

Promoting Student Independence: Reducing the Reliance on 1:1 Paraprofessionals

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What is a Paraeducator?

The prefix para- means “beside”, “alongside”, or “next to”.



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Inadvertent Detrimental Effects of Unnecessary Paraprofessional Proximity

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Separation From Classmates

Student with a disability and paraprofessional are seated in the back or side of the room, physically separated from the class.



ISLAND IN THE MAINSTREAM
MRS. JONES AND MRS. COOPER ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY FRED DOESN'T FEEL LIKE PART OF THE CLASS.

4

Unnecessary Dependence



Student with a disability is hesitant to participate without paraprofessional direction, prompting, or cueing.

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Interaction with Peers

Paraprofessional can create physical or symbolic barriers that interfere with interactions between a student with disabilities and classmates.



JOEY NOTICED A MYSTERIOUS FORCE FIELD AROUND HIS ASSISTANT THAT CHILDREN COULD NOT BREAK THROUGH.

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Insular Relationships

Student with a disability and paraprofessional do most everything together, to the exclusion of others (i.e., teachers and peers).



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THE SHADOW KNOWS: RODNEY'S SUSPICIONS WERE ACCURATE. UNKNOWING TO HIM, A PARAPROFSSIONAL HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO BE HIS SHADOW.

Feeling Stigmatized

Student with a disability expresses embarrassment/discomfort about having a paraprofessional; makes him or her stand out in a negative way.

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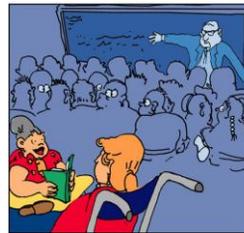


AFTER ONLY TWO MONTHS AS A TEACHER ASSISTANT, GLADYS FINDS HER SPELLING HAS IMPROVED, MATH SKILLS ARE HONED, AND SHE HAS DISCOVERED SHE HAS ARTISTIC ABILITY.

Limited Access to Competent Instruction

Paraprofessionals are not necessarily skilled in providing competent instruction: some do the work for the students they support.

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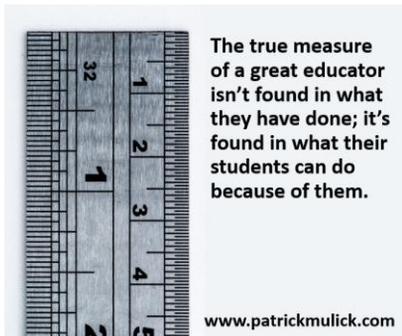


UNINTENDED DISTRACTIONS

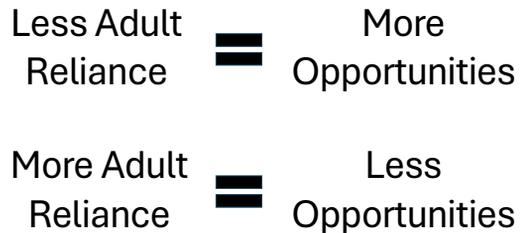
Interference with Teacher Engagement

Teachers tend to be less involved when a student with a disability has a paraprofessional because individual attention is already available.

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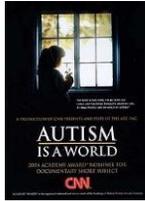


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Autism is a World

"My staff push me to be able to do things with the least amount of support necessary. They are constantly teaching me that I must rely on myself first and then ask for aid if I am not able to accomplish something on my own... I feel much more independent than I could have ever imagined, and that feeling alone is intensely gratifying."

-Sue Ruben



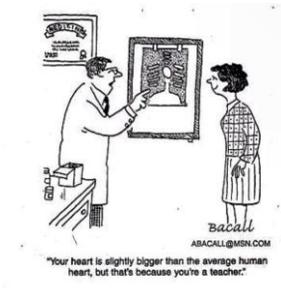
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Oxymorons

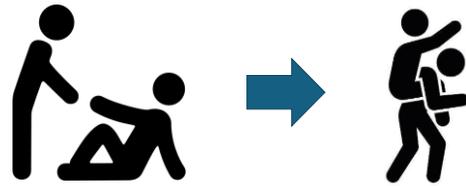
- Jumbo Shrimp
- Fun Run
- Original Copies
- Seriously Funny
- Indoor Recess
- Student Teacher
- Microsoft Works
- Special Educator Promoting Independence



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If we are not careful, we can have...

