



Strategies for Effective Interactions Among Adults Supporting Students with Learning Differences

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Introductions



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Objectives

Participants will learn about...



The RELATE project



Effective teacher-
paraeducator
collaboration,
including challenges
and barriers



Strategies to promote
teacher-paraeducator
collaboration



>>> Educator Collaboration Matters



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- For student motivation, engagement, achievement, and conduct.
- For educator well-being, engagement, efficacy and attendance.



➤➤➤ Benefits of Educator Collaboration



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Student Benefits

- ❖ Decreased problem behavior
- ❖ Improved academic performance
- ❖ Greater understanding of materials
- ❖ Positive models



Educator Benefits

- ❖ Increased professional satisfaction
- ❖ Increased professional support
- ❖ Increased professional growth



>>> Benefits of Collaboration now?



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- Relationships look differently now
- Direct access to caregivers
- Paraprofessionals roles required reimagining
- Coordination and technology are key



THE RELATE PROJECT



RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

At the RELATE project, we believe in Recognizing Excellence in Learning and Teaching. Excellence stems from classroom climates that are grounded in social-emotional well-being and that prioritize high-quality social relationships.

Bringing expertise from education, psychology, and social-emotional learning, we work with educators to create quality relationships that support student learning.

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>>> Observational Components



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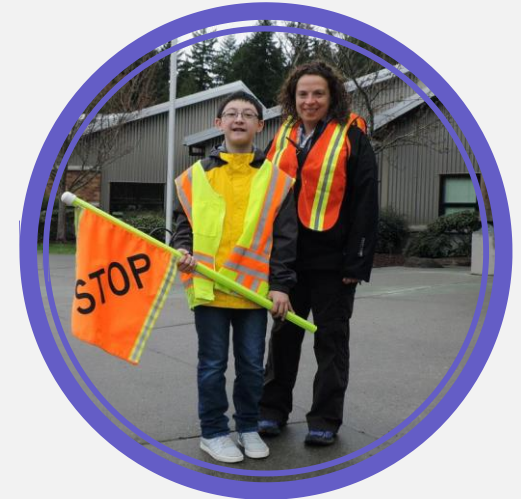
Teacher-Paraeducator Interactions

Interactions between educators that reflect unity of purpose, clear classroom management/ instructional strategies, and support a quality learning environment



Accommodations

Interactions between the educator and students that identify, acknowledge and accommodate for individual learning needs and goals



Prevention

Interactions between educator and students that promote a physically and psychologically safe learning environment

➤➤ Elements of Collaborative Relationships



Solidarity



Clarity of Roles



Respect

Solidarity

The consistent presentation of teamwork among educators in the classroom.



“

”

This is a work relationship, don't get me wrong, but you're with each other every day; there has to be something more than that. And you have to have each other's back no matter what. Being a teacher or paraeducator, you have to be on the same team.

- Paraeducator

Strategies for Solidarity



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Deferring

Teacher and paraprofessional consult and check in with one another before proceeding with students.



“We language”

Educators consistently use the word “we” when speaking to student to present a united front.



Active Listening

The teacher and/or paraprofessional echo what the other has said to create a consistent message.



Teamwork

Educators effectively work together to manage classroom and meet students’ needs.



Strategies for Solidarity



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Deferring

Check back with educator-initiated instructions



“We language”

All adults can use the word “we” when speaking with student to present a united front.



Active Listening

Use Empathy Interviews- understand the needs, strengths, and barriers to effective instruction



Teamwork

All adults can effectively work together to manage classroom and meet students’ needs.

“

I feel that we need to find a new way to balance our mental and physical health to stay strong together. Our students come first and we need to take care of each other to continue to support them to the best of our ability. It takes a village!!!

”

>>> Clarity of Roles



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How the lead classroom teacher determines roles for the additional staff member(s) to enable the smooth functioning of the classroom



“ ”

I had a full-time paraeducator that was with me for almost 20 years. She read my mind and our classroom ran like a well-oiled machine.

- Special Educator

Potential Classroom Tasks



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Check and record student attendance



Instructional support to small groups or individual students

Lead whole-group instruction



Administer Assessments

Prepare classroom materials



Distribute classroom material

Update classroom website



Parent meetings (formal and informal)

