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Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals in Creating Inclusive Communities: A Three Dimensional Perspective

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Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals in
Creating Inclusive Communities: A Three
Dimensional Perspective

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Purpose

- The purpose of the study was to explore the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals within an inclusive classroom from three different stakeholder perspectives:
 - 1) General education teacher
 - 2) Special education teacher
 - 3) Paraprofessionals

Research Questions

The following questions guided this research:

- 1: How do paraprofessionals view their roles and responsibilities in the classroom?
- 2: How do general educators and special education teachers view roles of paraprofessionals in the classroom?
- 3: How do paraprofessionals collaborate with general educators/ special educators?

Current Literature

Today, paraprofessionals have become more responsible for assisting students with disabilities in the general education classrooms that is different from special education settings

*(Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000;
Cameron, David Lansing, 2014)*

This change in service delivery setting indicates a change in

- Service delivery model
- Roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals
- Training and support required to perform those roles

(Riggs & Muller, 2001)

Most of the paraprofessionals and special education teachers believe that their primary role in the inclusive classroom is to manage students' behavior and academics on one-on-one basis, within the class

*(Fisher and Pleasants, 2012; Sarah,
Douglas, Shelley, Chapin, & Nolan, 2015)*

A study found that paraprofessionals were most effective when the supervising teacher clearly defined their roles and provided them with appropriate direction and guidance.

(Chopra et al., 2011)

Setting

Participants

- The Midwest school district consist of four elementary schools:

- LakeView Elementary School
- Baker Public School
- Macclenny Elementary School
- Hiland Elementary Schools.

- The participants of the study included

- one classroom teacher
- one special education teacher
- three paraprofessionals

- Lake View Elementary school
- 4th grade classroom

- One of the paraprofessionals left the school in the start of study

Methodology

Research design:

- Qualitative research design
- Case Study
- Purposive sampling
- The data was gathered and triangulated through
 - Structured interviews
 - Observation
 - Artifacts (email questionnaires, school handbook, students' worksheets & artwork)

No. of Participants	No. of Interviews	No. of Observations	Artifacts included
Classroom teacher	3	6	Follow-up questions through email School handbook
Special education teacher	3	6	Follow-up questions through email
Paraprofessional 1	1	6	Pictures of worksheets and art work follow-up questions sent through email
Paraprofessional 2	1	6	Pictures of worksheets and art work follow-up questions sent through email
Paraprofessional 3	Left school	Left school	Questionnaire sent through email. 2 follow-up emails were sent with additional questions.

Data Analysis

- Data was analyzed qualitatively using;
 - Thematic analysis
- Data was analyzed from three sources;
 - Interview transcriptions
 - Observation
 - Artifacts

emergence of themes (initial findings)

Coding	Themes	Sub-themes	Participant Quotes
<p>one-on-one, alternative curriculum, IEP implementation, time management, teaching, disciplining the kids, managing behavior, greeting parents...</p>	<p>Everyday responsibilities</p>	<p>One-on-One teaching Monitoring behavior Assisting general education teacher Monitoring Lessons Supporting interaction with peers Interaction with parents</p>	<p>“I work to monitor and work proactively to prevent inappropriate classroom behaviors, such as laying on the floor, making loud noises, hitting, kicking, and running out of the room...”</p>
<p>Sharing IEPs, shared responsibilities, modeling instructions, know the hierarchy, meeting once a month, RESPECT, taking opinion...</p>	<p>Collaboration among team members</p>	<p>Everyday communication Monthly meetings Understanding hierarchy Respecting individual differences</p>	<p>“... because the only time we have to communicate is when students are in the room.. I mean its not a good idea to talk about in front of students”</p>
<p>lack of description of roles and duties, different perspectives regarding inclusion, lack of common planning time, lack of education and training...</p>	<p>Potential challenges</p>	<p>Professional training (for both Paraprofessionals and teachers) Understanding hierarchy Specific roles vs general guidelines Time availability</p>	<p>“I would.. Because they know the students very well.. so yeah I would want it to be collaborative... but I also think that there needs to be an understanding that they would be provided instructions by the teachers regarding student goals.” “... I think a bigger issue is just that open communication and understanding that my job is the supervisor and I’m going to give you ideas and suggestions and feedback...”</p>

Next Step

Initial Implication

- Regular monthly meetings
- Training
 - Teacher
 - Paraprofessionals
- Explaining the hierarchy
- Guidelines
 - General vs Specific

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