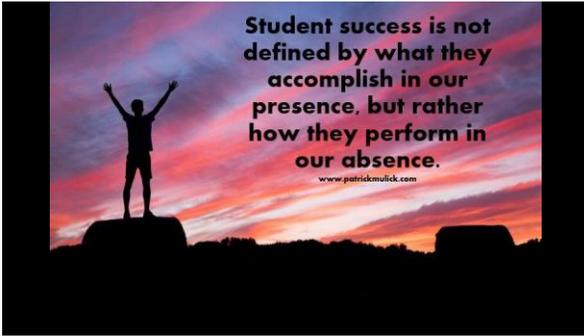
- A preschooler who can write all their letters but does not know how to ask for help
- A first grader who can read at a third-grade level but can't transition to another part of the classroom without holding on to an adult's hand
- A second grader who can multiply double digits but can't turn in papers to the teacher
- A fifth grader who knows the periodic table but can't navigate the lunch line
- A high schooler with basic computer programming skills but is unable to handle unexpected change

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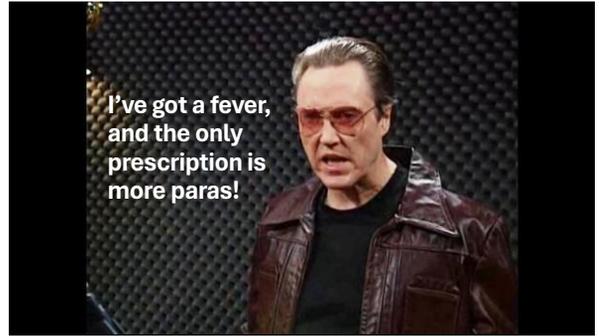
When we end up serving our students a little too well, we end up not serving them at all.



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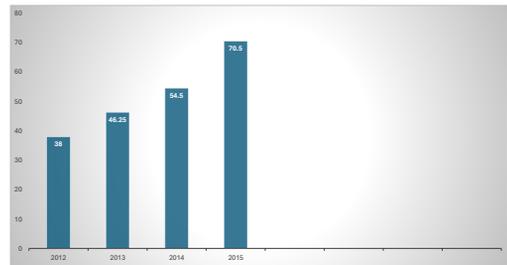
The Auburn School District

- Home to over 17,000 students
- 11.9% access special education services
- 16 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 3 high schools, 1 alternative high school
- Fastest growing district in King County
- Very diverse community
 - 44% of students live in multilingual households
 - 11% of students are new to the country within the past two years
 - 117 languages spoken



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Targeted Staffing Through the Years

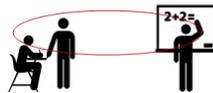


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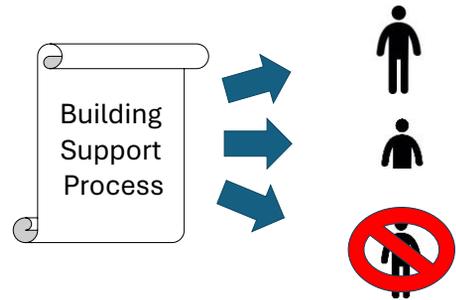
Detrimental Effects of Excessive Para Proximity

Ciangreco et al., 2005

- Separation from classmates
- Unnecessary dependence
- Interference with peer interactions
- Insular relationships
- Feelings of stigmatization
- Limited access to teacher instruction
- Loss of personal control



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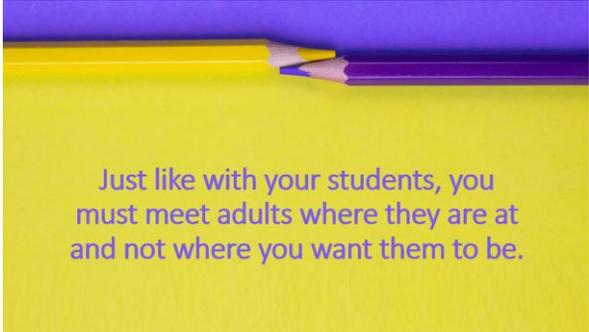
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“Categories lead us toward certainty but away from clarity, and categorical thinking moves us away from understanding the bigger picture.”

