

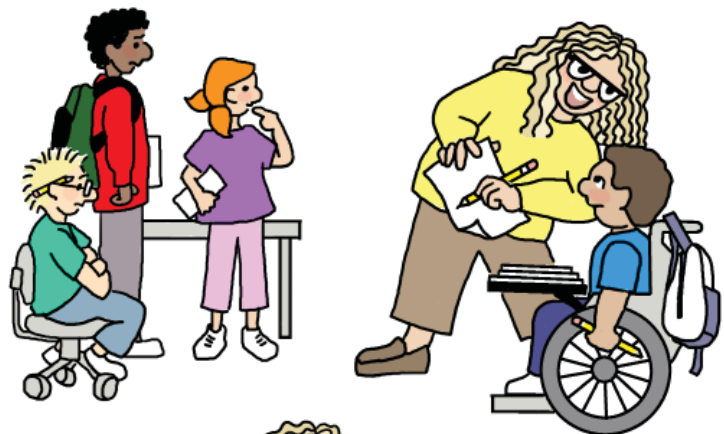
While paraprofessionals (paras) may have different job titles, they all work under the direction of at least one teacher. Teachers in inclusive schools sometimes rely on paras to provide extended support for students with disabilities in general education classrooms and other settings. Paras can also play an important role in the problem-solving and instructional planning process.

Not every student with a disability needs the assistance of a para. Some students with disabilities get the support they need from teachers working together in general education classrooms. Others may only need para support for part of the day or week. But for students with more extensive disabilities, paras can provide daily support for learning, physical, communication, behavioral, and social/emotional needs. The many roles performed by paras clearly result in positive outcomes for students with disabilities in general education environments.

Fulfilling these varied roles can be a complex balancing act for paras.

Because they are required to work closely with individual students, a para can be:

A BARRIER
to learning and social development and a symbol of the student's disability.



OR...

A POWERFUL FACILITATOR
of learning and social relationships.



One way that we can guide paras in the delicate balance between support and facilitation is by asking:

How can you provide support in a way that brings students with and without disabilities together for learning and social interaction?

Facilitating student learning and involvement in inclusive settings:

"Chloe can do this with a little extra help. Can you help her roll the dice?"



Help students without disabilities understand what students with disabilities **can do**.

"Who would you like to work with? How will you ask them to be your partner?"



Help students with disabilities learn how to **initiate communication and social interactions** with adults and peers.

Which way is better? You decide!

"See if you two can figure out how to use the calculator to solve your math problems. I'm going to go over and help the teacher prepare for tomorrow's lesson."



or

"Let me show you how to solve these problems with the calculator."



"OK, everyone who has a dog say 'woof-woof' and find a barking partner!"



or

"OK Miguel, today I'll help you practice using your switch to communicate."



For more ideas on how paraprofessionals can help make inclusion work in your school, contact your FIN facilitator by visiting our Web site: www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com

References and recommended reading:

- Causton-Theoharis, J. (2009). *The paraprofessional's handbook for effective support in inclusive classrooms*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Rossetti, Z., & Goessling, D. (2010). Paraeducators' roles in facilitating friendships between secondary students with and without autism spectrum disorders or developmental disabilities. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 42(6), 64–70.
- Doyle, M. B. (2002). *The paraprofessional's guide to the inclusive classroom*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.