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Supporting Assistants in Inclusive Settings

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Supporting Assistants in Inclusive Settings

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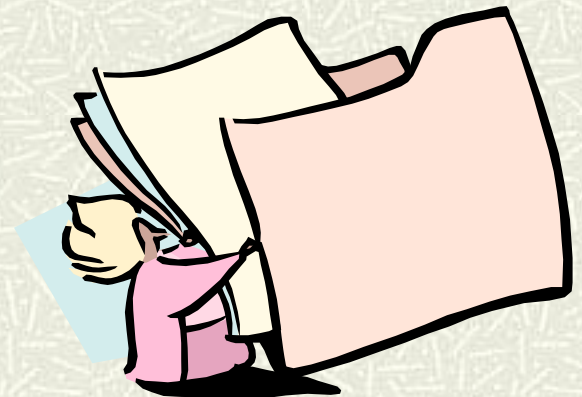
Assistants...

...can be used in special education programs to provide support and instruction IF they are appropriately **trained** and **supervised**.



Just to save some time...

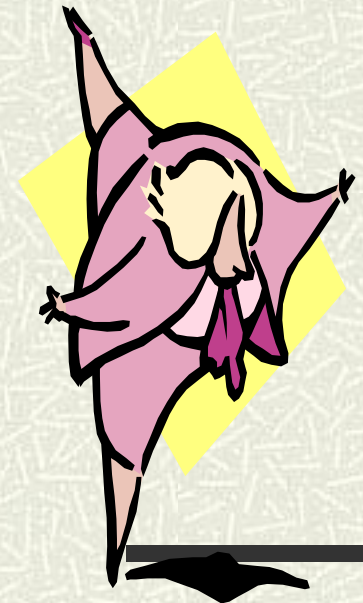
- # Assistants work within almost all educational programs, but the most...
- # Assistants perform a large number *of tasks*
- # *The tasks vary by program, building or grade level*
- # The tasks vary by student need levels
- # The tasks support students, teachers, and parents
 - Program Assistants
 - One-to-one Assistants
- # Teachers and assistants often view and value their roles and tasks differently



Federal Regulations

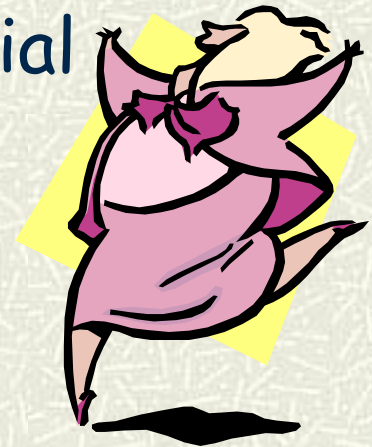
Define Assistants As...

...persons who work directly under the supervision of licensed professionals and who often deliver instructional and direct services to students and their parents.



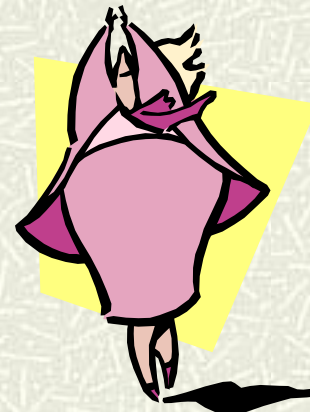
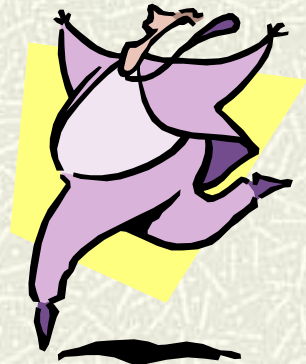
Who Are They? (National Profile)

- # Usually women
- # Are, on the average, 40 years old
- # Have little to no initial or specific training as an Parapro
- # Vary in qualities of experience, education level, training and knowledge of special education
- # Are paid on an hourly basis



Who Are They? (National Profile)

- # Are considered "underpaid" by almost everyone
- # Live in the school's neighborhood
- # Are racially, culturally & linguistically similar to the school's student population
- # Started careers while raising their own children
- # Are satisfied with their jobs
- # Are proud of what they do



Assistants Used to Perform More Clerical Tasks

This was to “free up” the teacher who in turn spent more time with the students. (Jones & Bender, 1993; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997)

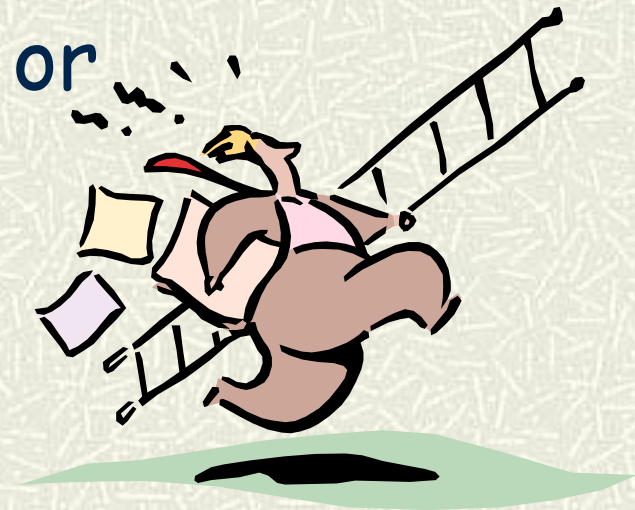
Today, more and more, assistants are working along side of teachers and therapists in instructional situations. (French, 1998; Likins & Morgan, 1999)



Roles and Responsibilities Look a Lot Alike

While assistants and teachers or therapists **SHARE** many responsibilities, there are some activities that should be the sole responsibility of teachers or therapists (French, 1999).

