supervisory relationships, such as speech-language programs and occupational/physical therapy. Section Five specifically applies these principles to related services supervision. Additionally, recommended competencies for paraprofessionals will be referenced in appropriate sections to assist with professional development plans. For example, Section Two addresses a paraprofessional's need to be aware of a local educational agency's policies that relate to a recommended competency listed in Section Six (Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education).

Section Components:

The First Section defines a framework for effective supervision. The principles of supervision and the supervisory relationship are also discussed.

The Second Section of the manual expands upon teacher-supervisor expectations and roles – team building. This part of the manual discusses the process of identifying and delegating roles and responsibilities that the teacher assigns to the paraprofessional and scheduling and planning assignments for the paraprofessional. Sample goal-setting plans and work-style preferences forms are included to assist in building a collaborative team.

The necessity for on-going communication and productive feedback to the paraprofessionals on their job performance is the subject of Section Three. Formats and agendas for effective meetings and instructive observations are provided.

In virtually any working relationship, problems may arise. Section Four provides strategies for solving possible performance and interpersonal problems.

The Fifth Section of the manual, as previously stated, details competencies and issues relating to related services paraprofessional and is based on principles of supervision previously emphasized in Sections One through Four. Virginia resources pertaining to health-care employees and assistants are referenced.

The final section lists competencies from The Council for Exceptional Children for paraprofessionals working with students with disabilities. Developing a good training program begins with identifying which skills and knowledge are most important for paraprofessionals to cultivate. Experts recommend that professional development programs include topics that not only provide the foundation for instruction support activities but also build a shared professional language for collaborating with teachers (Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). Use of these competencies could be a starting point for analyzing needs of your teacher-supervisory relationship.

Section 1
The Paraprofessional and Supervision

Introduction

The increased use of paraprofessionals in a variety of educational settings has resulted in the need for teachers and other educational professionals (nurses, speech-language pathologists, occupational/physical therapists) to assume the tasks of supervising these individuals. Being a qualified educational professional, however, does not automatically translate into being equally prepared to supervise another adult. In too many cases, this new role is undertaken with little or no training or previous knowledge of supervisory skills. Current state and federal legislation emphasizes the importance of adequate supervision for paraprofessionals, and those charged with supervision must learn strategies for directing the work of the paraprofessional to improve student achievement. This section of the manual provides information on the principles of supervision and establishing an effective supervisory relationship whose ultimate goal is success of the child in the school setting. Section Five of the manual includes additional recommendations and suggestions for the supervision of related services paraprofessionals.

Thoughts on Supervision

Supervision is one of those words that by definition and common use is assumed to be consistent and constant. Yet when actually put into practice, supervision strategies differ greatly from one program to another. Most classroom teachers have experienced supervision in the form of an administrator sitting through a pre-arranged observation, providing written and verbal feedback, and then returning at a later date to repeat the process. Many other educational professionals have experienced supervisory practices that have included coaching, instructional dialogues, and even instructional modeling. The educators who mentor or supervise paraprofessionals share invaluable knowledge and skills and build an effective partnership with shared power, clear mutual expectations, and open communication.

To clarify the basis for selecting material for this manual, it is important to share some thoughts and general assumptions about supervision. In fact, the first element of effective supervision is to be aware of personal beliefs, philosophy, and attitudes about supervision and share them with the paraprofessionals supervised.

1. Not everyone wants, or needs, to be supervised in the same way. There is no single right way to supervise. Your supervision practices should be flexible enough to match your paraprofessional's need for oversight and guidance.

2. Supervision is an on-going process, not a product. This means that supervision is proactive rather than reactive. Reactive supervision works to neutralize or repair a problem. In proactive supervision, interactions are based on goal setting, understanding the uniqueness of each person's roles and responsibilities, and an analysis of each individual's effectiveness, competencies, and style.

3. Supervision, when effective, results in change. As the process evolves, changes will occur in the development of additional skills and competencies for both the

paraprofessional and the educator-supervisor. Be prepared to accept the dynamic nature of supervision by expecting and preparing for new responsibilities to shift from the educator to the paraprofessional. It is important to acknowledge the personal growth experienced by the educator-supervisor and paraprofessional.

4. Supervision is a relationship-centered process. Effective supervision and constructive feedback require frequent interactions over an extended period of time. As all teachers know, 180 days can either seem to go by quickly or last forever depending on how each day flows. Expanded duties, coupled with less direct instructional time, make it pertinent that the educational professional and paraprofessional trust and respect each other and the job that each one is doing.

Expectations of the Teacher – Supervisor*

As an educator-supervisor of a paraprofessional you will be expected to:

- Orient the paraprofessional to the school;
- Train the paraprofessional to use instructional and management approaches;
- Schedule and plan the assignments for the paraprofessional's day;
- Communicate regularly with the paraprofessional;
- Delegate tasks and direct their implementation;
- Provide skill development opportunities, and
- Provide feedback of the paraprofessional's job performance.

Suggestions and strategies for implementing these components are provided in Sections Two - Five of the manual.

***** Supervision expectations may vary based on the disciplines and applicable state requirements shall be followed (e.g. nursing). (see Section Five).

Overview of a Supervision Plan

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998) recommended the following as a minimal set of guidelines for direct supervision of paraprofessionals:

- The first 10 hours in which the paraprofessional has direct contact with a student should be observed and supervised by the teacher.

- After that initial period, at least 10 percent of the supportive instructional sessions conducted by the paraprofessional should be supervised to ensure continuity of instruction and program. Using these guidelines the teacher is also able to guarantee contact with the child involved as well as direct interaction with the paraprofessional.

- There must be on-going communication on at least a weekly basis between the teacher and the paraprofessional during which data pertaining to the student's progress are reviewed.

Barriers to Effective Supervision

1. Inadequate feedback is provided to the paraprofessional. Feedback which is subjective rather than objective or which is provided infrequently can be considered inadequate.

2. The paraprofessional's lack of commitment. Lack of commitment to the program or to the educator will undermine the program and increase frustration in carrying out one's role as educator-supervisor.

3. The educator's or paraprofessional's attitudes about supervision are negative. For instance, if one or the other believes that supervision is solely for the purpose of evaluation, the relationship will become more reactive than proactive.

4. Inter-role conflict can occur when there is a belief that each individual's role, although different, is equal. Such a belief demonstrates that there is a poor understanding of roles and responsibilities. In addition, conflict will arise when one individual has a strong interest in maintaining the status quo and rejects a process that will lead to change in the form of growth and improvement. An individual who views change as a personal loss may view supervision as a threat.

5. The organizational structure of the school may not support effective supervision. In schools where the climate does not encourage change, there will be little or no time set aside for team planning and feedback. Rather than rewarding the efforts of the team to work as a unit toward change, the organization may present barriers in the form of time constraints, negative feedback, or increasingly burdensome student loads.

Section 2
Team Building: Working with a Paraprofessional

How an educator-supervisor proceeds to build a relationship with the paraprofessional will depend on whether the team is working with a new paraprofessional or a person in a pre-existing position. In the latter case, the orientation takes the form of building rapport with the individual and explaining any differences that exist in the program and teaching style. This section of the manual expands upon expectations of the classroom teacher-supervisor discussed in Section One.

Orienting the Paraprofessional

The task of orienting the new paraprofessional, which often rests with the teacher-supervisor, requires a fresh view of the school, the classroom, and the policies and procedures that may have become so familiar that they are taken for granted. The new paraprofessional often feels like an outsider, with unclear expectations of what to do and when to do it. To ensure a successful transition, expectations, directions, and communications should be stated as clearly as possible. One way to think of the orientation is as a new unit including an advanced organizer, providing new concepts, and establishing a context for retention of the material. The orientation should always be based on the local educational agency's policies and procedures as stated in the local educational agency's manual. Knowledge of law, rules, and regulations, and local district policies and procedures is a recommended professional competency for paraprofessionals (see Section Six, Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundation of Special Education Competency S1).

Some general guidelines for explaining these policies and procedures include the following:

- Provide examples of policies and procedures. Simply stating the policy or procedure will not be enough. The more meaningful the material, the better it will be remembered.

- Use clarifying questions to check for understanding. After providing information, be certain that the paraprofessional has focused on the important points by asking what should be done in a particular situation or when a policy or procedure should be followed.

- Provide a context for the policy or procedure. New concepts make more sense when given in context. They will also be remembered longer. As duties are performed, the teacher-supervisor should comment on why they are done in a particular way and their relationship to the policies and procedures.

Topics that need to be communicated during the orientation, which may or may not be in the local educational agency's manual, are:

- Ethical issues, especially those related to confidentiality and professionalism should be stressed (see **Figure 2.1** for a listing of ethical issues). Ethical issues also extend to informing parents, other service providers, and, when appropriate, the child of the use of

a paraprofessional in the context of the program. It is important not to misrepresent the role and responsibilities of the paraprofessional. In addition, the teacher directly responsible for the paraprofessional's performance is also under a professional code of ethics to provide competent supervision.

- Legal issues, such as nondiscriminatory practices, due process, and negligence should be reviewed. Many of these issues are covered in the local educational agency's policy manual, which should be reviewed as part of the paraprofessional's training. The supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that the paraprofessional has reviewed the policy manual and is familiar with it. Briefly go over the content together emphasizing particular points that are relevant to the position. Ask the paraprofessional to review the material and be sure to follow-up the next day by asking if there are any policies that need clarification.

- The school and classroom environments are largely unfamiliar to the new paraprofessional and need to be explained. Identify people and their roles that are important to the paraprofessional or the student. Think through a typical week and note the people with whom there is routine contact and those people who are important in moments of disruption or crisis. These are the individuals to whom the paraprofessional needs to be introduced. Provide a list of these individuals, their jobs, and where they can be contacted.

- What is the day's routine? Share both the schedule for the class and the paraprofessional's personal schedule that is to be followed. Explain why certain routines have been established.

Figure 2.1

Ethical Issues for Paraprofessionals

1. Records and information related to students and their families are considered confidential.
   Children and youth have legal and human rights that must be respected.
   Local educational agency's policies are to be understood and followed at all times.
2. Respect the roles of others in the schools and demonstrate your understanding of how your position relates to theirs.
3. Positive acknowledgment should be given to cultural diversity and the differences among individual children.
4. You are responsible for following the directions given to you by your supervisor and other administrators.
5. Learn and follow the chain of command for administrative procedures.
6. Professional behavior includes attendance, punctuality, appropriate dress, and being a good team member.
7. As a member of the school team, you should be committed to its programs.

(Adapted from: Pickett, A. L. (1997). A training program to prepare teachers to supervise and work effectively with paraeducator personnel (5th Ed.). The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.)

