Resource Packet for

"Teaching Them to Fish": Facilitating Student Independence and Fading Close Adult Support

The following resource packet includes various handouts and materials to assist teachers, child study team members, and paraprofessionals in working together to support students with disabilities. You do **not** need to print all of these to participate in the training—they are additional resources for your use in implementing material covered during the training. Please note that some items have been hyperlinked to provide access to internet materials. To utilize these links, look for any words, phrases or websites that are written in blue and underlined. For additional information and/or to receive additional training, please contact Michelle Lockwood, Director of Positive Behavior Support Services for the New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE).

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"Least Intrusive" Prompting to Foster Student Independence

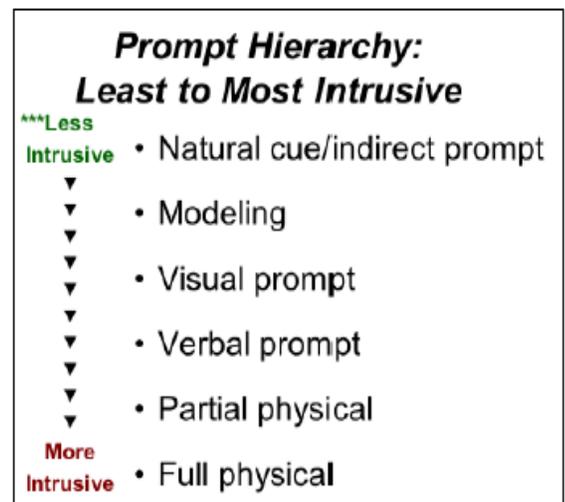### What are Least Intrusive Supports or "Only as Special as Necessary"?

Utilizing least intrusive supports that are "only as special as necessary" refers to the principle of ensuring that each student's needs for assistance and support are met; however, in meeting those needs, supporting adults are *not* compromising that student's ability to participate in a given activity as independently as possible. "Over-supporting" or using interventions that are more intrusive than needed is known to produce negative effects, such as poor self-concept and social alienation. These effects may narrow immediate and future options and choices, thereby minimizing life opportunities for the individual. For these reasons, the "only as special as necessary" rule of supporting individuals is an extremely important concept in education for students with disabilities.

Being "less intrusive" means that supports are matched to each individual's unique needs, with careful and ongoing consideration of those needs and how to move toward independence. Since every student—with or without a disability—is unique, there is no formula or recipe to follow in order to ensure we are using least intrusive support. But there are key considerations to revisit regularly: time-delay, modeling/request imitation, and prompting hierarchies focused on least-to-most.

- **Prompting hierarchies:** Response prompts exist on a continuum referred to as a prompting hierarchy, which is defined by the amount of assistance/intrusion each prompt requires from an adult. A prompting hierarchy is *not* meant to be used in a way that produces prompt dependency.
- **Modeling/request imitation:** Show the student what to do and immediately give the student a chance to imitate your model and get feedback.
- **Time-delay:** Systematically wait for a student to respond before delivering a prompt, in order to decrease the student's dependence on the prompt.
- **Least-to-most prompting:** Begin with the least intrusive prompt you think the student needs to be successful and increase the prompting supports if necessary. Gradually fade supports once the student can respond independently.

What is the System of Least to Most Prompts?

Prompting and fading strategies can help students learn and master new skills. The system of least prompts, also referred to as least intrusive prompts and increasing assistance, is a prompting strategy where the teacher/parent progresses through a prompting hierarchy (*like the one shown right*) from the assumed least intrusive prompt to the most intrusive prompt necessary. When an adult is utilizing the system of least to most prompts in providing a learning opportunity for a child, it is important to always begin by allowing the child an opportunity to respond correctly to the natural cue or question posed without any prompt being given (i.e., a chance for the child to respond independently).

Prompt Hierarchy: Least to Most Intrusive

***Less Intrusive
- Natural cue/indirect prompt
- Modeling
- Visual prompt
- Verbal prompt
- Partial physical

More Intrusive
- Full physical

How are Prompts Faded?

Prompts are only used as a support mechanism for students when necessary, and only for as long as is necessary. At whatever the least intrusive prompt level a child responds correctly, that is where the trial for that specific learning task ends. Therefore, the prompts in the system of least to most prompts are self-fading, meaning that as a child begins to learn to how to perform a skill correctly at prompting levels of decreased intrusiveness, then the more intrusive prompts that were previously used are no longer necessary.

References

Wolery, M., Ault, M. J., & Doyle, P. M. (1992). Teaching students with moderate to severe disabilities: Use of response prompting strategies. New York: Longman.

