
Northwestern Illinois Association

Paraprofessional Training Program

Workshop Topics 2009-2010

ABC's and Overview of Special Education

This will be an overview of special education services and the legislation affecting it - as it affects students, parents and staff. The impact of the IEP on the student's program, rights of students and parents as provided by law, and the influence of current legislation on students; Staff and school districts will also be discussed. The issue of confidentiality and an examination of the paraprofessional's role from the perspective of IDEA will be addressed. Appropriate language and terminology regarding classifications of disabilities, as well as a review of many of the widely-used acronyms in special education will also be included in the presentation.

Assisting Students from Other Cultures

Paraprofessionals will be given an overview of several different cultures and how the understanding of such cultures affects the success of students in the classroom. An introspection of their individual understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity will be administered. This awareness level will enhance group discussion on the different cultures that are represented in their educational setting.

Basic Training: Survivor Skills Necessary to Work Effectively with Students and Staff

This full-day presentation is essential for newly hired paraprofessional staff, but may also be beneficial for those who would like to refresh their skills or fill in areas of knowledge. Starting with the "basics", professionalism, and legal issues will be addressed. A section on participation as part of the school team includes effective communication, the settling of disagreements peaceably, as well as stressing the importance of confidentiality.

The core of this workshop is based on working effectively with students, starting with the management of student behavior, and including some basic behavioral concepts in preventing and dealing with non-compliance. Skills and strategies needed in order to work effectively with small groups and supervise independent work periods will be addressed. The final segment of this workshop will focus on the paraprofessional's role in working with individual students.

This workshop will include activities such as: role-playing, analyzing hypothetical situations and dealing with professional and ethical issues. Materials that should serve as valuable resources will be provided.

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Behavior and Difficult Students

Students will often react to situations and others in an inappropriate manner. Paraprofessionals can be an integral team player when they can assist the teacher by assisting with students that demonstrate difficult and problematic behaviors.

This workshop will help the paraprofessional develop skills to identify specific behaviors, recognize the underlying function of behaviors, introduce strategies for diffusing and redirecting behaviors, and implementing techniques to respond in a non-confrontational manner when dealing with difficult students.

Discussion will be facilitated to problem-solve real student situations.

Body Mechanics

Training provided by a Physical Therapist.

This workshop addresses the importance of using proper body mechanics throughout each day. The structure and function of the spine are discussed, identifying how the bones, nerves and muscles all play a vital role in proper application of kinesiology, which is the science of movement. The principals of lifting are discussed, followed by demonstration of the procedures for lifting including a two-person lift, one-person transfer and two-person transfer. Adaptive equipment that can be used for transfers and lifts is demonstrated. General principles for proper care of the back are discussed, including the top five things to do to maintain a healthy spine. General exercises to maintain a healthy spine are discussed and demonstrated. Labs are provided throughout the presentation to practice lifting procedures and use of adaptive equipment.

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Bully Busters! Strategies for the Paraprofessional to Minimize and Eliminate Bullying

Bullying is a universal and serious problem in all of our schools. Paraprofessionals will learn ways to identify the different types of bullying, become aware of why kids bully and are bullied, learn effective intervention strategies, and develop activities and suggestions for the school setting to minimize and prevent bullying.

The types of bullying to be discussed are:

- Verbal
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Racist
 - Sexual
 - Cyber
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Computer Use for Paraprofessionals – Level 1

Paraprofessionals that have little or no experience working on a computer will have an opportunity to become familiar with basic computer concepts. Tasks to be worked on will be:

- Turning on a computer
- Opening a word document
- Handling a mouse
- Performing simple toolbar functions: Save as, save, cut, paste, highlight, print, etc.
- Creating a document
- Printing a document

Each paraprofessional will draft one personal goal that will enhance their professional growth.

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Computer Use for Paraprofessionals – Level 2

Level 2 is for paraprofessionals who wish to expand their knowledge of utilizing a computer. Tasks to be worked on will be:

- Page Set-up
- Formatting a document
- Using spell-check and grammar check
- Using clip art, and word art
- Inserting standard functions
- Auto-text

A culminating activity for this workshop will be to start a resume or create professional goals for their portfolio.