Establishing a Working Relationship with a Paraprofessional

Determining Common Ground

Whether the paraprofessional is new to the school, is changing positions, or staying in a position where the supervisor is new to the team, requires that a new relationship must be formed. The supervisor and the paraprofessional may be uncomfortable at first with their assigned roles and responsibilities, especially if there are age, gender, or cultural differences between the two individuals. Keep in mind that these feelings are natural. Take the time to build rapport with the paraprofessional. Some things to remember during this early period of developing a relationship are:

1. Clearly state educational philosophy and expectations for the school, the teacher, and the paraprofessional. For instance, what is the key to the relationship with the students? What are the main objectives for the year? What routines are to be followed each day and what is the management style?

2. Get to know the paraprofessional as a co-worker.

3. Listen to the paraprofessional's understanding of the role and the expectations that the paraprofessional has for the teacher as a supervisor (see Section Six, Communication and Collaborative Partnerships Competency S2).

4. Let the paraprofessional know that consideration will be given to any concerns that exist. When there are points of disagreement, explain positions and come to acceptable decisions.

5. Find areas of agreement and highlight them as the basis for the developing relationship.

6. Include the paraprofessional in discussions about changes or the establishment of new routines, schedules, or approaches. The paraprofessional may offer a unique point of view from experience working with the child. Participation allows the paraprofessional to become more of a stakeholder in the process and will result in greater commitment.

Developing a Working Team

Both the educator-supervisor and the paraprofessional must recognize that the year's success depends largely on the working team's effectiveness. Taking the time and effort to build the team is well worth it. Pickett and Gerlach (1997) state successful teams (1) share common goals, (2) believe in the benefits of working as a team rather than as an individual, and (3) have identified roles. Remember that the team's primary goal is to increase student achievement.

The Team as the Working Unit:

- Team members need to feel that they contribute to team goals
- Team members need to feel their contribution is appreciated
- Team members must be committed to the team as a unit
- Team members develop shared channels of communication
- Communication among team members is open and regular
- Common language among team members reflects the involvement in the team (i.e., "we" instead of "I")
- The team works efficiently and respects the time of team members
- The team creates rules and procedures to be followed by all members (meetings, communications, schedules, etc.)
- Team members enjoy each other and are motivated by being involved with the team

Sharing Common Goals and Objectives

- All members understand the goals of the team and are focused on achieving them
- Team members work to solve problems together
- Team members support each other in tasks and in spirit
- Team members provide feedback to each other

Recognizing Team Roles

- Team members' roles are clarified and discussed
- Team members work to increase the skills of all members
- Team members acknowledge the leader's role in the team's functions
- Team leader shares achievements of the team with all members

Selecting a Paraprofessional

As paraprofessionals become more and more a part of the school, some administrators are asking educators to participate in the selection process. If the local educational agency or building administrator asks the teacher to participate, this invitation should be recognized as an opportunity, and the teacher should prepare for the task of interviewing and recommending individuals who can play an important role in the school's success. Figure **2.2** lists "Promising Practices" of successful interviews.

Figure 2.2

Promising Practices

Interviewing Paraprofessional Applicants

The paraprofessional applicant may never have had school-related work experience. A prospective paraprofessional may have a resume that reflects diverse experiences and educational backgrounds but provides few clues as to how successful the person will be in this particular role. As a result, the interview's importance is heightened. The interview itself can be divided into three components: (1) preparation, (2) the actual interview, and (3) follow-up (Russell, 1997).

Prepare for the interview by developing the job description. This will help determine the necessary baseline skills one must have coming into the position as stipulated by state and federal legislation (NCLB, 2002). Also, consider what elements of the instructional program, supervision, and personal style will affect the appropriateness of the match. Finally, plan how to conduct the interview, what topics will be covered, who will be present, and when and what type of feedback will be given to the applicant.

The interview is a combination of a social situation and a business function that should help in selecting the best applicant for the position. At the beginning, establish a welcoming atmosphere and a good rapport with the individual applying for the position. Introductions should include full names and titles and preferred personal names. Casual conversation will help to ease the transition into the more formal parts of the interview relating to the description of the position and job qualifications. The interview should allow you to learn about the applicant's skills, personal style, and ability to relate to children and adults.

Questioning skills are an essential component of every teacher's repertoire, but teachers who ask questions to students may have difficulty transferring this skill to the interview process. It is important to remember that questions pertaining to personal information (e.g., age, race, marital status, religion or national origin) which are not job related may be considered discriminatory in nature and should not be asked. Concerns about an applicant's physical or mental condition may be questioned only if the condition is related to on-the-job performance. *

*Review questions with the human resource office to assure inquiries are appropriate.

Figure 2.2

Promising Practices (continued)

Areas to explore in the interview are:

- Past experiences with children or with adults working cooperatively in a team,
- Knowledge of schools, education, and special programs such as special education
- Expectations about the job
- Examples of initiative and independence in past employment
- Ability to take directions and willingness to do noninstructional tasks such as copying, clean up, making materials, etc.
- Special talents that the program may draw upon such as art, music, etc.

During the interview you should note whether the applicant uses appropriate nonverbal communication, displays a genuine interest in the position, and appears competent in personal management.

Follow-up to the interview includes reviewing notes, checking with others who may have met with the applicant, and writing a brief statement concerning the final decision as a record of the interview process. As soon as possible, contact the applicant selected for the position and clarify any concerns that exist and establish the procedure to complete the employment process.

Setting Expectations

From the beginning, the educator-supervisor must envision how the school team will operate, how decisions will be made, and who will perform what tasks. Several sources of information may help in this process:

- the local educational agency's official job description for paraprofessionals;
- lists of strengths, weaknesses, and preferences of the team members;
- the teacher's own expectations for instruction and classroom management.

By integrating information from these three sources, the teacher may develop a list of preferences that clearly define roles, duties, and expectations for the paraprofessional.

The Paraprofessional's Role

In essence, the paraprofessional's job is to play a supplementary or complimentary role to the classroom teacher (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1998). For instance, the role of "teacher" implies certain expertise in instructional and behavioral management. Complimentary roles are those that exist in relation to one another. That is, without a teacher there would be no paraprofessional position. All services performed by the paraprofessional related to instruction and classroom management are done under the guidance of a trained teaching professional (see Section Six, Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment Competency S3). **Figure 2.3** demonstrates this role association between classroom teachers and paraprofessionals.

The local educational agency may have a general job description that applies to all paraprofessionals or more specific descriptions for certain types of positions. A job description acts as the starting point for developing a more personalized description that fits the particular characteristics of the teacher's classroom and the team members. The type and frequency of tasks performed by paraprofessionals have been shown to depend on the teacher's own beliefs about the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals (French, 1998).

Figure 2.3

Teacher & Paraprofessional Role Differentiation

TEACHER	PARAPROFESSIONAL
ROLE 1	
Program Manager	**Program Provider**
• indirect and direct services to students • lesson planner and provider • test developer and interpreter • introduces skills/concepts • develops and implements behavior management plan • devises instructional material	• provides instructional support to students • collects data on students • offers practice and review opportunities • implements behavior management plans • produces materials
ROLE 2	
Administrator	**Assistant**
• meets and confers with parents, teacher, and other professionals (IEPs, etc.) • initiates referrals and planning • informs paraprofessional of program changes	• communicates information from observations of student progress to teacher • participates in planning • implements program changes, after directed by the teacher
ROLE 3	
Supervisor	**Supervisee**
• provides clear directions for instructional procedures • provides regular constructive feedback • assists in developing paraprofessional's skills	• consistently follows directions given by the supervisor • accepts or responds to supervisor's feedback

Completing the exercise in **Figure 2.4** will help the educator and the paraprofessional understand each other's responsibilities and serve as a basis for discussion and team building

Figure 2.4
Establishing Roles

Instructions: Discuss the following tasks with members of the team. Establish the duties that should be performed exclusively by the teacher or paraprofessional and those that can be shared. Discuss the details of how each shared task will be performed. Policies and procedures vary within local educational agencies, therefore; be certain to verify responsibilities with you local administration.

Task	Teacher	Paraprofessional	Share
Participates in planning academic lessons			
Participates in planning academic activities			
Creates classroom displays			
Takes attendance			
Contacts parents			
Collects homework			
Assists in supervision in the classroom			
Makes copies, prepares materials			
Records and charts data			
Implements behavior management procedures			
Implements classroom management procedures			
Tidies classroom at end of day			
Escorts children to other classes			
Assists students with hygiene tasks			
Inventories and orders supplies			
Grades papers and records grades			
Takes phone calls from parents			
Participates in team meetings			
Participates in an eligibility meeting			
Participates in an IEP meeting			
Maintains prostheses or medical devices			

Note: There are many tasks that members of the team are responsible for and which should be discussed to clarify who will take the lead in performing them. On a separate paper, list any additional tasks, prior to performing this activity.

(Adapted from Pickett, A.L. (1997). A training program to prepare teachers to supervise and work effectively with paraeducator personnel. New York: National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.)

Work Style Preferences

The next step is for the educator to become familiar with the strengths, abilities, weaknesses, needs, and preferences of the paraprofessional. Not only will this information help to define the paraprofessional's role in the classroom and school, but it will also indicate potential training needs for which the teacher can begin planning. Obviously, a great deal of information will only be learned over time and after observing and working with each other on a daily basis; however, some immediate information can be gained from the interview, or by using a checklist of preferences. Educators can facilitate the process and avoid potential problems by taking the time up front to learn more about the particular characteristics of each team member.

An example of a rating scale that might serve as an informal assessment of an individual's work style preferences is provided in **Figure 2.5**. This is not intended to be a comprehensive assessment, but it may be useful as the springboard for discussions about individual strengths and weaknesses. Whether a rating scale like this or some other method is used for gathering information, all members of the team, including the teacher, should participate in the activity. It is just as important for the paraprofessional to be aware of the teacher’s work style as it is for the teacher to be conscious of the paraprofessional’s preferences.

Figure 2.5

Work Style Preferences

Instructions: Teacher and paraprofessional each fill out the form independently. Then share the results, and use them as a guide for developing a "Personalized Job Description."