-Bob Johansen

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Just like with your students, you must meet adults where they are at and not where you want them to be.

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The Beginning

- Assembled a critical mass of special education staff
- Reviewed district data and practices related to 1:1s
- Had authentic discussion around barriers that exist in the district
- Made recommendations for next steps



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Keep kids engaged in their learning. The busy mind forgets to misbehave.

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“He just needs more support.”

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Support is a Verb, Not a Human
-Dr. Julie Causton



“Support starts in knowing the student’s strengths, needs and preferences. Then it’s the thoughtful, intentional actions we take before, during and after instruction that help a student open to learning and make that learning stick. Sometimes support means adding things like novelty, visuals, tools or strategies and other times it means subtracting things like distractions or complexity or unpreferred formats.”

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Support is a Verb, Not a Human
-Dr. Julie Causton

"Let's stop defining support as a person. Let's define it by what we do and whether it works. It's the thoughtful planning. It's the in the moment adjustments. It's the reflection and follow through. Let's remember why this matters, because inclusion doesn't mean more people. It means more possibility. And when we get support right, it just fades right into the background so students can step into the foreground. That's the magic of real inclusive support."

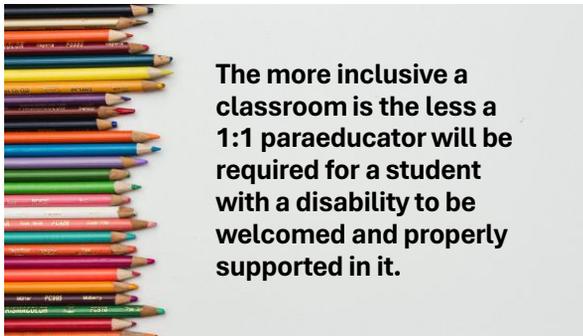


Inclusive Schooling Podcast



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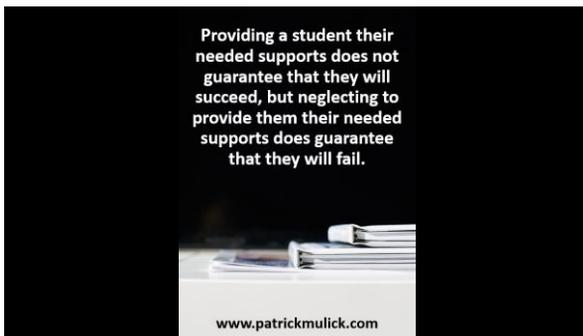
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Floater Paraeducators



- High performing special education paraeducators whose job it is to support a student's program getting back on track
- Never assigned to one assignment for more than a couple of months
- Has a strong focus and goal of promoting student independence
- Through the guidance from Student Special Services, they strategically navigate both student and staff challenges