Facilitating Friendships for Students with Disabilities and others who are Socially Isolated

This workshop addresses friendship as a basic need and the nature of friendship. Topics that are discussed include how friendships are viewed by students with and without disabilities, by parents, and how academic success can improve when a student has friends. Strategies for facilitating friendships and finding ways to bring students together are addressed. Time is spent on how to develop a Circle of Friends and the Circle of Intimacy.

Other topics related to developing friendships include peer partners and peer supports, social inclusion, and group activities based on classroom situations.

Handwriting

Training provided by an
Occupational Therapist.

This workshop provides an introduction to the physical, visual, perceptual, organizational and cognitive variables applicable to handwriting. The basic skills necessary to produce written work are reviewed, including pre-writing activities, posture for writing, hand dominance and grasping patterns. In addition, common concerns about handwriting are addressed and strategies provided. Following a short video, modifications are explored, including various writing surfaces and tools. A lab experience is provided to familiarize participants with the effect of positioning on handwriting outcomes.

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Increasing Self-Esteem in Students with Disabilities

The segment on self-esteem will include the components of building esteem, creating an atmosphere to foster positive self-esteem, and classroom activities and strategies to assist students to gain a better sense of self and develop a positive self-image.

A student's self-esteem and self-concept are directly related to school success and interpersonal relationships. The paraprofessional can help create an atmosphere to foster positive self-esteem. Classroom activities and strategies to assist students to gain a better sense of self and develop a positive self-image will be presented.

Instructional Strategies: Math

This workshop will address the developmental sequence of basic concepts related to mathematical skills; demonstrate strategies for math computation, including functional math, time and money; demonstrate learning strategies that students use to achieve comprehension and application of math concepts. Emphasis will be on elementary math skills and functional applications; the TOUCH math method will be introduced. Methods for modifications and adaptations will be an integral part of this workshop.

Instructional Strategies: Modifications and Adaptations

Knowing when and how to use modifications and adaptations for the student with special needs is crucial for a student's success in the classroom. The terms will be defined and clarification of the process for using the IEP or 504 plan to identify the modifications for a student will be discussed. Various types of modifications and adaptations will be explained. There will be an understanding that the paraprofessional must be trained by the teacher and work under the direction of the teacher in order to implement and make modifications for students. Samples of authentic student work that has been modified will be examined in this workshop to demonstrate curricular modifications and adaptations. Participants will have the opportunity to review other student work samples and make recommendations for modifications based on the students they support. Activities will culminate the workshop by having groups discuss various modifications and adaptations used in their classrooms.

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Instructional Strategies: Reading

Paraprofessionals will become familiar with their role in supporting a student's reading or literacy program. Understanding readiness and teachable moments will enable the paraprofessional to understand the needs and development of emerging readers. Basic reading concepts such as phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, shared and guided reading will be discussed. A brief overview of collecting reading data will enable the paraprofessional to assist the educational team with the assessment process. Different strategies for assisting students of all levels with reading instruction will be demonstrated and practiced during this session.

Instructional Strategies: Writing

Writing can be difficult and complex for many students, especially for the student with special needs. This workshop will help the paraprofessional support the instructional process by exploring the writing development process, examine sentence building and sentence sequencing activities, and discuss ideas for paragraph development and writing summary paragraphs. Simple techniques to use in the classroom to help students develop their skills will be demonstrated. Adaptive technology and alternative methods of producing written work will be discussed for the student who has limited ability to write in the typical fashion.

A demonstration and hands-on activity with the AlphaSmart may culminate this activity.

Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders

This workshop explores the characteristics and learning styles of individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Activities will be presented to assist paraprofessionals in a better understanding of how the child with autism spectrum disorder processes information. Communication, sensory processing, and visual supports are reviewed, and basic strategies for support are provided. Paraprofessionals will also be introduced to the process of understanding how challenging behavior, communication, and sensory processing interact in the school environment.

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It's All About the IEP!

Often times a paraprofessional is unfamiliar with the IEP. Its purpose, function and relative implications for the paraprofessional will be the focus of this workshop. All components of an IEP from the cover page, to the goals and objectives, to the related services page, to the accommodations and modifications, etc., will be reviewed and discussed. Legality and confidentiality of this binding document will be stressed as primary considerations. Discussion will be facilitated on the paraprofessional's role and responsibility of a student's IEP.