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
1. I prefer to work alone.	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. I make lists of things to do.	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. I can do many things at one time.	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. I enjoy talking on the phone.	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. I like to create things.	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. I am very organized.	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. I like to try new things.	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. I like to be a leader.	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. I enjoy being part of a team.	( )	( )	( )	( )
10. I appreciate feedback.	( )	( )	( )	( )
11. I am a morning person.	( )	( )	( )	( )
12. I prefer written to oral directions	( )	( )	( )	( )
13. I am artistic.	( )	( )	( )	( )
14. I am often quiet in groups.	( )	( )	( )	( )
15. I give praise easily.	( )	( )	( )	( )
16. I am on time for appointments.	( )	( )	( )	( )
17. I am musically talented.	( )	( )	( )	( )
18. I am a procrastinator.	( )	( )	( )	( )
19. I am very emotional.	( )	( )	( )	( )
20. I have a good memory.	( )	( )	( )	( )

(Adapted from Pickett, A.L. (1997). A training program to prepare teachers to supervise and work effectively with paraeducator personnel. New York: National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.)

Collaboration Among Team Members

After reviewing the general job description and obtaining some information about the particular characteristics of each team member, the teacher should decide how best to use each person's strengths and abilities to create an efficient and cooperative classroom team. Several models exist for collaboration, and the teacher must determine which one works best for the particular situation. Some teams use a collaborative model, in which the teacher devises instruction and the paraprofessional supports the teacher's instructions and plans. They may teach some lessons working together or teach small groups at the same time. Remember, it is never the paraprofessional's responsibility to develop instructional plans or curriculum or provide direct instruction on teaching a new skill. This model works well for a well-established team with a paraprofessional who already has a high skill level and extensive experience. Many teams work toward a collaborative model only after having worked together for a period of time. The key to successful implementation of this model is the scheduling of joint planning time.

Other teams use a teacher-assistant model for classroom instruction. In this model, the teacher assumes responsibility for direct instruction of new material, while the paraprofessional provides supplementary instruction involving practice and feedback for individuals or small-groups. When the teacher is instructing the whole group at one time, the paraprofessional under this model may be moving around the classroom, helping students to stay on task, or assisting a student whose IEP indicates an individual accommodation (e.g., a student who needs someone to help him follow along in a book).

A third model assumes a primarily clerical or organizational role in the classroom. Organizational duties, such as taking attendance and lunch count, charting behavior, marking and sorting papers, preparing materials, and creating classroom displays, can be performed by the paraprofessional while allowing more time for the teacher to engage in instructional planning and delivery.

Finally, a paraprofessional may be assigned to a particular student with responsibilities focused primarily on the student's needs. For some children to be successfully included in the general education classroom, it may be necessary to provide additional support. In such cases, which are becoming more and more common in special education placements, the paraprofessional may be responsible for implementing the instructional and management procedures that have been developed by the special education teacher and the general educator (Freschi, 1999) (see Section Six, Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills Competency S1). This model works best when the special education teacher and the paraprofessional have pre-arranged daily contact since they may actually be working in separate classrooms throughout the day.

A combination of these models may be used to create the most effective team. It is essential that the teacher and paraprofessional clarify from the start what their expectations are concerning the team's functioning. This includes clearly defining each team member's role and contributions to the team. The line of authority needs to be established from the start; although the paraprofessional's ideas and input are needed and valued, the teacher is responsible for making the final decisions that effect the operating classroom and service delivery to students. Remember that **Figures 2.2 - 2.5** provide information that is only a starting point for establishing classroom roles and assigning duties.

Establishing a Team Schedule

Another component in establishing expectations is designing a team schedule. Developed by the educator-supervisor, the schedule should indicate where each team member will be and generally what the member will be doing at all times throughout the day. It may be helpful to post the schedule in the classroom for easy reference. An example of an elementary classroom schedule is provided below in **Figure 2.6**.

Figure 2.6

Sample of Team Schedule

Time	***Teacher***	***Paraprofessional***
7:45-8:15	Supervise independent seatwork	Take attendance, collect homework
8:15-8:45	Lead morning meeting	Observe and participate
8:45-10:00	Language Arts: teach small groups	Monitor seatwork, practice sight word flashcards or other specific skill activities with individuals
10:00-10:15	Snack: Set up for next lesson	Serve snack, supervise students at snack table
10:15-11:00	Math: teach small groups, monitor seatwork	Accompany students to mainstream math class (Room 238)
11:00-11:30	Journal writing: explain topic, teach mini-lesson, monitor seatwork	Take dictation from two students for their journal entries
11:30-12:00	Read-aloud to group	Clerical tasks (office, classroom)
12:00-12:30	Lunch	Accompany students to cafeteria and have lunch, if appropriate
12:30-12:50	Recess: monitor students who must stay in classroom	Accompany students to playground and supervise recess
12:50-1:30	Science: teach whole-group lesson	Assist with lesson or teach small group practice skills
1:30-2:15	Social Studies: teach whole-group lesson	Accompany student to speech/language therapy (room 126, Tues. and Fri.) or assist with lesson or teach small group
2:15-2:45	Planning time: develop lessons and provide student assessments	Provide assistance: Mon., Wed., Fri.: Phys. Ed. (gym) Tues.: Art (room 231)
2:45-3:00	Supervise students for dismissal	Bus duty
3:00-3:25	Planning time: confer with the paraprofessional concerning lessons and students' needs	Planning time: confer with the teacher concerning lessons and students' needs

Goal Setting and Skill Development

Goals for the paraprofessional can be established in several different areas and may take into consideration ways of improving performance in delivering supportive instruction, managing behavior, organizing and using time wisely, and meeting standards of professionalism. When a team is just beginning to work together, initial goals may be quite broad, becoming more specific as team members become familiar with one another, the students, and the program. Over time, individual goals should reflect personal strengths, weaknesses, and program needs. Goals should be reviewed and revised periodically; perhaps once per grading period.

The paraprofessional's performance goals should be clearly stated with a plan for achievement and a method of monitoring progress. Goal setting is also a way of documenting and planning training needs of individual team members, essential for local educational agencies (LEAs) and state educational agencies (SEAs) for compliance with state and federal laws. When conceived of in this manner, established goals may become the professional development plan for the paraprofessional (see Section Six: Framework for Professional Development). Just as the teacher can hold the paraprofessional responsible for delegated tasks, the paraprofessional should hold the teacher and the local educational agency responsible for providing the proper training and support needed to carry out those tasks.

Although goals should be updated on a regular schedule, more frequent updates may be necessary for shorter-term goals or when specific difficulties or issues arise. **Figure 2.7** provides an example of a goal-setting plan for a paraprofessional. Column one states the professional development goals of the paraprofessional, with the remaining columns outlining a structured, timely plan to achieve the determined goal. **Figure 2.8** is a blank form for creating your own plan.

Figure 2.7

Sample Goal Setting Plan

Area	*Goal*	*Early Training Plan*	*Monitoring Plan*	*On-going Training*
Instruction	To identify elements and structure of direct instruction of reading to assist the teacher in implementing lesson plans	Observe teacher implementing lessons. Study teacher's manual. Practice with individual student.	After two weeks, check for understanding and proficiency, then begin daily implementation with one reading group.	Attend one-half day workshop on implementation of direct instruction (10/1).
Behavior Management	To implement time-out procedures consistently under supervision of teacher	Observe teacher. Read behavior procedures. Write down questions and problems as they arise.	Informal daily discussion (at end of day). Review questions/resolve problems.	Informal training by teacher. Read article on effective use of interventions.
Professional Expectations	To attend weekly team meetings after school.	Stay one-half hour late every Tuesday; leave one-half hour early every Friday.	Attendance at all meetings.	None
Communication with students	To provide consistent positive and corrective feedback of identified students	Observe teacher. Record praise statements and resulting consequences	Measure frequency of positive feedback during observation sessions	Feedback on observations. Division-wide workshop on communication skills
Organization/ Efficiency	To update daily attendance, homework, assignment completion and maintain current data records for each student.	Complete daily "progress note" for each student.	Check records for completion every week. Make note of concerns, patterns of behavior. Share with teacher before meeting.	See "progress notes" from previous years.

Paraprofessional_____Date_____
Supervising Educator_____
Review Date_____

Figure 2.8

Goal Setting Plan

Identified Area	*Goal*	*Early Training Plan*	*Monitoring Plan*	*On-going Training*

Section 3
Communication, Observation, and Feedback

As in any collaborative relationship, on-going communication between the educator and the paraprofessional is essential to effective team functioning. Open communication, providing fair leadership, and sensitive feedback within the guidelines of a coaching model builds trust in teams. Successful communication results in mutual understanding of what was sent and what was heard. As a supervisor, the educator needs to use active listening skills to facilitate open communication among team members. Active listening involves eye contact, paraphrasing, clarifying, and summarizing.

Active Listening

Active listening involves the listener attending to the speaker in a way that will allow direct and clear communication. The result of active listening is an accurate understanding of what is being said. The supervisor needs to model active listening by:

- Making direct eye contact with the speaker. To be comfortable, one may have some moments where eye contact is broken by blinking or looking at an object and then returning attention to the speaker.

- Attending to the message without drifting to personal thoughts. This includes not interrupting when the paraprofessional is speaking.

- Asking clarifying questions to be sure that the message is understood. Examples of clarifying questions are, “What did you mean when you said...?”, “Is this an example of what you observed?”, and “Is this what you mean to do...?”

- Paraphrasing or summarizing the message to be sure everyone is in agreement. When paraphrasing, it is important to remember that both the emotion and the words need to be matched to the speaker’s message. If the emotional content is not conveyed correctly, the speaker will feel that he or she has not been heard well enough to understand the full impact of what was being said.

Developing Communication Channels

Teams should set aside at least a few minutes at the beginning and end of each day to clarify plans, ask and answer questions, and address any immediate concerns that arise. However, the fast pace of schedules within any program often means that there is limited time to meet and communicate on a daily basis. That is why a variety of communication methods need to be developed that allow the teacher or related service professional to keep up with the instructional tasks, and the progress the paraprofessional is making toward reaching the program goals. Written lesson plans should be provided to the paraprofessional as part of the educator's responsibilities (see Section Six Instructional Content and Practice Competency S4). Information on the implementation of the plans may be written or whenever possible communicated face-to face, however, when this is not possible other techniques will be useful. Sample communication channels include:

- Communication logs in which the paraprofessional and the teacher write notes about the day's activities and progress can be kept in a three-ring binder in a convenient place.
- Progress and data sheets that are routinely used will provide information for the teacher and the paraprofessional on the effectiveness of the instruction or management plan.
- Communication notes that are jotted down and dated on post-it paper can be organized in a spiral notebook and reviewed for a more thorough analysis.

Delegating Tasks

As part of the on-going communication process, teachers need to be skilled at delegating appropriate tasks to other members of the team. Delegating tasks require the teacher to be willing to surrender a certain degree of control over how a task may be completed. The paraprofessional needs to know exactly how much authority she or he has in carrying out assigned tasks and what to do when unexpected circumstances arise. Again, the importance of keeping the lines of communication open among team members cannot be overemphasized. The longer a problem is allowed to go unresolved, the more complicated it becomes and the more difficult it is to solve. Daily communication, as well as regular team meetings, can help to maintain a healthy level of communication and collaboration.

