

Considerations for Leaders: Effective Use of Paraprofessionals

General/Immediate Considerations:

- Who made the request and why?
 - Parent, teacher, paraprofessional, related service provider, principal
 - Academic concerns, behavioral concerns, health/safety concerns
- Is the concern due to past/current documented needs or due to concerns about the future?
- Is the request for paraprofessional support for just one type of activity/environment or for multiple activities/environments?
- Does the request indicate that individual (1-1) support is needed or assistance by a paraprofessional who would be able to assist other students as well?
- Has the student received paraprofessional support in the past? Was it successful (be sure to consider learned helplessness and student independence)
- Has the teacher or related service provider been supported in the selection of appropriate interventions and strategies? By whom?
- What documented strategies have been attempted with fidelity?
- Has the student been observed by someone other than the teacher/related service provider in the environment in which paraprofessional support is being requested? In other environments?

Long-Term Considerations:

- What potential negative effects could paraprofessional support cause the student in the future (e.g., learned helplessness, dependent upon prompting, social isolation)?
- How will the team determine when it is appropriate to begin fading the support?
- How will the effectiveness of paraprofessional support be monitored and documented?

Academic Considerations:

- Is the student able to stay engaged in learning in some environments and not others?
- What tasks or activities can the student do independent of support or with minimal support?
- What task or types of activities can the student currently not engage in due to a need for ongoing prompting and support?
- Does the student require accommodations and have they been provided?
- Does the student require modifications and have they been provided?
- What types of prompts have been provided to the student (e.g., visual, verbal, physical)?

Behavioral/Environmental Considerations:

- What is the nature of the behaviors of concern (e.g., defiance, peer-related, isolationism, communication, physical)?
- What documented supports have been put into place and with what effect?
- Does the student have a PBSP that has been based upon the results of a FBA?
 - Do all staff understand their role in the implementation of the PBSP?
- Do the exhibited behaviors constitute current or potential safety concerns (e.g., physical harm to self or others, elopement from the building)
 - Do all staff working with the student know what to do if dangerous behaviors occur?
 - Have staff been trained in de-escalation and restraint? Is this documented?
 - Do staff know what to do should a restraint become necessary (e.g., teams, note-taker)

Health/Safety Considerations:

- Are the health/safety concerns ongoing or episodic (e.g., allergies, seizures with/without medication, mobility, feeding, catheterization)?
- What methods have been put into place already and with what effect?
- Are the documented concerns able to be addressed by a paraprofessional or is there a need to consider a nurse?