Hosting online storytime

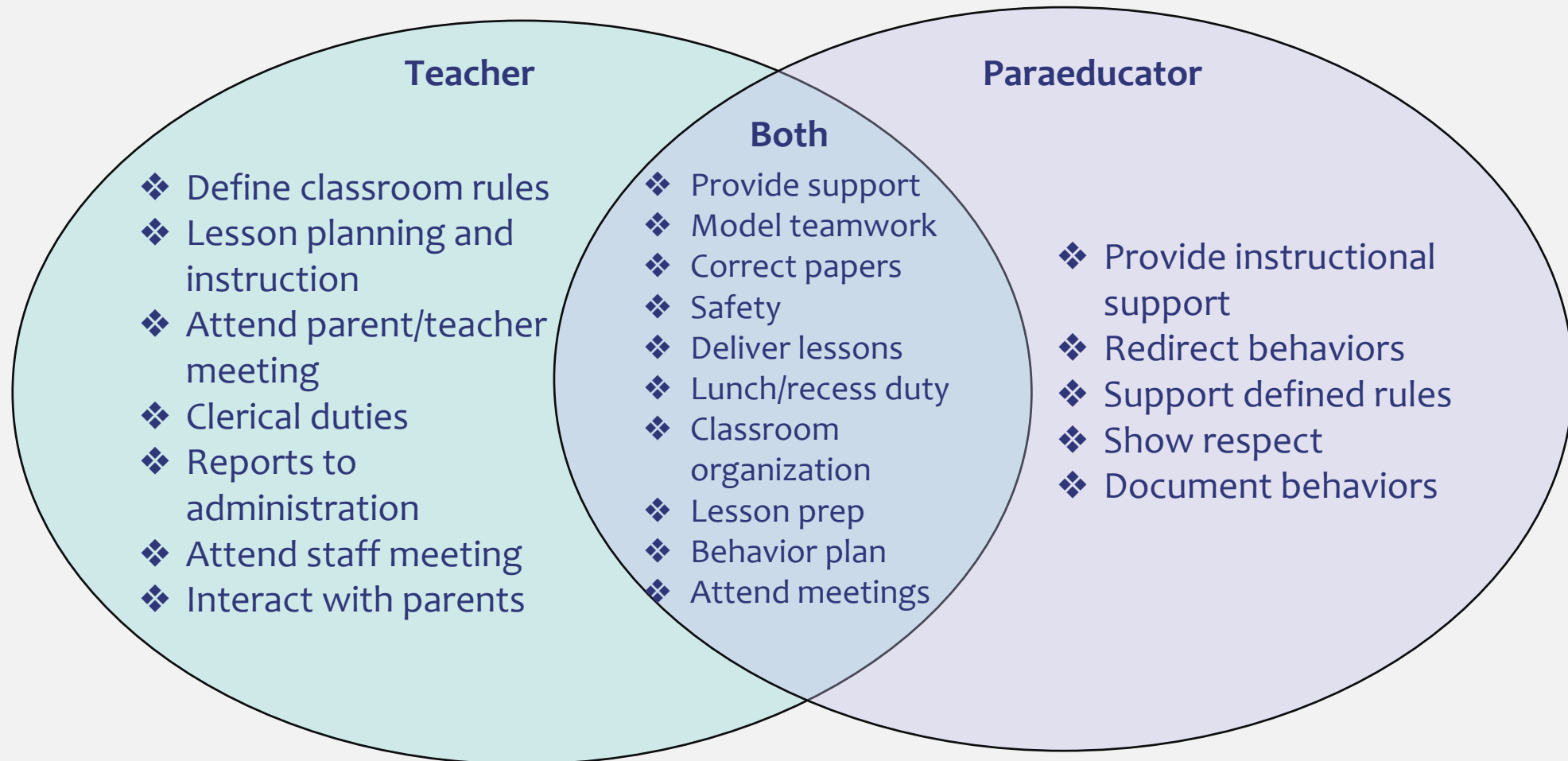


Class newsletters

>>> What are Others Saying?



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»» Barriers to Clarifying Roles





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Strategies for Clarifying Roles



Determine Key Roles

Consider who takes on each key role. Play to the strengths of the teacher and paraprofessional.



Consistent Communication

Ask for teacher-paraeducator prep time at the beginning of the school year. Develop an ongoing communication system.



Get Involved

When possible, teachers can request to be involved in the paraprofessional hiring process.



Seek Out Training

Teachers can attend trainings and gather information on best practices for supervising paraprofessionals.



>>> Clarifying Roles in 2020



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Determine Key Roles

All adults acting in a supportive role



Consistent Communication

Coordinate communications with families and set expectations on response needs

“

I feel that I no longer know how to do a job that I've been doing for 6 years.

“

Think of us as a valuable part of the team. Not just a dispensable employee. Not rushing to judgement about who we are and how we will react. Believe in us. Communicate with us.

“

During the pandemic, I feel I'm on an island. I'm not involved in my usual day to day functions of dealing with students and staff. This leaves me not really understanding my role during all of this

”

”

Respect

Respect is defined by educators holding one another in high regard and acknowledging each other's work in the classroom



“

”

The teacher validates my presence in the room. She doesn't see me as just a para. She sees me as experienced and respects my position in the room.

- Paraeducator

Strategies for Respect



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School Level: School Climate

Listening to the thoughts and opinions of all members while adopting a team approach.



School Level: Valuing Employees

Demonstrating respect and appreciation for the contributions of all school employees.



Classroom Level: Verbal Communication

Respectful discourse between teachers and paraeducators, such as saying please and thank you and using a warm tone.



Classroom Level: Nonverbal Communication

Making eye contact when listening and co-instructing, using gestures and body language, and delivering compliments via a note or memo.





Strategies for Respect



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Act with intention to demonstrate respect

“

”

I think better communication is needed at my school. There is a lack of guidance from the superintendent on down. I think if the staff felt valued enough to be included and informed then there would be less stress. Our climate right now is an "every man for himself" attitude. I feel like we are competing against one another instead of building each other up. If the schools could show us that we are valued and appreciated it would ease some of the stress.”

“

”

We need to be included in discussions, planning and trainings. They need to create a culture that values support staff and encourage staff to take care of themselves.

[illegible]

I'm proud of what I do in supporting educational staff. But this involves wearing many hats, with very often, not enough time. When I'm burnt out, looking at my role versus financial compensation, I can't help but wonder if it's worth it."

>>> Emotional Intelligence Charter



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1. In our class/ home/ school, we want to feel...
1. To feel this way, we will...



Learn more at https://www.rulerapproach.org/2020_backtoschool/



What can you do tomorrow?



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- Use “we” language
- Hold empathy interviews
- Clarify roles and expectations
- Set a clear plan for communication
- Create an Emotional Intelligence Charter

FREE Course for Educators and School Personnel:
coursera.org/learn/managing-emotions-uncertainty-stress



Can You RELATE?

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Any
1.1
Questions