Delegating tasks to a paraprofessional is often hard for teachers to manage. Whether it is because they feel a loss of control, believe that the paraprofessional is not skilled enough, or feel that they are totally responsible for the child's program, teachers are not always prepared to subdivide their responsibilities. Trust in the other team member's ability to do the task is absolutely necessary. Task analysis of the program needs and of the steps for carrying out planned instruction will allow the teacher to feel more comfortable about delegating responsibilities.

To successfully delegate tasks, a teacher must accept the differentiation between the teacher's roles and paraprofessional's roles. Next, the teacher should analyze what needs to be done to accomplish the goals that have been established. Consider whether the task can be

achieved reasonably well by a student peer, an adult volunteer, or the general educator. If the answer is yes, those individuals should be asked to complete the tasks. If the answer is no, analyze the level of professional skill that is needed to perform the task and determine if the paraprofessional can accomplish the job, or if the teacher needs to perform the task. **Figure 3.1** is a worksheet that can assist with planning and delegating responsibilities based on the objectives of the program, for a child, or for group of children.

Figure 3.1

Delegating Tasks

Measurable Objective Of Class Lesson	**Required Task of Student**	**Skill Level of Teacher or Paraprofessional Needed to Perform Task**	**Person Responsible for Task**
Example: To develop phonemic awareness	*Sound substitutions at the beginning of words*	• *Able to pronounce sounds and words correctly* • *Able to hear sound differentiations* • *Able to make appropriate corrections when students make errors*	*Ms. Jones, Paraprofessional* *Following lesson plans of teacher*

Paraprofessional_____
Supervising Educator_____
Date_____

Team Meetings

Working teams of teachers and paraprofessionals should conduct regularly scheduled team meetings **(Figure 3.2)** at which complex problems may be discussed and more thorough explanations and instructions given. Team meetings should be conducted in a manner that shows respect for an individual's ideas and concerns. Meetings should be focused on common goals, seeking solutions to problems, or providing additional clarification of instructional procedures. All team members should have the opportunity for input and participation in problem solving. Team meetings should be occasions for positive and public feedback to the paraprofessional.

Many paraprofessionals are not paid for time to attend team meetings after school hours, yet open communication cannot exist without them. Teachers may need to be creative and flexible in scheduling team meetings so that the paraprofessional may participate without putting in extra hours off-contract. One option may be to allow the paraprofessional to arrive late or leave early one day of the week to compensate for staying late on another day to attend a team meeting (adjustments to work schedules should be discussed with school administrators). Whatever arrangements are made, it is important for teachers to consider the fact that paraprofessionals are paid an hourly wage and should not be expected to put in extra hours without pay. Depending on the needs of the team, regular team meetings can be held weekly, bi-monthly, or even monthly for a set amount of time. The team meeting schedule should be established from the beginning of the year to establish a routine and obtain an on-going commitment from every team member to participate on a regular basis. An example of a team meeting agenda is:

Figure 3.2

Sample Team Meeting Agenda

I. ***Team Business***
- *A. Upcoming events*
- *B. Memos from building principal or supervisor*

II. ***Classroom Business***
- *A. What is going well?*
- *B. What is not going well?*
- *C. Which students are presenting particular concerns at this time?*
- *D. Specific feedback (from team members' on-going notes and from goal-setting plans)*
- *E. Skill review and/or practice*

III. ***Other Issues***
- *A. Allow team members to raise issues of concern*
- *B. Follow problem-solving steps if necessary*

IV. ***Next meeting***
- *A. Establish next meeting time*

The Goal of Supervision

If asked, most adults would say that they do not like to be supervised. Understanding that supervision is a required part of the position may not change feelings, but explaining up front that the intent is for skill development may help the paraprofessional to accept the supervisory relationship. Supervision should be an on-going interpersonal process, such as coaching, that focuses on the paraprofessional's actual performance of the job requirements. This focus involves detailing and improving the paraprofessional's skills through formative and summative measures. The outcome of supervision is improved job performance, which is defined in terms of increasing student achievement.

The Importance of Providing Feedback

Educators learn a great deal from one another and value the opportunity to talk about what is happening in the classrooms. One way to share information and reflection on issues is through creating a feedback loop. Feedback is part of the cycle of on-going coaching and support (see Section Six Professional and Ethical Practices Competency S10). Feedback is a means of giving both supportive and corrective information to the paraprofessional. A feedback loop consists of (1) establishing effective ways of providing instruction to students and managing the classroom environments; (2) helping paraprofessional learn vocabulary of educational terms for teaching techniques they can use and discuss with others; (3) helping paraprofessionals become aware of increasing skills; and (4) assisting paraprofessional in building confidence in their ability to work effectively and make further improvements (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). Feedback supports the continued use of appropriate behaviors, as well as, informing a person about inappropriate behaviors that need to be changed in order to improve performance. Downing, Ryndak and Clark (2000) concluded that most paraprofessionals "considered both receiving feedback related to their interactions with students and brainstorming future interventions with other team members to be forms of support" (p. 176).

The primary function of feedback is to enable educators to improve their job performance. It is less likely to be threatening when it is a regular component of the feedback conference, and when it focuses on how she or he can improve their performance. The most useful feedback meets four criteria:

(1) It is descriptive rather than evaluative. Feedback should be objective with as little personal interpretation as possible.
(2) It is specific rather than general. Tell paraprofessional what she or he is or is not doing correctly rather then using terms that convey little meaning such as "Nicely done". Such terms should be accompanied by an explanation, such as "The way you paced the lesson was nicely done".
(3) It is directed toward behavior that is voluntary and can be controlled. Involuntary behaviors do not respond to feedback.
(4) Feedback should always be checked to insure that it is understood.

The Purpose of Feedback

Feedback is carried on throughout the year as the paraprofessional completes the assignments given by the supervisor or masters competencies listed in Section Six of this guide as part of their professional development. Feedback can be formative and summative. Detailed feedback is considered formative and occurs as part of a continuing process. Formative feedback informs people about what they have done and enables them to make changes if necessary. For example, after a meeting to discuss the paraprofessionals' concerns, the educator/supervisor and paraprofessional can create an action plan based on feedback that identifies strengths and needs. The action plan is a type of formative feedback because it addresses on-going job improvement issues. Formative feedback is specific, non-judgmental, and objective. It is based on observed performance and related to indicators that measure consistency and effectiveness. (See **Figure 3.3** for indicators of effective practice.)

Summative feedback is given to the paraprofessional at, or near, the end of the term and is passed on to a program administrator for the purpose of deciding continued employment. "You did a good job" is an example of summative feedback – it sums up what the person has done but does not explain what was good or bad about it (Morgan & Ashbacker, 2001). If the formative process has been appropriately applied, the end-of-the-year feedback, or summative feedback, should reflect the previously gathered information, act as a follow-up review of the past year, and serve as a planning mechanism for professional development for the coming year.

Elements of Supervision Model

Supervision involves providing performance-based assessments of the paraprofessional. This occurs through interaction between the supervisor and the paraprofessional during planning sessions, performance observations, and feedback conferences.

(1) Supervision of the paraprofessional during planning sessions involves identifying the paraprofessional's tasks and strategies that should be in place during the observation and helping the paraprofessional identify areas that need improvement**.** The paraprofessional may not be able to identify the areas needing attention, however, the supervisor can assist by asking probing questions such as:
   (a) What do you feel you do well most of the time?
   (b) How much progress toward the objective have you made?
   (c) What seems to be holding the progress back?
   (d) When you try _____, what happens?
   (e) What do you think are the consequences of using that strategy?

By the end of the planning conference the teacher-supervisor and the paraprofessional should have agreed on skills or strategies that the supervisor will observe.

(2) The supervisor should do formal and informal observations of the paraprofessional. Informal observations are those that occur in the course of the day while the teacher and paraprofessional are executing their duties. These observations, although generally unfocused, can provide much information on the paraprofessional's ability to carry out the tasks assigned by the teacher and to help children meet instructional and behavioral

goals. When a paraprofessional is observed informally, the teacher should try to wait to the end of the lesson to make comments about what was observed. Occasionally, there may be a good opportunity for the teacher to demonstrate a strategy or to assist the paraprofessional during the on-going lesson. Too many interruptions by the teacher, however, can interfere with the lesson and/or undermine the paraprofessional's authority with the children and should be avoided.

Formal observation of the paraprofessional within the supervision model should occur at a scheduled time. The focus of a formal observation should be the agreed upon areas discussed in the planning conference. During these observations the teacher may choose to collect data on the interaction occurring between the paraprofessional and student(s), the methods or strategies used, and the consequences of the paraprofessional's communication and behavior. This nonstructured approach is useful for gaining an overall impression of the paraprofessional's abilities.

A more objective observation approach is a checklist of instructional, interpersonal, or management behaviors. The teacher can use one such as **Figure 3.4** or develop a checklist specific to the needs of the paraprofessional and the position as found in Section Six. A frequency count of specific behaviors also may be applicable. With a frequency count, the educator/supervisor would use a checklist to record the number of instances the paraprofessional demonstrated a specific behavior such as giving clear directions to the student(s).

(3) The feedback conference provides another opportunity for enhancing the paraprofessional's performance. During the feedback conference, the teacher should solicit the paraprofessional's self-assessment of the lesson and encourage the paraprofessional to highlight strengths and areas for improvement that occurred during the observation period. The conference provides feedback on past performance, a chance to modify strategies and behavior, and an opportunity to develop new professional goals.

Figure 3.3

Examples of Observable Indicators of Effective Practices by Paraprofessionals

Directions: Observe the paraprofessional and circle the level of practice for each indicator. Develop more specific indicators based on the job description of the individual paraprofessional.