...the "short" list!



Roles and Responsibilities of Assistants

ONLY for Teachers
or Therapists (11)

T

SHARED with
Assistants

S

Roles and Responsibilities ONLY for Teachers

- # Write IEPs or program plans
- # Determine student eligibility
- # Prescribe behavioral supports
- # Plan lessons*
- # Determine amount/type of services
- # Evaluate student progress

Roles and Responsibilities ONLY for Teachers

- # Ensure the delivery of a student's program
- # Prescribe types of daily student activities, materials, and interactions
- # Deliver initial instruction or new material
- # Make decisions about curricular modifications
- # Contact and communicate with parents*

The Day-to-Day Tasks: Assistants

- # They are defined first, by the needs of the students, but...
- # More and more, the tasks are **instructional**, but...
- # Tasks also include:
 - Clerical
 - Personal care
 - Community/Training
 - Other Duties



Regarding Assistant Roles & Responsibilities



It helps to get it written down!

- # Roles and responsibilities (and specific tasks) are clearly defined and a schedule is defined
 - Improves communication
 - Helpful if tasks and classroom/instructional settings vary
 - Supports supervision and evaluation
- # **My Classroom Duties**
- # **Detailed Classroom Duties**
- # **Assistant Schedule and Information Chart**

It's a Supervision Thing!



- # **Program Assistants** focus support on all parts of an instructional program, including sometimes supporting individual student needs
- # **One-to-One Assistants** are hired to provide specific support for a target student, but can work with ANY student as long as the needs of the target student are the priority.

Regulations Require Supervision and Training for Assistants

That's Usually by
Principals and Teachers



Inclusion Confusion:

2 Types of Supervision

Executive Supervision

- # General orientation
- # Scheduling
- # Target students
- # Program/Student info
- # "Marching Orders"
- # General training
- # Ongoing support
- # Feedback and evaluation

Instructional Supervision

- # Specific orientation
- # Pinpoint times
- # Other students
- # Class or subject info
- # Specific job tasks
- # Specialized training
- # Skill development
- # Daily Feedback



Useful Tools of Supervision...

My Classroom Duties

Detailed Classroom Duties

- Develop (1) Yes/No check sheets, and (2) Quality performance rating scales

Assistant Feedback Form

- Use for (1) observation, (2) feedback, and (3) self-assessment



Hovering or Helping?

Assistants can be TOO Close!

When it comes to Assistant support, you can have too much of a good thing - according to Giangreco, et al. (1997).

Even the physical presence of an assistant too often or too close may actually have negative affects and interfere with student progress and independence



Hovering or Helping?

Parapros can be TOO Close!



“Unchecked” Paraproximity can result in:

- # Reduced ownership and responsibility by other teachers and adults
- # Separation from classmates
- # Dependence on adults
 - Over-reliance on prompts and cueing
- # Learned helplessness
- # Reduced student risk taking

"Unchecked" paraprofessional proximity can result in:



- # Reduced peer interactions or reduced quality of those interactions
- # Limited content instruction from the classroom teacher
- # Loss of student's personal control
- # Interference with instruction to other students
- # Inappropriate sense of responsibility by the assistant (Marks, Schradder, & Levine, 1999)

Reducing the Effects of Hovering

- # Consider the assistant as working with a program and not to a single student
- # Insist the assistant work with ALL students
- # Rotate assistant assignments
- # Have Assistants give students "space" and opportunity
- # Pinpoint specific areas and times of assistance needs
 - Consider requests for an "assistant" as request for "assistance"
- # Develop and implement a student independence plan
 - Fading
 - Cueing/prompts
 - Backing off



Working in a "Cold Climate"

Teachers and assistants don't have to be "best friends" to effectively work together!



Many Uncomfortable Situations Result from...

- # Poor or unclear role or task assignment
- # Difficulty adjusting to an unfamiliar working arrangement
- # Lack of time to communicate and plan
- # Personality conflicts
- # Differences in instructional, discipline, or personal styles



Working in a Cold Climate

- # Specifically define and write down tasks
- # Communication on a "business" level
- # Don't look for hidden messages
- # Settle disputes away from the students
- # Don't put students in the uncomfortable position of choosing sides
- # Brush up on communication skills
- # Include a 3rd party



To Wrap-up



11-21-2015

WDoverBalough,

Good Training

- Confidentiality
- Areas of Disability
 - Characteristics and suggestions
- Parts of the IEP
- Classroom Management
- Taking Data
- Communication Skills
 - Questioning, feedback, taking initiative
- Teaching Individuals, Small Groups
-



Good Supervision



- # Watch what the assistant does, listen to what is said, make corrections when necessary
- # Empower the assistant in each setting
- # Make sure teachers do not their responsibilities to students, including discipline, curriculum, and modification decisions.
- # Teachers and assistants **MUST** have time to communicate and share information.
- # Deal **IMMEDIATELY** with problems
- # Maintain a degree of authority and management.
- # Explain, demonstrate, coach/model teaching and discipline methods, strategies and classroom expectations.

Questions?