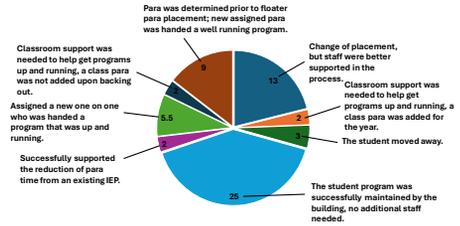
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Table 2. Alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals	
CATEGORY OF ALTERNATIVES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES
Resource Reallocation	Trading in paraprofessional positions to hire additional special education teachers provides increased access to more highly qualified personnel.
Co-teaching	Teachers and special educators work together in the same classroom. To maintain a naturally occurring number of students' special needs, it may be necessary to share a special educator across three or four classes.
Building Capacity of Teachers	Teacher capacity can be built in a variety of areas (e.g., expectations of teacher engagement with students with disabilities, differentiated instruction, universal design, response to instruction, positive behavior supports, assistive technology, information about current evidence-based practices).
Paperwork (Paraprofessionals)	Paraprofessionals may be assigned clerical paperwork duties that free time for special educators to collaborate with teachers and work directly with students.
Improving Working Conditions for Special Educators and Classroom Teachers	Special educator conditions can be improved by reducing caseload size, the grade range covered, and the number teachers with whom special educators interact. Explore changes in class size, increase availability of special educator and related supports, schedule coordinated meeting times, and provide access to adapted materials, to improve conditions for teachers.
Peer Supports	Encourage peer support strategies that provide natural ways to support students with disabilities and may also benefit students without disabilities.
Self-Determination	Teach self-determination skills and provide opportunities for students with disabilities to have a voice in determining their own supports.
Paraprofessional Pools	Establishing a small pool of skilled paraprofessionals (or one floating position for a small school) allows for their temporary assignments to address specific, short-term needs.
Fading Plans	Developing a plan to fade paraprofessional support as much as possible can lead to greater student independence and more natural supports.
Dually Certified Teachers	Hire teachers who are certified in both general and special education to provide enhanced personnel availability for all students.



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Our Data after 4 Years and 62 Cases



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Floater Updates



- Created an intake and exit process
- Changed the Name to **Inclusive Support Professional**
- Changed the actual category of the position due to the type of work involved
 - Supporting staff who are struggling to support a student
 - Collaborating with many adults and co-creating student systems
 - Coaching gen ed teachers on interventions
 - Being flexible with start/end times

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High Quality PD on Promoting Independence

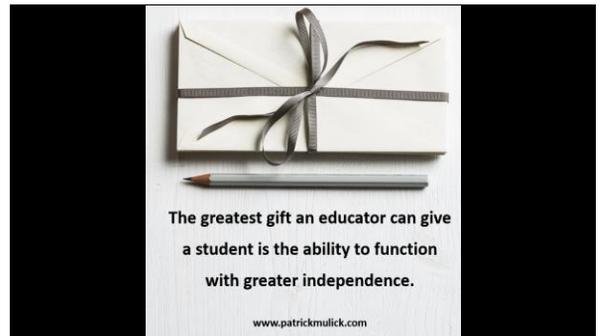
- For case managers who had a student with a 1:1 paraeducator assigned, multiple opportunities for PD on PI were provided. The course highlighted:
- Strategies to promote student independence
 - How to lead this work with families and school teams
 - Tools and resources
 - Shifting mindsets



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Less Adult Reliance = More Opportunities

More Adult Reliance = Less Opportunities

Bad Reasons to Continue the Use of a 1:1 Paraeducator

- Everybody in the building loves the para, they are a part of the school, people would hate to see them go
- Makes it easier to find the student in a crowd, just look for the para
- The para and the student are a good match, the student enjoys the para and responds well to them
- The student feels safer when their para is around
- It helps to have someone following the student around all day just in case they escalate
- The student needs to be nudged when they stop working and the para is great at doing that

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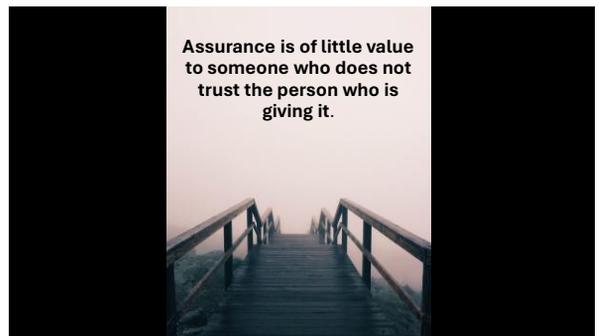
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Paraeducator Role Rubric

Time of Day, Activity, or Class Period	What can the student do independently with the provided classroom supports and should not be given extra help with by the 1:1 paraeducator?	What does the student need 1:1 assistance with that cannot be provided by the existing classroom staff?	What accommodations and strategies can be utilized that would permit the student to complete the activity independently?	What work can the paraeducator do when their targeted student is not in need of support?