Indicator	Level of Practice		
1. The paraprofessional is using the lesson plan, teaching strategies, and instructional materials as specified by the teacher.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
2. The paraprofessional demonstrates skills to maintain appropriate student behaviors.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
3. The paraprofessional demonstrates skills to enhance a supportive, caring, and enjoyable learning environment for students.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
4. The paraprofessional follows all school rules and procedures.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
5. The paraprofessional adheres to attendance, punctuality and dress codes established by the school.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
6. The paraprofessional follows directions given by the teacher.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
7. Decisions made by the paraprofessional regarding instruction or management changes are discussed in advance.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			
8. The paraprofessional is consistent in implementing instructional strategies, behavior plan, and classroom routines that were established by the teacher.	**Consistently**	**Occasionally**	**Never**
Specific Indicators:			

Figure 3.4

Sample Observation Checklist

Rating Scale: 1=poor, 3=average, 5=excellent, NA=not applicable (no opportunity to observe)

During this observation the paraprofessional:

1. Gave clear directions	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2. Told the student what behavior is expected	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3. Followed the provided lesson plan	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4. Taught skills identified by the teacher	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5. Kept the students on task	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6. Used prompts appropriately to gain responses	1	2	3	4	5	NA
7. Provided appropriate reinforcement	1	2	3	4	5	NA
8. Used correction procedures	1	2	3	4	5	NA
9. Maintained control of the session	1	2	3	4	5	NA
10. Had instructional material ready for lesson	1	2	3	4	5	NA
11. Paced the instructional activities effectively	1	2	3	4	5	NA
12. Collected data to measure student progress	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Comments:

(Adapted from: Pickett, A. L. (1997). A training program to prepare teachers to supervise and work effectively with paraeducator personnel (5th Ed.). The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.)

The Teacher's Role in Performance Evaluation

Although the educator oversees the paraprofessional's daily activities, she or he may not have the responsibility to complete the paraprofessional's performance evaluation. The local educational agency's management plan, or policies, may place that responsibility with the principal or a central office administrator. As the paraprofessional's supervisor, the teacher should clarify who will complete the evaluation and convey that information to the paraprofessional. If an administrator is the primary evaluator, the teacher should request a role in the process to provide a fair assessment of the paraprofessional's job performance. However, many teachers would prefer to remove themselves from the summative evaluation process so that they can maintain a balanced relationship with the paraprofessional with whom they work so closely. A possible solution to this dilemma is to have different people do different parts of the evaluation.

Section 4
Solving Performance and Interpersonal Problems

In virtually any working relationship, problems will arise and cause tension among individuals. Sometimes problems develop because one or more team members are not meeting the performance expectations of the rest of the team. At other times, problems arise as a result of different interaction styles or opposing philosophies or ideas. Regardless of the source of the conflict, the team needs to have a strategy for addressing and trying to resolve the issue. The purpose of the "Problem-Solving Strategy" discussed below is to provide such a framework for the classroom team. This is preceded, however, by a discussion of some of the most common issues that frequently contribute to conflicts between teachers (as supervisors) and paraprofessionals (as supervisees).

Issues in Supervision

Control factors

The role of the paraprofessional has evolved out of necessity because the teacher cannot be everywhere or do everything required for the job. The teacher, therefore, has to feel comfortable delegating tasks to the paraprofessional. This involves surrendering some degree of control over how and when things are done. Difficulties may arise when the teacher is not willing to give up control over the tasks she or he delegates. Perhaps the teacher did not delegate an appropriate task that the paraprofessional has the knowledge or skills to complete. Perhaps the teacher did not make the expectations clear or provide adequate instructions to the paraprofessional. Or perhaps, for some reason, the paraprofessional is unable or unwilling to perform well enough to meet the demands of the job. The problem-solving strategy provided in this section can be used to address these situations.

Time Constraints

Obviously a great deal of time is required for the teacher and the paraprofessional to develop a working relationship and to operate efficiently as a team. The teacher needs to find the time to prepare, confer with, and observe the paraprofessional at work. This can present quite a problem because most paraprofessionals are paid on an hourly basis, usually arriving when the students arrive and leaving soon after the students leave. Furthermore, even when the teacher may have a planning period during the day, the paraprofessional is often working with students and not available. In many situations, the teacher may need to request shared planning time with the paraprofessional. In some schools, coverage can be arranged for the class to allow the teacher and paraprofessional time to meet and plan. In other situations, meetings before or after school can be scheduled as part of the agreement that the paraprofessional may leave early or arrive late to compensate for the extra time. Any change in work adjustments should be discussed with the school administration. However it may be arranged, time for meeting, planning, and problem solving is essential to developing an effective instructional team.

Communication Differences

Everyone has a personal style of communication, and supervisors interpret events and make decisions differently, to a large extent because of individual style. One common distinction between communication styles is "direct" vs. "indirect." A description of each style, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each, is given below.

> **Direct**: People who are considered to have a direct, forward communication style engage in behaviors such as dispensing knowledge, giving directions, and offering opinions. The advantages of this style of communication are that expectations are usually very explicit and honest feedback is given frequently. Disadvantages may include unwillingness to accept new ideas and suggestions and insensitivity to others' feelings.
>
> **Indirect**: People who have a more indirect style of communicating tend to be less reticent in expressing their ideas, feelings, and opinions. The advantages of this style of communication are that indirect people may be less confrontational and, on the surface, easier to work with than direct people. The disadvantages, however, include the fact that expectations are usually not made clear, and misunderstandings are often not addressed immediately.

People who are predominantly direct or indirect in their methods of communicating do not make good supervisors. Although there are times when the elements of one style or the other are appropriate, the best approach appears to be a "happy medium" between the two, in other words, an assertive/supportive style of communication. An assertive person stands up for beliefs and opinions, yet does not trample on the beliefs and opinions of others. Being supportive involves giving encouragement and praise as well as making suggestions and setting goals for improvement. Using "I-messages," asking clarifying questions, respecting and using the ideas of others, expressing empathy, providing guidance without taking over are all examples of assertive/supportive behaviors. Supervisors who model these behaviors are more likely to get the responses they desire from their supervisees.

In addition, teachers need to be aware of both correction and praise strategies. Just like students, adults respond better to positive feedback than to criticism. This is not to say that correction will not be necessary, but teachers should keep in mind that statements of praise should far outweigh corrections. Whenever possible, teachers should focus their praise and correction statements on student outcomes to avoid making the paraprofessional feel under personal attack. For example, a correction statement may be stated as "I noticed that Marcus started raising his hand to speak ," rather than, "You need to stop responding to students who call out." A praise statement similarly consists of comments such as “Your preparation of the materials for the class assisted in a smooth transition for the students” rather than, “You helped me today.” Specific comments assist the paraprofessionals in their job performance and self-esteem.

Furthermore, teachers and paraprofessionals need to pay attention to the nonverbal cues they give to others. Facial expressions and body language contribute a great deal to the content of any interaction. They can also enhance the ability of a team to operate smoothly and

efficiently throughout the day, when verbal communication is not possible or may not be desirable. By developing a set of hand signals or nonverbal cues, the teacher and paraprofessional can signal to each other that a student is becoming agitated, trying to manipulate them, or may be in need of extra assistance.

Certainly, other factors exist that may influence team performance and interpersonal relationships. For example, team members may have different points of view about educational practices and strategies, different value systems, different cultural backgrounds, different ages, different ideas about gender roles, varying levels of education and experience, and different tolerance levels for frustration. Importantly, the feelings of both teachers and paraprofessionals must be recognized, understood, and appreciated. When these feelings are not expressed openly, they can build resentment, increase frustration, and allow negative feelings to fester to a point where they become insurmountable barriers to an effective partnership.

Differences in Role Expectations

Sometimes problems arise when individuals are not accustomed to or are not comfortable with the role they are expected to assume. For example, the teacher may not feel comfortable in a supervisory role, especially if the paraprofessional is older, more experienced, or culturally different. Similarly, some paraprofessionals may not be comfortable taking directions from the teacher or, conversely, taking the initiative when specific directions have not been given. Again, open and honest communication is the essential ingredient for creating an effective partnership and clarifying role expectations. Talking about problems early on and employing the problem-solving strategies before problems become too difficult are the keys to teamwork.

A Problem-Solving Strategy

Because of the complex and fast-paced nature of classroom life, it is easy for teams to ignore or postpone dealing with minor misunderstandings or disagreements. Unfortunately, this only tends to exacerbate the problem. The team needs to work together to decide on a course of action, but this is not always easy to do. To make matters worse, most classroom teams are left to solve interpersonal problems on their own, without much outside support or assistance.

The following problem-solving strategy has been adapted from Pickett and Gerlach's work (1997) and consists of a series of five steps that the teacher may use to guide the team in resolving conflict and improving their ability to work together. This approach emphasizes the team's effort to reach consensus, but in reality, there are times when the teacher or other school professionals need to make decisions with which everyone on the team may not agree. However, if problems are addressed early and assertive/supportive communication techniques are used, these situations should be kept to a minimum.

> Step One: State the problem. A situation must be clearly understood. If concerns and issues cannot be stated clearly, it is impossible to choose a course of action that will lead to a satisfactory conclusion. Everyone involved in a situation or participating in team efforts should describe the problems in their own words and from their own point of view. At this stage, each person needs to be objective in describing the variables involved. Infusing subjective statements will lead to misinterpretation of the problem.

Each member of the team should attempt to answer the following questions: What is the problem? Who is involved? Who is affected? How are they affected?

Step Two: Identify the causes of the problem. After defining the problem, the team must try to identify the sources of the problem and the reasons it persists. Some of the reasons for the problem may come from outside sources, over which the team may have little or no control. Therefore, it is important to focus the solutions on those factors over which the team does have at least partial control. At first, differences may not be apparent and the problem may be attributed to something else. It is important that the team investigates as deeply as necessary the true source of the problem and clearly identifies areas of agreement and disagreement. Utilizing skills such as active listening can help separate surface events from the underlying issues and clarify similarities and differences.

Step Three: Generate possible solutions. The team must decide what the desired outcome looks like. This can be stated in terms of a goal. From there, the group can generate a list of possible pathways to that goal. At this point, it is important that the team accepts all feasible solutions and allows each member to contribute something. It may also be helpful to list resources that may be necessary to implement each proposed solution.

Step Four: Select a course of action. After a list of possible solutions has been developed, the team should spend some time discussing the positive and negative aspects of each idea. Ultimately, the team wants to choose the alternative that is most likely to achieve the desired results and, at the same time is most agreeable to team members. The chosen solution must be "tested" over a period of time to see if it will work. An intervention should be assessed at least weekly to determine its effectiveness.

Step Five: Evaluate the results. Finally, the team must reconvene to evaluate progress in resolving the issue. Remember, progress toward a desired goal can be meaningful, even if the goal has not been entirely achieved. Sometimes change is occurring but more time is needed to achieve the desired results. Try to determine what parts of the intervention seem to be working and what parts may need to be changed. If positive changes have not occurred after a two-week period, the team should review the original problem statement and try an alternative intervention.

Figure 4.1 provides an abbreviated description of the problem-solving strategy including an implementation component and an example to help guide you. Use **Figure 4.2** to guide you through the process on a problem you are currently experiencing or may have experienced.