Prompt Hierarchy: www.bridgeschool.org/transition/strategies_success/prompt_hier.php

25 General Ideas for Fading Close Adult Support

1. Watch before assisting. Can the student ask for help from teacher or peer? Can the student problem solve on his/her own?
2. Give the student extra time to process and respond before redirecting/assisting.
3. Have high expectations regarding what the student understands and/or can do independently.
4. Provide a consistent classroom schedule (posted, visual, at the student's desk and/or in his/her binder, if needed). Actively teach the student how to use it, so that eventually he relies on it to know what comes next/where to go (rather than on the adult's reminders or on following peers).
5. Ask facilitative questions ("What comes next?" "What are other students doing?" "What does the schedule say?" "What did the teacher say?").
6. Give choices often (e.g., multiple times every day!), so the student can refine decision making skills and be comfortable making choices independently. Embed choices in required tasks.
7. Maintain a log to track independence and the student's need for assistance. Ask the student's Case Manager for data collection sheets to record increasing independence.
8. Start with the least intrusive prompts to get the student to respond:

   Less Intrusive--START HERE ➡
   - Natural Cue—help student be aware of these.
   - Indirect Verbal Prompt—ask the student a question, instead of directly telling him what to do—"what comes next?"
   - Gestures, Hand/Facial Signals
   - Modeling—show/demonstrate it for the student.
   - Visual Prompt—personal visuals, items posted, timers, etc.
   - Verbal Prompt
   - Light Physical Prompt
   - "Hand Over Hand"—warn/tell the student before touching.

   More/Most Intrusive
   - Full Physical Prompt

9. After prompting, back away to allow plenty of wait time and independent practice time.
10. Model or direct, then leave and check back periodically; if physically moving away is not possible, then direct your attention *away* from the student to allow time for independence, then check back.
11. Teach independent learning skills (raising hand, asking for help, observing other students, etc.).
12. Praise the student for independent attempts ("Great job trying it by yourself first!").
13. Direct student to respond to teachers and direct others to speak to the student (not "through" you).
14. Prompt the student to listen to the teacher's instructions. If the student seems unsure, ask him/her "what did the teacher say?", rather than immediately repeating back the directions. Repeat only when absolutely necessary (e.g., less intrusive prompts have been tried, such as "what are the other kids doing?", "where can you look to figure out what to do?", etc.).
15. Use strengths and weakness, likes and dislikes to motivate student participation and interest.
16. Be aware of your own proximity to the student. Sit near the student *only* when necessary.
17. Encourage peer assistance and partnering. Teach peers how to help, not enable.
18. Utilize self-monitoring checklists with the student; you may need to *teach* the student to use these.
19. Color code materials to assist the student with organization.
20. Use transition objects to help a younger student complete a transition (e.g., "take the head phones to the listening center" to prompt to go to the listening center).
21. Break big tasks into smaller steps or "chunks".
22. Use backward chaining (e.g., leave the last portion of a cutting task for the student, then gradually lengthen the parts of task that the student is to do himself).
23. Assist in encouraging a means for independent communication (e.g., augmentative communication devices, picture exchange systems, etc. for those who need them).
24. Establish a signal with the teacher for when the aide should intervene. General rule of thumb: the Teacher should prompt several times *before* an aide steps in.
25. Make sure the class perceives you are there to help all of them, not just one student.

Questions to Consider for Fostering Inclusion and Student Independence

The IEP decision making process dictates that selection of student supports be made for each student on an individual, subject-by-subject basis in order to effectively address the student's needs and goals outlined in the IEP. The following questions can be a catalyst for further discussion and support planning:

➢ Does this student enter the classroom at the same time as typical peers?

➢ Does this student make transitions within the classroom at the same time as typical peers?

➢ Does this student exit the classroom at the same time as typical peers?

➢ Is this student actively involved in class activities and at the same time as typical peers?

➢ Is this student expected to follow the same classroom and social rules as typical peers?

➢ Is this student sitting so that they can see and participate in what is going on and easily interact with others?

➢ Are peers, and not just teachers, encouraged to provide assistance to this student?

➢ Does this student socialize with peers?

➢ Do assisting/supervising adults facilitate social interactions by encouraging others to communicate directly with this student?

➢ Does this student have a way to communicate with others throughout the day?

➢ Do peers know how to communicate with this student?

➢ If this student uses an alternative communication system, does everyone understand it?

➢ Do assisting/ supervising adults provide the least intrusive and least audible supports possible to this student?

➢ Do assisting/supervising adults encourage this student to notice and respond to natural cues in the environment, instead of providing excessive individual prompts/cues?

➢ Do assisting/supervising adults replace some of their verbal prompts with teaching this student to use visual cues to remind him-/herself of expectations and procedures (what to do, what comes next, etc.)?

➢ Is this student actively encouraged by the assisting/ supervising adult to interact with as many other adults as possible to reduce overdependence on one staff member?

➢ Do assisting/supervising adults circulate throughout the class and work with other students in addition to this student?