Making Inclusion Work – Grades 6-12, 7-12

The workshop will provide a number of effective strategies when working with the middle school or secondary student in the inclusive classroom. Problems in implementing inclusion specific to this population will be examined. Ways in which the paraprofessional can successfully overcome or avoid such problems will be considered. Motivational tools such as time cards and goal sheets, instructional adaptational frameworks, and modes of instruction will be presented. A number of strategies for improvement of reading comprehension and the development of test-taking skills are included. Adaptations and recommendations to address other academic areas will also be provided. Finally, participants will discuss and examine best practices in working with the educational team.

Making Inclusion Work – Grades K-5, K-6

Participants will first review the concept and definition of inclusion from IDEA 2004. Then, current approaches will be covered; including the implementation of activities to foster an inclusive climate in the classroom, during the "specials", and during unstructured times such as lunch and recess. The use of learning strategies, the development of positive attitudes and perceptions and practical ways to improve communication with the educational team will be explored. A discussion on intrusive and non-intrusive support and the paraprofessional's role in the inclusive classroom will be facilitated. An overview of information on learning style will be provided. The presentation will provide many individual examples of inclusion in the elementary setting.

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More than Meets the Eye - Visual Impairments

Working with students that have visual impairments presents a unique situation for the paraprofessional. This workshop will provide an explanation of visual impairments, discussion on types and degrees of impairments, terminology associated with it, and roles of the personnel who support these students. The technology and equipment that are used with students who have vision impairments will be discussed. Insight will be offered into how the impairment affects a student at school, home, in their community, and in recreational life. Proper etiquette, language, environmental modifications and understanding the role of sighted guide and guide dogs will be addressed. Suggestions and strategies will be offered to help the paraprofessional and other support staff recognize how they can foster inclusion for a student with a visual impairment into the regular education setting. The workshop will culminate with visual impairment simulation activities.

Observation and Data Collection

Paraprofessionals trained in this area should be able to provide valuable assistance to teachers regarding the documentation of student progress, especially as related to IEP goals. Items covered include recording behaviors, charting, effective observation, anecdotal records, varieties of recording systems, checklists, and a data collection glossary. The procedures discussed in this workshop may be advantageous as best practice aligns with the Response to Intervention initiative.

Paraeducator Communication Skills ©

It is important for all members on the educational team to communicate with one another in a professional and positive manner and to understand how our communication ultimately affects the students we support in the educational setting. Discussing basic communication skills and providing interactive activities will be the format for this training workshop.

Portfolio Development for the Paraprofessional – Level 1

No Child Left Behind legislation has presented the need for paraprofessionals to upgrade their skills and to show competency in those skills. This workshop will introduce the paraprofessional to different formats that will help document their professional development activities and create a “filing system” (portfolio) for that purpose. Access to a computer lab for this presentation will be necessary to begin an electronic filing system for the paraprofessional.

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Portfolio Development for the Paraprofessional – Level 2

This workshop is for paraprofessionals who have begun working on a professional portfolio. Time will be spent assisting paras write professional goals and reflection statements and helping them expand the work they have started in Portfolio Development Level 1.

Pumping Up Paraprofessionalism! ©

Paraprofessionals, like other staff, work very hard at targeting the needs of the students they support and the teachers with whom they partner on a daily basis. It is highly encouraged that paraprofessionals are given the opportunity to network and reflect on how well they are doing. This presentation offers the paraprofessional a highly interactive opportunity for growth in appreciating their self-worth on the educational team. Further, new and veteran paraprofessionals' points of view are shared in an easy going atmosphere.

Response To Intervention for the Paraprofessional

This workshop defines Response To Intervention and the Problem Solving Model. It provides a history of Response To Intervention and why there is a movement in schools toward this model of service delivery. The components of the model are presented as well as the role paraprofessionals can play in the process. The importance of data collection and ways to facilitate data collection are reviewed and discussed.

Sensory Processing

Training provided by an
Occupational Therapist.

This workshop introduces participants to sensory processing and explains the impact it has on a student's functional performance. It presents an explanation of behaviors that relate to sensory processing problems and presents programs and activities that can be implemented in the school setting. Participants will become familiar with the seven sensory systems and identify "alert states / readiness to learn" and how to modify these states. This workshop will define the paraprofessional's role when working with students who have sensory processing problems.