FIGURE 4.1
INTERPERSONAL PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGY

STEP	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
1. State the problem.	Allow each person to explain her or his point of view.	Several students are entering the classroom in a disruptive manner every morning.
2. Identify the causes.	Determine those over which the group has some amount of control.	Chaotic morning, rowdy bus ride, inclement weather, new student
3. Generate solutions.	Accept all feasible ideas.	Ask students to carry contracts for the bus driver to complete. Create a checklist for students to complete at home to help with organizational issues. Discuss with students changes in classroom routine.
4. Decide on a course of action.	Choose the most acceptable alternative, set a timeline for evaluation.	Alter morning routine: paraprofessional will meet students at a designated spot near buses and walk them to class. Students must take one "quiet minute" in hall before being allowed into class. Evaluate after one week.
5. Evaluate the results.	Assess whether or not progress has been made toward goal, make necessary changes in plan.	Progress is being made, but students have trouble settling down because of distractions in hall. Try taking "quiet minute" in library, which is empty in the morning.

FIGURE 4.2
INTERPERSONAL PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGY

STEP	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	PROBLEM
1. State the problem.	Allow each person to explain her or his point of view.	
2. Identify the causes.	Determine those over which the group has some amount of control.	
3. Generate solutions.	Accept all feasible ideas.	
4. Decide on a course of action.	Choose the most acceptable alternative, set a timeline for evaluation.	
5. Evaluate the results.	Assess whether or not progress has been made toward goal, make necessary changes in plan.	

WHAT IF . . .

In this section, several hypothetical problem situations and a series of steps for teachers to follow are presented. The examples represent fairly common challenges for many classroom teams, and although the details of each situation will be different, the basic problem-solving framework remains consistent. The suggestions below may help the teacher determine a starting point for resolving the problem.

1. What if the paraprofessional is not performing well enough to meet the demands of the job?

The teacher should:

- Clarify job expectation for the paraprofessional. Review any written information (job description) that has been developed.
- Document the paraprofessional's performance.
- Develop a discrepancy analysis: How does the paraprofessional's performance differ from the established expectations? Do the expectations need to be clarified? Does the paraprofessional possess the knowledge/skills necessary to perform the task? Is additional training needed?
- Set clear expectations for improvement. Establish a timeline for evaluating results.
- Document progress toward goal.

2. What if the students like the paraprofessional better than the teacher?

The teacher should:

- Acknowledge her or his own feelings.
- Try to identify reasons why students feel this way: reasons may be positive or negative (for example, students may prefer the paraprofessional’s sense of humor, or students may prefer the paraprofessional because she or he does not enforce the rules consistently).
- Make changes in interactions with students, if appropriate.
- Accept the fact that this is not a popularity contest, and students are entitled to their personal preferences.

3. What if the paraprofessional cannot maintain control of the class?

The teacher should:

- Determine needed level of classroom control.
- Observe paraprofessional and document interactions and effects of paraprofessional's behavior on students (e. g., students have difficulty settling back into academic routine after activity with paraprofessional).
- Model appropriate control strategies.
- Minimize negative factors effecting control (e. g., reduce amount of time that paraprofessional is expected to manage the entire group).

- Provide frequent feedback to the paraprofessional.

4. What if the paraprofessional and the teacher have different styles and philosophies?

The teacher should:

- Identify and communicate stylistic/philosophical differences.
- Highlight positive aspects of each style/philosophy.
- Match positive aspects of paraprofessional's style to certain tasks or activities whenever possible.
- Take the lead in developing classroom environment and structure and explain the need for a common approach within the classroom.

5. What if the paraprofessional undermines the teacher's authority?

The teacher should:

- Document paraprofessional's behaviors that are causing the problem.
- Explain and show documentation such as the job description and local educational agency’s policy manuals to the paraprofessional.
- Agree not to settle differences in front of students.
- Establish methods of communicating differences throughout the day (e. g., check with each other before granting a child permission to do something, or develop hand signals to communicate when a child may be trying to play one adult against the other)

Section 5
Related Services Paraprofessionals

A variety of noninstructional roles currently are performed by paraprofessionals in schools today. Under federal legislation (IDEA,1997) and new proposed special education laws, schools must ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. Related services may include health-care services, therapies, or psychological services according to the individual needs of students. These noninstructional roles have federal and state regulations reflecting specific standards. This section of the manual addresses the unique aspects of supervising health assistants, paraprofessionals assisting with speech-language programs, and occupational and physical therapy assistants.

Health Aides or Health Assistants

Approximately 400 paraprofessionals are currently employed as health aides or health assistants in Virginia. IDEA (1997) stated that school health services may be provided by a school nurse or other qualified person in accordance with applicable state qualification standards. IDEA (1997) also stipulated that paraprofessionals and assistants may assist in providing special education and related services. Adequate supervision and training are required of health assistants just as they are with special education paraprofessionals.

According to French (2003), adequate supervision of paraprofessionals employed as health-care assistants includes three elements. They are:

- Training for all school personnel working with students who have health needs.
- Educating all school personnel regarding the legal limitations placed on them by the state's nurse practice act.
- Providing job descriptions that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all school personnel regarding the health needs of students.

Virginia has specific qualifications and responsibilities for supervisors of health assistants. The Code of Virginia defines the "practice of a nurse aide" as the performance of services requiring the education, training, and skills specified for certification as a nurse aide. Such services are performed under the supervision of a professional nurse, licensed practical nurse, or other licensed health care professional acting within the scope of the requirements of her or his profession.

The Virginia School Health Guidelines (1999), published by the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Department of Health, states the Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP) assists in the school health program as determined by the school nurse (registered nurse). The scope of the responsibilities will vary according to the school health program needs, the capabilities of the UAP, and the availability of the registered school nurse to provide supervision. When the registered nurse determines that certain tasks may be delegated to the UAP, such

delegation shall be under the supervision of the registered nurse and consistent with the Virginia Board of Nursing regulations.

Qualifications for Unlicensed Assistive Personnel (UAP), as suggested by the Virginia School Health Guidelines (1999) are stated with minimum and recommended criteria.

Minimum:

- Possess a high school diploma or its equivalents
- Demonstrate sound judgment
- Demonstrate communication with verbal and written language skills
- Demonstrate ability to read and write English
- Demonstrate respect and protection of the confidentiality of students, staff, families, and so forth
- Demonstrate a willingness to accept nursing supervision
- Complete training in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and basic first aid program, and maintain the necessary certifications
- Demonstrate clerical proficiency.

Recommended:

- Possession of post high school education
- Demonstration of office management skills, such as typing, computer literacy and filing
- Experience in the care of the school-age child
- Possession of certification as a nursing assistant.

Minimal appropriate supervision for the UAP is having availability to immediate contact with a registered nurse. Qualifications for registered nurses employed by a local education agency are found in the Virginia School Health Guidelines (1999). Qualifications of the school nursing supervisor, who supervises all clinical nursing staff providing services in the school health program, as well as those unlicensed personnel (e.g. health aides) are also found in the Virginia School Health Guidelines. These highly recommended qualifications of supervisors for unlicensed assistive personnel (health assistants) are:

- Have a valid license to practice as a registered nurse in Virginia
- Possess a minimum of a baccalaureate in nursing from an accredited nursing program (a master's degree in nursing or related field is preferred with an emphasis on nursing, education, or public health)
- Have a minimum of three years experience in school nursing or a related field
- Have experience in personnel management
- Have experience in program administration
- Hold certification by a national organization of school nurses
- Maintain certification in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation; CPR-instructor certification for the supervisor or the supervisor's delegate is recommended
- Assume responsibility for updating knowledge and skill in community health, management, and related fields as new information emerges
- Complete ongoing continuing education programs pertinent to the evolving specialty area of school health and school nursing practice (pgs. 59-60 VA School Health Guidelines).

The Virginia Department of Education has published additional documents pertaining to training for all health assistants, in specific areas. These documents, available on the VDOE web page (www.pen.k12.va.us), are:

1. *Manual for Training of Public School Employees in the Administration of Insulin and Glucagon*
2. *Manual for the Training of Public School Employees in the Administration of Medication*

The Division of Special Education and Student Services offers an annual three day professional training on school health laws and health issues for health aides.

Paraprofessionals Assisting with Speech-Language Programs

Due to the growing numbers of medically fragile children, children with multiple or severe disabilities, and children who receive homebound services, the demand for school-based, speech-language services is expected to continue to rise (ASHA, 1997). Additionally, federal special education laws (IDEA, 1997) and proposed new special education laws, mandate access to assistive technology for students in school, when appropriate. One way schools have responded to these changes is with the use of speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs). Neither the Virginia Board of Education nor the Board of Audiology and Speech Language Pathology have established standards for qualifications of SLPA, qualifications of supervising speech language pathologists (SLPs), or roles and responsibilities of SLPAs. Local educational agencies (LEAs) are free to use SLPAs to support the work of SLPs, as long as only qualified SLPs provide those services. IDEA (1997) and state regulations specify as the responsibility of qualified providers:

- Evaluation
- Preparation of evaluation report
- Representation of speech-language services in evaluation, eligibility and IEP meetings
- Direct instruction of skills.

Further, an SLPA may not represent her/himself as an SLP.

The American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) recognizes the role of an SLPA as a person who can "perform tasks prescribed, directed, and supervised by ASHA-certified speech-language pathologists (ASHA 2000). Direct and indirect supervision of SLPAs by speech-language pathologists expands the speech-language pathologists' role as a service provider to include responsibility for the work of support personnel (ASHA, 2000). Supervision of these paraprofessionals requires a new knowledge base of the supervisory process by speech-language pathologists. ASHA (2002) has created a list of 17 specific skills required of a supervisor of SLPAs. Many of these skills parallel those of supervision for classroom supervision. The knowledge and skills required of supervisors of SLPAs are the ability to:

- Select and assign appropriate patients/clients to the SLPA
- Determine the nature of supervision that is appropriate for each SLPA

- Establish and maintain an effective relationship with the SLPA
- Direct the SLPA in following screening protocols
- Demonstrate for and participate with the SLPA in the clinical process
- Direct the SLPA in following individualized treatment plans that have been developed by the speech-language pathologist
- Direct the SLPA in the maintenance of clinical records
- Interact with the SLPA in planning and executing supervisory conferences
- Provide feedback to the SLPA regarding skills
- Assist the SLPA in effectively selecting, preparing, and presenting treatment materials and organizing treatment environments
- Share information regarding ethical, legal, regulatory, and reimbursement aspects of professional practice
- Model and facilitate professional conduct
- Direct the SLPA in the implementation of research procedures, in-service training, and public relations programs
- Train the SLPA to check and maintain equipment and to observe universal precautions
- Assist the SLPA in using appropriate language (oral and written) when interacting with patients/clients and others
- Establish a system of accountability for document use and supervision of the SLPA (ASHA, 2002).