➢ Is this student's independence facilitated by fading direct adult assistance as soon as possible?

➢ Does this student have frequent opportunities to make choices throughout the day?

Being "less intrusive" means that supports are matched to each individual's unique needs, with careful and ongoing consideration of those needs and how to move toward independence. In this process, it is important to think of supporting adults as "facilitators" who can help make independence a reality, rather than "helpers". The following may assist teams in developing a plan to facilitate this.

Step One: Schedule team meetings to facilitate/support the fading process.
- The Case Manager, teacher, parent(s) and others involved with the student should meet on a regular basis to evaluate student progress and need for close adult support.
- The supporting adult (paraprofessional, aide, assistant) should be given encouragement, strategies and support for encouraging student independence and stepping back as possible.

Step Two: Identify the types and levels of student assistance currently being provided.
- Observational data may need to be collected to accurately identify the types of help and levels of adult support being provided across the entire school day.
- Any staff member who supports the student may also want to provide his/her own input regarding the general levels and types of adult support that he/she has seen being provided.

Step Three: Review the assistance currently provided and brainstorming alternatives.
- Use observational data and staff input provided to clarify the current levels of adult support being provided across all subjects and activities, then work as a team to brainstorm less intrusive alternatives.
- It may also be helpful to identify why the student needs that level of adult support for a specific task, then consider what else (other than 1:1 adult help) might help.
- Questions to consider when brainstorming might include:
  - If the student needs 1:1 help from an adult because a lesson is going too fast or seems too difficult, are other modifications needed?
  - If close adult support is for attention or behavior issues--what less intrusive strategies can be tried?
  - Can peer supports be tried instead of relying on the adult for support?
  - Can praise or reinforcement be used to help motivate the student stay on task (instead of an adult continually re-directing the student)?
- Discussing the questions included in the independence and inclusion checklist may help when brainstorming times target for reducing the level of direct adult assistance.
- It may also be helpful to review the tips for Aides/Paraprofessionals about fading support and using appropriate levels of prompting.

Step Four: Outline the plan to reduce the types and levels of adult support and assistance provided.
- Specify the criteria for fading measures to be used in a written plan for fading.
- Include information about who will review progress on this fading plan and how often to review.

Step Five: Incorporate the plan to reduce adult into the IEP.
- Develop goals and objectives that contain reduced levels of support and prompting to be used as measures of need for close adult support.
- Determine if a specific plan for motivating the student to work as independently as possible needs to be developed and added to the IEP as accommodations or listed as behavioral interventions or a behavior intervention plan (BIP).
- Specify accommodations/modifications to be provided as needed or as requested by student (in place of the direct adult support).
- Indicate the specific activities and times in the day when the student may still require close adult support in the IEP (as a service or elsewhere).

Developing a Plan for Facilitating Independence and Fading Support

Step Two: Identifying the Types and Levels of Student Assistance Currently Provided

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Student Name_____   **Date**_____

Directions: Place tallies in corresponding column to indicate what support was given to student and time of day support was provided.

Time	Period/ Subject	Helped student organize materials	Redirected student	Provided verbal cue to refocus	Sat next to student to refocus	Assisted with writing task	Other (*specify*)
7:30							
7:45							
8:00							
8:15							
8:30							
8:45							
9:00							
9:15							
9:30							
9:45							
10:00							
10:15							
10:30							
10:45							

Time	Period/ Subject	Helped student organize materials	Redirected student	Provided verbal cue to refocus	Sat next to student to refocus	Assisted with writing task	Other (*specify*)
11:00							
11:15							
11:30							
11:45							
12:00							
12:15							
12:30							
12:45							
1:00							
1:15							
1:30							
1:45							
2:00							
2:15							
2:30							

Student Name:_____ **Date:**_____

Respondent: _____

1. During what routines, activities, time periods, or tasks is it *truly* necessary to be physically next to this student?

☐ During hallway transitions ☐ To prevent aggressive behavior
☐ In social situations ☐ To address the student if upset or anxious
☐ Beginning a task (getting started) ☐ Providing cue to refocus the student
☐ Completing a new/unfamiliar task ☐ During school arrival or dismissal routine
☐ Helping student organize materials ☐ While riding to/from school on the bus
☐ If assisting with a specific kind of task (such as writing, reading, etc.); please specify: _____
_____
☐ Other: _____
_____   _____

2. For the skills, activities or time period(s) during which you believe close adult support is necessary, is the goal for this student independence (i.e., done by the student) or *inter*dependence (i.e., done with the support of a peer)?