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Special Students, Special Problems: Behavior

Some of the most frequently occurring behavioral problems, as seen across grade and age levels, are presented - with opportunity for discussion of appropriate strategies. Basic principles of behavior management, modifications, and reinforcement are discussed.

The paraprofessional's role in understanding and implementing a student's behavior management plan as a component to the IEP is covered. Behavior issues that may be included are: the aggressive student, ADD/ADHD, the disorganized student, the disruptive student, and the student with low self esteem. Interactive exercises and discussions will provide participants an opportunity to practice application of various strategies and to evaluate the merits of each.

Succeeding with Difficult Students

This workshop addresses challenges presented when paraprofessionals work with students who have significant behavioral problems, students who are frequently disruptive or who consistently act out. Participants will receive guidelines on how to establish a relationship with the student and identify his primary needs and interests. The how and when of teaching appropriate behaviors, and methods of providing positive support will be addressed. Interactive exercises demonstrate measures for redirecting non-disruptive off-task behavior and decreasing disruptive behavior. Discussion of communicating with difficult students will include suggested means of diffusing confrontations and one-on-one problem solving. Handouts of practical and effective cue cards, positive support graphics and reward systems will be provided.

The Role of the Paraprofessional in Providing Instructional Support

It is imperative that paraprofessionals understand their role on the educational team. Roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional and the teacher as defined in the NCLB guidelines will be discussed. Basic teaching competencies will be addressed, with emphasis on task analysis and wait time. Instructional terminology is introduced and practical examples of application and use are provided. Levels of student support and intrusive versus non-intrusive instruction will be addressed. Learning styles will be discussed and a self-analysis of learning style will be used to better understand the different ways students learn.

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The Role of the Substitute Paraprofessional

Substitute paraprofessionals have little opportunity for orientation and training. They must 'hit the ground running' and some lack having exposure in the field of special education. This workshop will cover topics such as: professionalism, confidentiality, communication skills, reporting abuse and neglect, IEPs, accessing information for a successful day; important information, important people, daily schedule, student's goals and objectives, student behavior, feedback, etc.

The Teaming Process for Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals work closely with classroom teachers and other staff, but often without fully understanding what makes a team effective. This workshop will review how the history and expectations effect their role, identify how to determine the role of an individual paraprofessional, how to evaluate and understand their work and communication style and will increase their understanding of teaming and ways to facilitate it. Points on working in the classroom, such as when to take the initiative will be reviewed, as well as expectations and strategies for interacting appropriately with school staff will be provided.

Translation of the IEP for the Bilingual Paraprofessional

Formerly called -- The IEP & The Bilingual Paraprofessional Translation

Visual Supports Work!

Visual supports for students on the autism spectrum, students with multiple impairments (as well as typical learners) are effective - and fun! This workshop will provide a brief introduction to autism spectrum disorder (pervasive developmental disorder), visual learning styles, and work systems. Visual supports can be used for schedules, turn taking, waiting, communication, social skills, and more. Learn the basics of visual strategies for use with students of any age. This workshop provides an opportunity to see examples of visual supports and time for paraprofessionals to share their experience with using visual supports. Paraprofessionals are encouraged to bring a camera for taking pictures of visual support samples.

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Working with Students Who Are ADD/ADHD

Practical techniques, strategies, and interventions for helping children with attention problems and hyperactivity will be provided. The workshop will identify characteristics of these conditions, as well as critical factors in working with children who have this diagnosis. The prevention of behavior problems will be addressed as well as issues related to times of transition and unstructured situations. Methods of multi-sensory task presentation will be presented, as well as specific strategies for providing instructional support in the content areas. In addition, a section will be included on organization and study skills.

Working with Students Who Are English Language Learners (ELL)

Children in our schools today speak many languages and come from diverse cultural and ethnic minority backgrounds. Paraprofessionals, as well as other school personnel, can benefit from understanding the child by being aware of his home environment, his background experiences, and the process of becoming familiar with second language proficiency. Specific instructional interventions for enhancing learning in English language learners will be discussed.

Working with Students Who Have Orthopedic Impairments

This workshop focuses on physical and medical conditions that often have a significant impact on the student. This workshop will address how this impacts the student as a learner, and what paraprofessionals need to know as background and as guidelines for adaptations and accommodations. A variety of specific conditions will be addressed and may include: asthma, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, epilepsy, hearing and vision impairments, spina bifida, and Tourette's syndrome.