ASHA also suggests the amount and type of supervision required should be based on the skills and experience of the speech-language pathology assistant, the needs of patients or clients served, the service setting, the tasks assigned, and other factors (ASHA, 1997). Guidelines created declare that the minimum amount of supervision is 30 percent weekly (at least 20 percent direct) for the first 90 workdays and 20 percent (at least 10 percent direct) after the initial work period. The guidelines also recommend that a speech-language pathologist supervise no more than three SLPAs.

According to ASHA (2003) a speech-language pathology assistant may conduct the following tasks under the supervision of a speech-language pathologist:

- May assist the speech-language pathologist with speech-language and hearing screenings (without interpretation)
- May follow documented treatment plans or protocols developed by the supervising speech-language pathologist
- May document patient/client performance (e.g., tally data for the speech-language pathologist to use; prepare charts, records and graphs) and report this information to the supervising speech-language pathologist
- May assist the speech-language pathologist during assessment of patients/clients
- May assist with informal documentation as directed by the speech-language pathologist
- May assist with clerical duties, such as preparing materials and scheduling activities as directed by the speech language pathologist
- May perform checks and maintenance of equipment
- May support the supervising speech-language in research projects, in-service training, and public relations program

- May assist with departmental operations (scheduling, record-keeping, safety/maintenance of supplies and equipment)
- May collect data for quality improvement
- May exhibit compliance with regulations, reimbursement requirements, and speech-language pathology assistant's job responsibilities (ASHA, 2003, p. 5-6).

Occupational and Physical Therapy Assistants

As mandated in federal and state legislation, local educational agencies are required to provide occupational and/or physical therapy when the student needs the services to benefit from special education (IDEA, 1997; VDOE, 1997). Similar to responsibilities of other related service paraprofessionals, an occupational therapy or a physical therapy assistant provides therapy services to assigned students under the direction and supervision of a certified OT/PT. Responsibilities of these personnel may include assisting a therapist in "assessment, program planning, education, documentation, and service delivery" (VDOE, 1997, p. 8). As with other paraprofessionals, the occupational and physical therapy assistants do not perform initial evaluations of student, develop a student's IEP, or therapy plan.

Suggested guidelines for supervisors of occupational and physical therapy paraprofessionals are delineated in the Board of Medicine Statutory Authority §§54.1-2400, 54-1-2956.1, and 54.1-2956.2 and §§ 54.1-2400, 54.1-3475 and 54.1-3480.1 of the Code of Virginia (2002). Code of Virginia regulations pertaining to supervision of occupational therapy paraprofessionals state that "an occupational therapist shall be responsible for supervision of occupational therapy personnel who work under his/her direction" (*Regulations Governing the Practice of Occupational Therapy*, 18 Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) 85-80-110). Additionally, the Handbook for Occupational and Physical Therapy Services in the Public Schools of Virginia (VDOE, 1997) recommend that supervisors of unlicensed occupational therapy personnel:

- Shall meet with occupational therapy personnel to review and evaluate treatment and progress of individual students at least once every fifth treatment session or twenty-one calendar days, whichever occurs first
- Shall not provide clinical supervision for more than six occupational therapy personnel
- Shall be responsible (and accountable, VAC 85-80-110) for the services provided by occupational therapy personnel under their clinical supervision (VDOE, 1997, p. 8).

Similar guidelines, are found in the Board of Medicine Regulations (2002) *Governing the Practice of Physical Therapy* (18 VAC 112-20-10) for supervision of physical therapy personnel. The regulations define a physical therapist assistant as a "person qualified by education and training to perform physical therapy functions under the supervision of and as directed by a physical therapist" (18 VAC 112-20-10). In accordance with Virginia regulations specifying supervision of physical therapy assistants, The Virginia Department of Education (1997) lists responsibilities of the supervisor as:

- Making joint first visit with physical therapy assistant,

- Providing on-site supervision not less than one of twelve visits made to the student during a 30-day period or once every 30 days, whichever occurs first,
- Supervising no more than three assistants at one time per practice setting, but not to exceed a total of two practice settings, and
- Taking responsibility for any action of persons performing physical therapy functions under the physical therapist's supervision or direction (VDOE, 1997, p. 8).

Virginia does not currently regulate the practice of persons employed to assist Occupational Therapists, but recognizes a certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA) as a person who has an associate degree from an approved and accredited occupational therapy assistant program. In addition, the assistant must have passed the certification examination administered by the American Occupational Therapy Certification Board (AOTCB).

Qualifications for a physical therapist assistant, as stated in the Handbook for Occupational and Physical Therapy Services (VDOE, 1997), require an associate degree as a physical therapist from an approved and accredited physical therapist assistant program.

The Virginia Department of Education has developed a document to provide supervisors and other interested persons with information about related services pertaining to occupational therapy and physical therapy in Virginia's public schools.

1. *Handbook for Occupational and Physical Therapy Services in the Public Schools of Virginia (1997) (Revision in process for 2003).*

Best practices and clear supervision by a highly qualified professional of related services paraprofessionals can improve services to students and ultimately increased student achievement.

Section 6
Framework for Professional Development

The final section of *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* provides a framework for professional development of paraprofessionals. This framework is designed to assist the supervisor-educator paraprofessional team to identify the knowledge and skill base needed to build strong working partnerships between all instructional personnel. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the largest international professional organization committed to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, has created specific knowledge and skills' competencies for beginning special education paraprofessionals. These competencies are designed to assist with:

- Building a professional, site-specific knowledge base
- Providing an accountability tool for communication, training, and supervision
- Building a partnership between paraprofessionals and teachers (CEC, 2003).

This section contains a Master Competency List and eight Individual Competency Sheets. Each of the eight Individual Competency Sheets is broken down into a total of fifty-two discrete items, which should be discussed with the paraprofessional. Each paraprofessional will have a set of competencies. Not all of the competencies will be applicable to each paraprofessional's role.

These competencies and materials may be used by administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and other individuals charged with professional development activities to develop professional development programs for paraprofessionals (NCLB 2001). The competencies are flexible enough to be used in multiple settings, with either regular education or special education paraprofessionals. As with any staff development program, effective communication depends on the staff's commitment to excellence and collaboration. Each local educational agency or school is encouraged to use these materials in a way that fits the unique instructional climate of that school.

A few suggested approaches for implementing components of *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* may include:

a. A comprehensive professional development program for paraprofessionals that includes a multi-step process from personnel selection to accountability;
b. A supervision and feedback tool that may be used formally or informally to provide constructive feedback and encouragement regarding job performance and new knowledge to increase the competency level;
c. An orientation tool that identifies key knowledge and skills needed by the paraprofessional, or
d. A skills and knowledge inventory for paraprofessionals to identify professional development needs.

A Comprehensive Professional Development Approach

The following is a five-step process that may be helpful using *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* as a comprehensive professional development program for paraprofessionals. However, this program may be adapted to suit the individual professional needs of the paraprofessionals and teachers in a local educational agency.

1. Selection of Personnel

The personnel to be involved in this professional development program may be the administrator in charge of staff development, the paraprofessional receiving training, and the teacher or teachers with whom the paraprofessional will be working. In some cases, a district may also choose to use a peer trainer to assist with some of the district or school-wide competencies

2. Pre-training Conference and Selection of Training Materials

The administrator (or designee) may want to schedule an initial conference with the teachers and paraprofessionals involved. Although individual conferences are recommended, small groups of paraprofessionals performing in similar roles may be convened at one time. Care should be taken to keep the group small and make sure that the paraprofessionals are performing similar duties.

The Master Competency List should be reviewed with the participants. The competencies that apply to the paraprofessional's role in the school should be selected for training. Not all competencies will be chosen for each job description. These selected competencies should be checked on the Master Competency List under the column Pre-instructional Goal.

Having chosen the appropriate competencies from the Master Competency List, the teacher and paraprofessional should be responsible for selecting the corresponding Individual Competency Sheets. Special attention should be paid to the fact that although the teacher is responsible for insuring that all targeted competencies have been discussed, the teacher is not necessarily directly responsible for providing all of the training. It is, however, fair to ask the teacher to assume the majority of the supervisory work since apart from the students, the teacher will benefit the most from having a well-trained partner in the classroom. Master Competences are selected from the Council for Exceptional Children’s recommended competencies.

3. Professional Development Phase

The teacher and paraprofessional should have a folder assembled containing all the Individual Competency Sheets corresponding to the selected competencies identified as pertinent to that role. The teacher now assumes responsibility for insuring that the paraprofessional is knowledgeable about the information covered in the individual competency sheets. The teacher may do the direct instruction, or arrange with other professional(s) (media specialist, occupational therapist, etc.) to provide the needed instruction and information.

When each competency is completed, the teacher and the paraprofessional may sign off and date on the appropriate line on the Individual Competency Sheet. This is essential for accountability. When an individual competency is completed, the appropriate line on the Master Competency List should be signed under Instructional Goal Completion.

4. Administrator Sign-off and Post-training Conference

When all the selected Pre-instructional Goals have been signed off under the Goal Completion column, the teacher and paraprofessional should submit the Master Competency List and the Individual Competency Sheets to the administrator (or designee) for verification. The administrator might want to confirm through dialog or observations the level of success the paraprofessional has attained through training.

Following this verification period, the team involved in the training may meet for a post-training conference. Any problems or questions that have surfaced during the training and verification phases might be dealt with at this time. If the administrator (or designee) feels confident that the paraprofessional has acquired the knowledge or skill, indicated on the checklist, they should sign off under the Administrative Sign Off column

5. Accountability

The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership is designed to serve as a system of accountability for establishing the roles, responsibilities, and professional development needs of the paraprofessional. With increased requirements for paraprofessional training in federal special education legislation, in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, and increased accountability for student learning at all levels, all schools will benefit from having clear documentation on the roles, responsibilities, and professional development needs of all their paraprofessionals. The NCLB Act mandates that each state and their LEAS must identify annual measurable objectives to increase the percentage of highly qualified professionals, including paraprofessionals supported by Title I funds. Increased qualification requirements "apply to paraprofessionals with instructional duties in any program supported by Title I funds. For Title I schoolwide schools, this means all paraprofessionals with instructional duties without regard to the source of funding of the positions" (NCLB, 2002). These requirements consist of the following:

- All paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or its equivalent
- Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support must have
    - Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education
    - Obtained an associates (or higher) degree

      OR
    - Demonstrated through a formal state or local assessment knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics

According to NCLB (2002) regulations, all instructional Title I paraprofessionals employed after January 8, 2002, must meet new requirements. Existing paraprofessionals must meet requirements by 2006. These requirements do not relate to other noninstructional and related services paraprofessionals who have their own local requirements (NCLB 2002).