3. What types of cues or prompts do educators typically use with the student and how often?

☐ Modeling—*frequency:* _____
☐ Indirect or natural cues—*frequency:* _____
☐ Visual cues/supports—*frequency:* _____
☐ Gestures/signals—*frequency:* _____
☐ Verbal prompts—*frequency:* _____
☐ Physical prompts—*frequency:* _____
☐ Other: _____

4. Can anyone else provide more natural supports for the student?

5. What next step(s) might reduce the type and level of support given to the student (i.e., move from more intrusive to less intrusive cues; teach the student to use natural cues in the environment; ask questions of the student rather than directly giving the student prompts, etc.)?

6. What material, content, or classroom structures/schedules might need to be developed to allow the student to experience more independence?

Student Name:_____   **Date:**_____

Respondent(s): _____
_____

Directions: Discuss the following questions with key stakeholders, including the student, his/her family, CST members, the student's teachers, related service providers, paraprofessionals (if involved), and any other support staff currently assisting this student.

1. When is it *truly* necessary to be physically next to this student? (Use the data collected to answer this question.)

2. For the skill, activity or time period, is the goal independence (i.e., done by the student) or interdependence (i.e., done with the support of a peer)?

3. What types of cues are educators using with the student? With what level of intensity, duration and frequency?

4. Can anyone else provide more natural supports for the student?

5. What next step(s) would reduce the type and level of support given to the student (i.e., move from more intensive to less intrusive cues; use natural cues in the environment; ask questions of the student rather than directly giving the student prompts, etc.)?

6. What material, content, or classroom structures/schedules might need to be developed to allow the student to experience more independence?

<mark>Step Four:</mark> *Outlining a Plan to Reduce the Types and Levels of Student Assistance Provided*

*Student Name*_____ *Date*_____

Directions: Use the data and information gathered with the forms on the previous pages to develop a plan for reducing the types and levels of assistance provided to the student in order to increase independence.

Time/ Period	Routine/ Activity	Needs Assistance With	Type of Assistance Currently Provided	Steps to Reduce Level of Assistance	Commitments