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Student Skill Analysis

What missing skills are interfering with the student's ability to function more independently at school that cannot be supported by the existing classroom staff? Please list each skill with a corresponding goal from the IEP that is addressing it and how data is being collected. Finally, list out the next steps or future goals that will need to be reached before the support of the 1:1 paraeducator can be fully transferred over to the existing classroom staff. If the next step is to transfer the support back over to the existing classroom staff and reduce the 1:1 paraeducator time, please write "reduce paraeducator time."

Missing Skill	Description of the IEP goal that is addressing the missing skill	Method of data collection	Next steps or future goals that need to be reached before the student can become independent of the 1:1 paraeducator

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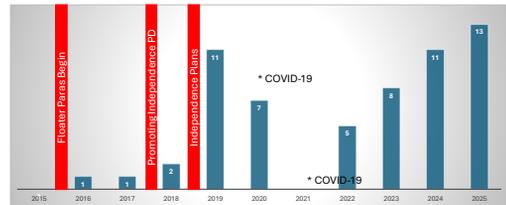
What is your estimated timeline in which you believe the student will be able to continue to make progress on their goals independent of an assigned 1:1 paraeducator?

List an estimated 1:1 paraeducator support reduction plan:

The Reduction in 1:1 Paraeducator Support	Estimated Timeline of Achievement
Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	
Step 5	
Step 6	
Step 7	

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Removal of Targeted Staffing from IEPs



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Adult Support Role Rubric

Fill out the table below that specifies the role of the adult support. Indicate "NA" for times that do not apply.

Time of Day, Activity, or Class Period	What can the student do independently and does not need additional help with?	In what ways will the classroom teacher assist the student and in what ways will the adult support assist the student?	Beyond the direct assistance of an adult, what supports can be used to help advance the skills of the student and build their independence? (for example, a visual schedule, voice scale, break card, timer, eye gaze device, switch, etc.)	What work can the adult support do when their targeted student is not in need of support?
General Education Setting:		Teacher assists by: Adult support assists by:		
Special Education Setting:		Teacher assists by: Adult support assists by:		

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1. What is the intent of the assigned 1:1 paraeducator as described in the adverse impact statement of the IEP?
2. In what ways has the student demonstrated greater independence in the past year?
3. What skills, when developed, will indicate that the student is performing at their highest level of independence?
4. What specially designed instruction is the student currently receiving to help advance those skills and how is it being delivered?
5. What next steps can the staff take to support the student in becoming more independent?

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Reduction of 1:1 Paraeducator Time

Misleading Language

- Remove the para
- Yank the para
- Dropping support
- Getting less help
- Decreasing student support

Student Centered Language

- Increasing opportunities for independence
- Progressing the student's learning through the use of naturally occurring academic, social, and behavioral cues
- Transfer instructional control from the para to their teacher
- Increasing student's ability to do it all on their own
- Growing the student's ability to be a do it yourselfer
- Maximizing direct learning from peers and the highly trained teacher
- Advancing the student from being dependent on their own adult to be successful

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Where Things Sit Today

- 65.5 1:1 Paras
- 19 Behavior Specialists
- 2 LPNs



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Updates



Meeting with building principals and principal leadership about promoting independence in buildings



Moved promoting independence professional development to an asynchronous option



Periodically having school teams return to Student Special Services to provide updates on students



This work is still hard!!!!

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Bringing It All Together



- Identify your messaging and mantra
- Engage in the conversation about the practice of 1:1 adult support and be prepared to listen
- Target PD on Promoting Independence that pairs with your inclusive practices and district priorities
- Create the needed structures and supports to work against how we are naturally wired
- Identify a system of accountability at the leadership level
- Start with, end with, and everywhere in-between discuss the why of the work

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Here's an IDEA!

The purposes of IDEA include ensuring that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and **prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.**



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"I cannot do all the good that the world needs. But the world needs all the good that I can do."
-Jana Stanfield

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Thank You!

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