A Supervision and Feedback Tool

The development of a competent educational team depends, in part, on the preparation of skills and knowledge of the paraprofessional. *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* may be used as a supervision and feedback tool to provide a performance-based assessment of the paraprofessional. As stated in Section Three of this manual, Communication, Observation, and Feedback, offering feedback and supervising paraprofessionals involves identifying specific tasks, strategies, and competencies, and collecting data to identify areas of excellence or improvement. The supervising teacher may use this program as a tool for formal or informal feedback checklist of instructional, interpersonal, or behavior management competencies. Many paraprofessionals may be concerned about meeting new regulations that each state must design to raise standards of paraprofessionals. *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* can be used to focus on specific skills and comply with federal special education legislation.

An Orientation Approach

In a new working environment, the paraprofessional and teacher must establish and maintain a collaborative working culture. One way to establish this culture while transitioning into a new position is through a systemic orientation that will allow the paraprofessionals to become familiar with school personnel members, the educational setting, building and room layout, and basic school procedures. The competencies found in *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* may help structure the paraprofessional orientation.

A paraprofessional notebook that is kept in the classroom may be helpful. This notebook may contain information that is related to daily activities of the classroom and the paraprofessional's role and responsibilities. The individual competency sheets may help to organize the paraprofessional notebook and may be used as a guide for daily routines and procedures and pertinent information for new paraprofessionals and substitutes.

A Self-Assessment Tool for Paraprofessionals

The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership may be used as a tool for self-assessment and identifying professional development needs. The competency areas, as well as additional competencies to fit the needs of the individual, may be used to guide the development of professional areas listed in the Master Competency List. When using *The Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Supervision and Collaboration with Paraprofessionals: A Partnership* as a self-assessment tool, the program is intended to be used as an ongoing record of paraprofessional development and preparation. A suggested schedule for implementation includes an initial review of relevant competencies at the beginning of the school year and updating them regularly to reflect professional development opportunities, continuing education courses, and on-the job experiences. Some suggestions for using the self-assessment tool include using the individual competency sheets to:

- Maintain a record of professional development,
- Determine areas where increased skill or knowledge are desired; opportunities and preparation experiences are identified that increase the level of competency,
- Record skills, knowledge, and experiences to assist when requesting a change in position or setting, and
- Record areas of interest and skills to help guide or direct further career advancement or development.

The NCLB Act encourages states to create programs to establish, expand, or improve alternative routes for state certification for teachers and principals (especially in the areas of mathematics and science) that will encourage entry into the teaching profession for highly qualified individuals with at least a baccalaureate degree, including mid-career professionals, military personnel, paraprofessionals, and recent college graduates with records of academic distinction. High-quality professional development, as discussed in the manual or formed from discussion of competencies, can assist these individuals in their educational goals.

MASTER COMPETENCY LIST

Name of Paraprofessional: _____

Name of Teacher: _____

Date Implemented: _____ Date Completed: _____

School: _____

District: _____

Pre-Instructional Goal	Instructional Goal Completion	Admin. Sign Off	Competency Areas
			Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education
_____	_____	_____	1. Knowledge of purposes of programs for individuals with exceptionalities.
_____	_____	_____	2. Knowledge of beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures and their effect on the relationships among children, families, and schooling.
_____	_____	_____	3. Knowledge of rights and responsibilities of parents and children/youth as they relate to individual learning needs.
_____	_____	_____	4. Knowledge of the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraeducators, and support personnel.
			Characteristics of Learners
_____	_____	_____	1. Knowledge of the impact of differential characteristics of individuals with exceptionalities on the individual's life and family in the home, school, and community.
_____	_____	_____	2. Knowledge of indicators of abuse and neglect that put students at risk.
			Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation
_____	_____	_____	1. Knowledge of the rationale for assessment.
			Instructional Content and Practice
_____	_____	_____	1. Knowledge of demands of various learning environments on individuals with exceptional learning needs.
_____	_____	_____	2. Knowledge of basic instructional and remedial methods, techniques, and materials.
_____	_____	_____	3. Knowledge of basic technologies appropriate to individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment

_____ _____ _____ 1. Knowledge of teaching and learning environments.

Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills

_____ _____ _____ 1. Knowledge of rules and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Communication and Collaborative Partnerships

_____ _____ _____ 1. Knowledge of characteristics of effective communication with children, youth, families, and school and community personnel.

_____ _____ _____ 2. Knowledge of common concerns of parents of individuals with exceptionalities.

____ _____ _____ 3. Knowledge of roles of individuals with exceptionalities, parents, teachers, paraeducators, and other school and community personnel in planning an individualized program.

____ _____ _____ 4. Knowledge of ethical practices for confidential communication about individuals with exceptionalities.

Professionalism and Ethical Practices

_____ _____ _____ 1. Knowledge of personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's ability to work effectively with children, youth, families, and other team members.

_____ _____ _____ 2. Knowledge of the paraeducator as a role model for individuals with exceptional learning needs.

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Special Education

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of purposes of programs for individuals with exceptionalities
_____	_____	_____	K2: Knowledge of beliefs, traditions, and values across cultures and their effect on the relationships among children, families, and schooling
_____	_____	_____	K3: Knowledge of rights and responsibilities of parents and children/youth as they relate to individual learning needs
_____	_____	_____	K4: Knowledge of the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraeducators, and support personnel.
_____	_____	_____	S1: Perform responsibilities under the supervision of a certified/licensed professional in a manner consistent with the requirements of law, rules and regulations, and local district policies and procedures.
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Characteristics of Learners

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of impact of differential characteristics of individuals with exceptionalities on the individual's life and family in the home, school, and community
_____	_____	_____	K2: Knowledge of indicators of abuse and neglect that put students at risk
_____	_____	_____	S1: (None in addition to the required knowledge and skills for all beginning special education teachers.)
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge (K) and Skills (S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of the rationale for assessment.
_____	_____	_____	S1: Demonstrate basic data collection techniques.
_____	_____	_____	S2: With direction from a professional, make and document objective observations appropriate to the individual with exceptional learning needs.
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Instructional Content and Practice

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of demands of various learning environment on individuals with exceptional learning needs
_____	_____	_____	K2: Knowledge of basic instructional and remedial methods, techniques, and materials
_____	_____	_____	K3: Knowledge of basic technologies appropriate to individuals with exceptional learning needs
_____	_____	_____	S1: Establish and maintain rapport with learners
_____	_____	_____	S2: Use developmentally and age-appropriate strategies, equipment, materials, and technologies, as directed, to accomplish instructional objectives
_____	_____	_____	S3: Assist in adapting instructional strategies and materials according to the needs of the learner
_____	_____	_____	S4: Follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: (None in addition to the required knowledge and skills for all beginning special education teachers.)
_____	_____	_____	S1: Assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment that includes following prescribed policy and procedures
_____	_____	_____	S2: Use basic strategies and techniques for facilitating the integration of individuals with exceptional learning needs in various settings
_____	_____	_____	S3: As directed by a certified/licensed professional, prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning
_____	_____	_____	S4: Use strategies that promote the learner's independence
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of rules and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individuals with exceptional learning needs
_____	_____	_____	S1: Demonstrate effective strategies for the management of behaviors
_____	_____	_____	S2: Use appropriate strategies and techniques to increase the individual's self-esteem, self-awareness, self-control, self-reliance, and self-advocacy
_____	_____	_____	S3: Assist in modifying the learning environment to manage behavior
_____	_____	_____	S4: Collect and provide objective, accurate information to professionals, as appropriate
_____	_____	_____	S5: Use appropriate strategies and techniques in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Communication and Collaborative Partnerships

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of characteristics of effective communication with children, youth, families, and school and community personnel
_____	_____	_____	K2: Knowledge of common concerns of parents of individuals with exceptionalities
_____	_____	_____	K3: Knowledge of roles of individuals with exceptionalities, parents, teachers, paraeducators, and other school and community personnel in planning an individualized program
_____	_____	_____	K4: Knowledge of ethical practices for confidential communication about individuals with exceptionalities
_____	_____	_____	S1: Under the direction of a certified/licensed professional, use constructive strategies in working with individuals with exceptional learning needs, parents, and school and community personnel in various learning environments
_____	_____	_____	S2: Follow the instructions of the professional
_____	_____	_____	S3: Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and other school and community personnel
_____	_____	_____	S4: Participate as requested in conferences with families or primary caregivers as members of the educational team
_____	_____	_____	S5: Use appropriate basic educational terminology regarding students, programs, roles, and instructional activities
_____	_____	_____	S6: Demonstrate sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritages,

lifestyles, and value systems among children, youth, and families

_____ _____ _____ S7: Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to use effective problem solving, engage in flexible thinking, employ appropriate conflict management techniques, and analyze one's own personal strengths and preferences

_____ _____ _____ Other:

Action Plan:

Individual Knowledge(K) and Skills(S) Sheet

Paraeducator Common Core

Professional and Ethical Practices

Paraprofessional: _____

Teacher: _____

Teacher initials	Para. initials	Date	Individual Competencies
_____	_____	_____	K1: Knowledge of personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's ability to work effectively with children, youth, families, and other team members
_____	_____	_____	K2: Knowledge of the paraeducator as a role model for individuals with exceptional learning needs
_____	_____	_____	S1: Demonstrate commitment to assisting learners in achieving their highest potential
_____	_____	_____	S2: Function in a manner that demonstrates a positive regard for the distinctions among roles and responsibilities the ability to separate personal issues from one's responsibilities as a paraeducator
_____	_____	_____	S3: Function in a manner that demonstrates the ability to separate personal issues from one's responsibilities as a paraeducator
_____	_____	_____	S4: Demonstrate respect for the culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation of individual students
_____	_____	_____	S5: Promote and maintain a high level of competence and integrity
_____	_____	_____	S6: Exercise objective and prudent judgment
_____	_____	_____	S7: Demonstrate proficiency in academic skills including oral and written communication
_____	_____	_____	S8: Engage in activities that promote paraeducators' knowledge and skill development
_____	_____	_____	S9: Engage in self-assessment activities

_____	_____	_____	S10: Accept and use constructive feedback
_____	_____	_____	S11: Practice within the context of the CEC Code of Ethics and other written standards and policies of the school or agency where they are employed
_____	_____	_____	Other:

Action Plan:

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