Increasing Student Independence Across School and Classroom Routines

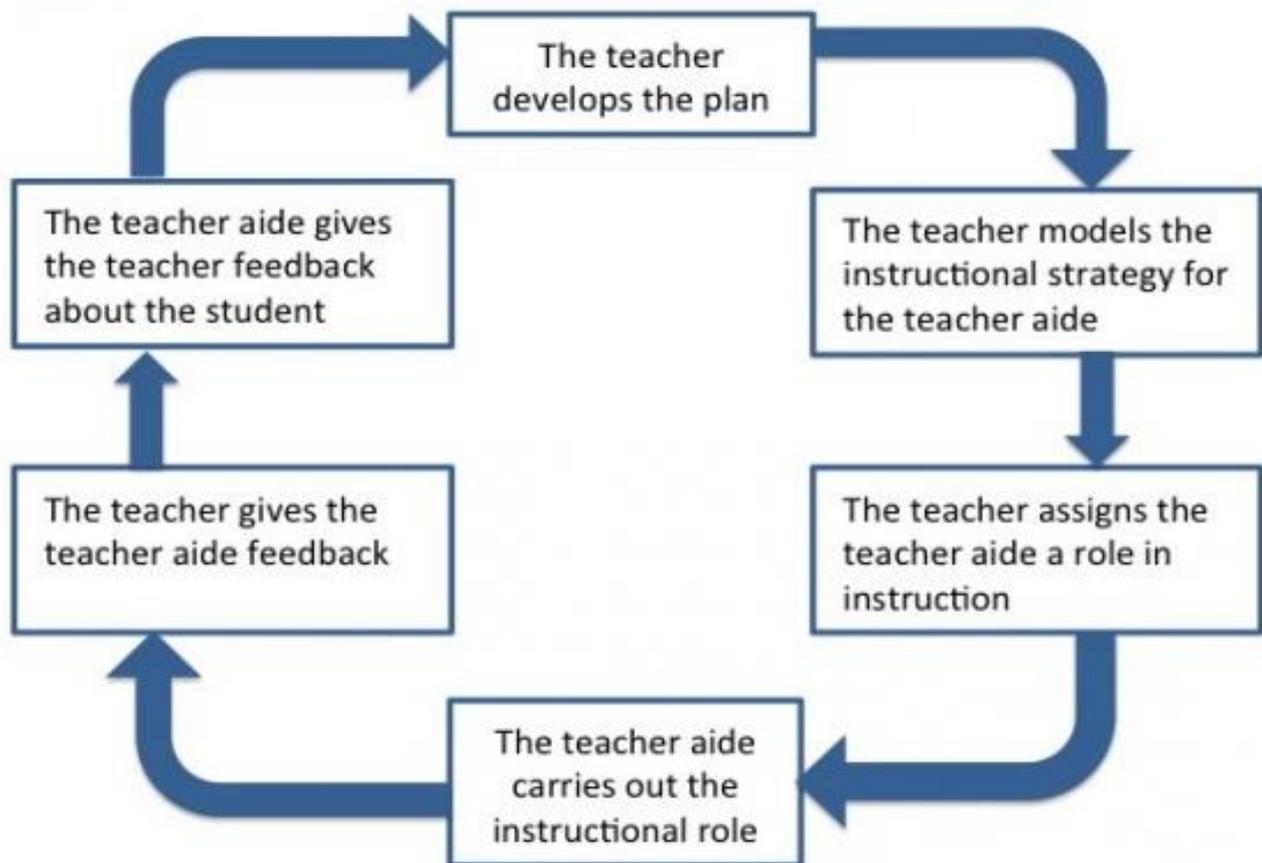| School Routine *(When the student...)*	Idea for Facilitating Student Independence
Enters the Classroom	➢ If seats are not assigned, then allow him to choose where to sit and do *not* pick a seat for him. ➢ Do *not* to sit directly next to him throughout the *entire* class period (i.e., circulate in the classroom when appropriate).
Is Beginning the Class	➢ Do *not* take out his materials (pen, homework, etc.) or open his books for him. ➢ Remind him of what to do to begin class by pointing out what his peers are doing. ➢ Use a task checklist or "to do list" to clarify the work expected of him and exactly how much work is required within a given block of time (i.e., to clarify "when the work will end"). ➢ When appropriate offer choices within tasks (which item to do first, where to work, choice of work partner, etc.). ➢ Remember to give choices *prior* to interfering behaviors, *not* in response to them.
Is Given Directions by an Adult Verbally	➢ Replace some of the *verbal* prompts with teaching the student to use visual cues to remind himself of what to do, what step comes next, etc. ➢ If you have asked the direction more than once, consider writing it down on a post it note and then using the post it to redirect him (rather than repeating the direction verbally).
Reviews Homework	➢ Do *not* get the student's homework out for him. ➢ Consider organizing his subjects by color (i.e., each subject has its own color), then using this color coding to help him find his homework (i.e., "Math homework is in which color folder?").
Takes Notes in Class	➢ Have the student highlight key words/phrases in his own copy of powerpoint slides (if powerpoint is used); do not highlight for him. ➢ If possible, make a copy of a reliable peer's notes for the student.
Listens to a Whole Class Discussion or Lecture	➢ If he has trouble focusing on the materials, consider getting a list of vocabulary to be discussed from the teacher, then writing the words down. Have the student listen for these target vocabulary words during the discussion/lecture and then check them off or tally when he hears them.
Needs to Take a Brief Break	➢ Facilitate the *self*-directed implementation of movement breaks (instead of *adult*-directed) by helping the student recognize his level of attentiveness, then determine what he should do to adjust his attention. ➢ If an adult notices that the student is in need of a movement break, use least intrusive prompting to remind him to self-regulate (i.e., "You look like you're having trouble concentrating. What do you think you should do?", etc.).
Is Working on an Individual Task or Seat Work	➢ If the student is working independently, the adult can "check in" with him then move away. ➢ Do *not* to sit directly next to him throughout the *entire* class period, but circulate in the classroom when appropriate.

Is Participating a Small Group Activity	➢ Allow the student to choose his group or work partner (if appropriate). ➢ Seat the student with the group, *not* separately with an adult. ➢ The adult should *not* sit directly next to the student for the duration of the activity. ➢ Give the student a specific role in the group (such as time keeper, note taker, facilitator, etc.). ➢ The student can practice group roles in advance, so that he is better prepared for them. ➢ Prepare the student to participate by having him ask questions of other group members. ➢ Provide the student with a specific question to ask such as "Ask someone a question about _____.", "What is the most interesting thing you just learned?", etc.
Is Approaching the End of a Class/Period	➢ Give the student transition warnings when it is almost time to transition to help him gauge how much time he has left. ➢ Remind the student to check his schedule to see what comes next/where he is going, instead of telling him what is next.
Packs Up to Leave the Class	➢ You can assist him, but do *not* pack up *all* of his materials for him (he must help with this). ➢ Do *not* close his books for him. ➢ Remind him of what to do by pointing out what his peers are doing. ➢ If not done earlier, remind the student to check his own schedule to see what comes next and where he is going, instead of *telling* him what is next.
Is Walking in the Halls (to/from Class)	➢ Fade *close* adult supervision as appropriate. ➢ Encourage the student to "walk ahead" of you and then maintain line of sight supervision, instead of walking directly next to him. ➢ Usually, if the student is moving a short distance for a class, the adult does not need to walk directly next to him during the transition. ➢ If the student is traveling a greater distance, try to partner him with a peer (i.e., "transition buddy") to accompany him to the destination. ➢ Have him carry his own materials (books, laptop, etc.). If he is not able to do so, ask his teacher or CST how to address the issue—he may need to store certain items in a classroom or stop at his locker more often.
Eats Lunch or Snack/ Is in the Cafeteria	➢ Do *not* open packages for him, unless he has a physical disability that prevents him from doing this by himself. ➢ Do *not* wipe his face for him if he is a messy eater; use a subtle gesture/cue to remind him to clean his own face or have him go to the restroom to clean himself up. If he returns without properly cleaning himself, then remind him to go back to try it again. ➢ If he does have a physical disability, then remind him that he needs to ask for your help in opening something, instead of helping him before he has asked. ➢ Do not "mind read" his wants and/or needs; he must learn to express these himself (verbally, with a gesture or using an augmentative communication device).

The Cycle of Paraprofessional Support

According to the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, the definition of a paraprofessional is an employee: 1.) "Whose position is either instructional in nature or who provides other direct or indirect services to students and/or their families; or 2.) Who works under the supervision of a teacher or another professional staff member who has the ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of education programs and related services."

Paraprofessionals provide invaluable support services to students such as helping a student learn new skills using lessons the teacher has prepared or practice these previously-learned skills. Paraprofessionals also can assist students with a wide variety of tasks, from organization to physical mobility, translation, even job coaching. However, they are ALWAYS meant to work under the supervision of a qualified, certificated staff member who has the ultimate responsibility for instruction design and evaluation. Although the support delivered by a paraprofessional can be essential to a student's success, a paraprofessional should never feel like they are "all alone" in supporting that student. However, paras, especially those who work one-to-one with a student, often know that student better than anyone in the building, which makes them an important member of the team.

Feedback builds a working team. While the teacher takes the lead in the classroom, both teacher and paraprofessional should have the chance to share feedback. Feedback cuts down on confusion, duplicating tasks and resentment between paraprofessional and teacher. Mary Beth Doyle's Cycle of Support clearly outlines how this kind of feedback cycle might look in the classroom (*see graphic below*). It is acknowledged that finding this time for the teacher and paraprofessional to collaborate in order to engage in these practices may be a challenge, however it is highly recommended that time be established for this purpose.

Doyle, M.B., 2008. *The paraprofessional's guide to the inclusive classroom: Working as a team.*
Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Possible Discussion Points for Effective Teacher-Paraprofessional Communication

Discussing and clarifying some key topics at the beginning of the school year can prevent conflicts resulting from misunderstandings and assumptions. The following includes topics that Teachers and Paraprofessionals/Aides should discuss when starting to work together.

1. Teacher's availability to meet and best way to contact him/her;
2. Teacher's standard classroom procedures and routines;
3. Daily and weekly schedule(s) for student(s) that the Aide is supporting;
4. Classroom behavior management techniques that the Aide will implement to support students (ways to motivate student, rules and consequences, documenting problems, process for removal/return due to behavioral outbursts, etc.);
5. Data collection methods for the Paraprofessional/Aide to implement;
6. Relevant information from students' IEPs to be shared with the Paraprofessional/Aide (i.e., the student's "positive profile" document and/or IEP "snapshot" or summary); and
7. How the Paraprofessional/Aide should handle parent inquiries.

Additional clarifying questions that a Paraprofessional might initially ask a Teacher include:

- How do you see my role in your classroom?
- How will my role be presented to the students and their families?
- How will we communicate about the student(s)?
- What are the individual behavior support techniques that I am to use with individual student(s) I support (i.e., ways to motivate student, documenting problems, removal/return)?
- What are some ways I can help facilitate student independence and avoid fostering over-dependence on my assistance?

As the year progresses, ongoing discussion can enable Teacher and Paraprofessional to build a strong classroom partnership that will benefit *all* students. Paraprofessionals can facilitate this by:

- Letting teachers know what your areas of strength are.
- Asking questions and actively seeking clarification if something is unclear.
- Informing the teacher of how the student(s) responded to learning activities.
- Offering ideas/suggestions when the opportunity arises.

As the school year progresses, it is also important to make sure to "stay on the same page". In order to keep the lines of communication open and the "cycle of feedback" (previously discussed) running smoothly, teachers and paraprofessionals might find a "communication tune-up" helpful. The following questions may assist teachers and paraprofessionals in "tuning up" their communication:

- Are we regularly sharing information about student performance, behavior and growth?
- Do we need to work further on defining job roles (who does what) and evaluating student(s)?
- What areas (within our collaboration) would we like to see improved?
- What areas (in our collaboration) can we congratulate ourselves on?
- Are we treating each other as co-workers rather than supervisor and subordinate?
- Do we each feel free to offer suggestions or bring up problems?
- Are we both fulfilling our job descriptions, so that neither of us is overburdened or underutilized?

"Tune Up Checklist" adapted from AFT School Tips: Creating a Classroom Team, p. 7.

Tips for Supporting Students in Lunch/Recess

The main goals of providing additional adult support to students while in the cafeteria for lunch or during recess is to accomplish the following:
1. Main student **safety** (issues to address may include students who attempt to leave an area/school grounds if not properly supervised, students who are physically aggressive with others, etc.).
2. Foster student **independence** in completing self-help skills (e.g., opening food containers, using utensils for some students, etc.).
3. Facilitate **social interactions** with typical peers so the student can form relationships and practice using targeted social interaction skills in the natural context.

Maintaining Safety with Active Supervision

One strategy for effective student management that is supported through research is known as **active supervision**. Active supervision can be very useful during classroom activities, but is also very effective at reducing misbehavior in non-classroom situations, such as cafeteria time, hallway transitions, and recess. When adults *actively supervise* students, we verbally and non-verbally communicate to students the certainty that we *do* inspect what we expect. Active supervision is a monitoring procedure that uses 3 components:

"Scan": Scanning effectively means frequently and intentionally look around at students:
- Visually sweep all areas of the room as well as look directly at students nearest you.
- If working with an individual, position self to scan the area or get up and scan occasionally.
- Look for signs of problems or signs of agitation in your student (if providing individual support).

"Move": Moving effectively when supervising work or activities involves:
- Continuous movement.
- Circulating among all students.
- Random or unpredictable movement patterns.
- Moving close to noncompliant students and possible targeted problem areas, as needed.
- Periodically moving and supervising when providing individual or small group instruction.

"Interact": While moving and scanning you should also frequently interact with students to:
- Demonstrate interest in students and provide non-contingent attention.
- Assist with tasks and provide specific feedback–both positive and corrective.
- Use active listening, eye contact, smiles, pleasant voice tone, and students' names.
- Use precorrection (proactive reminders of expectations, instead of waiting to correct misbehavior).
- Redirect behavior using brief statements, signals and non-verbal cues, as needed.
- Use a continuum of responses to address inappropriate behavior, as needed.

After the adult uses "scan-move-interact" and recognizes that a student is agitated, the primary goal is to use strategies to calm the student down and carefully assist him or her to become engaged in an appropriate activity. But the key is timing, so that you catch the student before his behavior escalates beyond agitation. Use the following techniques at the earliest indications of agitation:
- *Support:* Communicate concern to the student.
- *Space:* Provide student with an opportunity to have some isolation from the rest of the group.
- *Choices:* Give the student some choices or options.
- *Calm Down Time:* Allow the student to engage in a calming activity for a short period of time to help regain focus. Use audiotapes, drawing activities, breathing and relaxation techniques.
- *Process Incidents in Private:* If inappropriate behavior occurs, it is important to let the student know his behavior was problematic, but this feedback should *not* necessarily be given in front of peers, especially if doing so would make the student appear "different" or socially inadequate.

Since agitation is a very common predictor of serious or crisis behavior, it is very important for adults to develop a sharp eye in identifying agitation as early as possible and implement strategies that are designed to calm the student down and reorient student to the current activity.

7 Tips for Facilitating Appropriate Social Interactions

One of the biggest problems in social skills training is getting behaviors/skills to endure longer than end of the training session and transfer to other settings. Specific strategies to promote generalization and maintenance of the social skills being taught are needed. In order to support generalization, any social skills intervention should incorporate strategies such as:

1. Define It: clearly define what the desired skill or behavior looks like.
- Define the skill precisely so that everyone agrees on what is to be accomplished, or what the student will be able to do/show after instruction.
- Develop specific terminology or "cue words" to use when referring to the skill, and encourage all adults to use the same word/phase for the skill.
- For more complex skills, identify specific skill components and the sequence of actions or steps to complete it successfully (task analysis) and generate a visual checklist to use to reduce verbal prompting needed to move a student through each step to promote independence.

2. Practice It: provide opportunities for student to practice the skill.
- Practice using role plays where at least two different scenarios are included.
- Label the skill being practiced by using the specific terminology or cue word/phrase for the skill.
- Provide opportunities to practice the skill in "real life situations/settings".
- Promote generalization to different settings/circumstances by practicing in different settings and under various conditions.

3. Model It: demonstrate skill or call attention to others providing a spontaneous model of the skill.
- Use the "cue word/phrase" for the skill when modeling use of the skill and specifically point out instances where others are using the skill using the consistent terminology assigned to the skill.
- Video modeling can also be used to show the student the skill in action so that s/he can then perform the target behavior depicted in the video.

4. Precorrect It: give the student reminders proactively *before* a behavior is expected.
- Precorrect by reviewing and/or practicing the skill in advance with the student and especially before a troublesome situation or routine (i.e., before a "trigger" situation).
- Use the specific terminology assigned to the skill when precorrecting (e.g., consistently say "remember to 'use your words' if you feel mad" if that is the skill being taught).
- Pre-corrections give students an opportunity to practice or be reminded about expected behavior before they enter situations in which displays of problem behaviors are likely.

5. Prompt It: remind the student when to use the skill then react with feedback.
- Promote generalization to different settings/circumstances by prompting and coaching the student in naturally occurring situations.
- Use the specific terminology assigned to the skill when prompting (e.g., consistently say "we use our words, Suzy" if that is the skill being taught).

6. Praise It: reinforce the skill verbally by giving *specific* positive feedback using the terminology.
- Give positive feedback in the moment as successful approximations of desired behavior occur.
- Use the specific terminology assigned to the skill when praising (e.g., consistently say "great job 'using your words', Sam" if that is the skill being taught).

7. Debrief and Try a "Do Over": after an incident, practice to discuss alternatives to have used.
- If an incident occurs, have the student practice the correct behavior (e.g., "do over").
- If an incident occurs, an adult and the student should discuss it and what could have been done differently. Debriefing about a socially interaction "mishap" by reevaluating the situation and dissecting what happened, why the student's behavior did not work, and what can be done in the future may be referred to as a "social autopsy" (http://www.ricklavoie.com/competence.pdf).

Tips for Facilitating Social Interactions with Peers

In addition to the above strategies for social skill instruction and feedback, the following ideas may also be used by adults who are directly facilitating social interactions among students.

1. Highlight Similarities Among Students: Pointing out things students have in common can provide the basis for a conversation among peers. Example: *"I hear Stephen really likes American Idol, too. Maybe you can ask him if he watched it last night."*

2. Model Confidence in the Student: Remind others (peers and adults) to communicate *directly* with this student. Provide assistance only if needed or requested to ensure clear communication. Demonstrate that you value the student's contributions by giving a specific responsibility or "job".

3. Provide Opportunities for Frequent Interactions to Occur: Encourage social interaction by partnering this student with peers whenever appropriate. Have this student work in cooperative peer groups to help him/her practice social interaction skills in a more structured setting. Give the student the space and freedom to socialize and interact with peers on his/her own. Always sitting next to this student can become a barrier for any kind of peer interaction, so try not to sit directly next to him/her throughout the entire class period. If the student is working independently on a task, "check in" with him/her then move away and circulate in the classroom.

4. Provide Proactive Reminders: Using *proactive* reminders to remind the student of the expected social behaviors can set the student up for success and minimize the need for corrections. Example: *"Remember to use your whisper voice on the bus to talk to another kid."*

5. Use Reminders to Teach Initiation Skills and Appropriate Conversation Starters: The adult can proactively remind the student of appropriate ways to start a conversation (or use "Friendship Builders"), so that he can apply the skills with peers. An example of this for the social interactions on the playground or in the lunchroom might sound like *"Remember to use your 'Friendship Builders' to another kid"* or *"What do you think would be good to talk about with another kid?".*

6. Prompt by Providing Appropriate Conversation Starters: Help the student start a conversation with a peer by reminding him of what he could say that would be an appropriate way to start a conversation with a peer. Some ideas for "conversation starters" (or "friendship builders") to try that could be part of a *proactive* reminder to the student might include any of the following:

➢ Discussing seasonal topics (e.g., summer, spring or winter break, and other holidays off from school such as President's Day, Memorial Day, etc.):
  o *"What did you do over…?"*
  o *"Do you have any plans for…?"*
➢ Remembering shared events with the peer:
  o *"Do you remember when…?"*
  o *"I did that too! Did you…?"*
➢ Remarking on current events of that might be of interest (e.g., common topics that are in the news that might be interesting to the peer, such as sporting events):
  o *"Did you hear about…?"*
  o *"What do you think about…?"*
  o *"Did you see the game on Sunday?"*
➢ Sharing enjoyable experiences, such as discussing a good movie you just saw, favorite TV show, a good website, etc.:
  o *"Hey, I just saw this movie…"*
  o *"Hey, I just read this book…"*

7. Give Specific Praise: When giving positive feedback, be specific and point out factual evidence of the student's success and good choice making, rather than just saying "nice job". Being descriptive is important because vague, general praise does *not* give the student any useful information about how their behavior met the adult's expectations. It can also sound fake.

8. Give Frequent Positive Feedback: Make an effort to give positive attention or praise at least four times more frequently than when you correct behavior (e.g., use a 4 to 1 ratio of positives to corrections). Giving the student attention or praise during moments when that student is acting appropriately can greatly improve the adult's relationship with students who require corrections. Finding additional times to briefly interact with the student also gives adults more opportunities to have positive interactions with students and makes it more likely for the 4 to 1 ratio to be used.