

A Process for Determining When a Student Requires Paraprofessional Support

(Adapted from Patricia H. Mueller, Ed.D., November 1999)

Paraprofessional assistance is required by some students in order for them to succeed in school. Frequently, IEP Teams are requested to consider the need for paraprofessional support. The following process can be used by IEP Teams as guidance in making decisions regarding paraprofessional support.

When dealing with the addition of paraprofessionals, it needs to be determined what the educational benefits are for the students. Recent research and current practice indicates that misuse of paraprofessionals can produce among the results, students becoming over-dependent upon adult support, and the segregation and isolation of the student from their peer group. (Marks et al., 1999; Giangreco et al., 1997; Mueller, 1997)

This planning process applies to any student who requires paraprofessional support for a portion of their school day. The student's IEP Team should use the process annually, at least in sync with his/her annual review.

Assumptions Regarding Paraprofessionals:

- They are a valuable and necessary resource for students
- They are not surrogate teachers
- Support services are to promote independence, not dependence
- Paraprofessional assignments should be based on the needs of the student as specified by the IEP Team or Behavior Intervention Plan.

Description of the Instrument:

The instrument is divided into two parts:

- I. **Intensive Needs Questionnaire** – This questionnaire is designed to assist in developing an overview of the student's needs in direct relation to the classroom environment. Completion of the questionnaire helps focus discussion.
- II. **Paraprofessional Needs Matrix** – This matrix identifies specifically where, when and how the Paraprofessional will provide support and how independence will be encouraged.

I. Intensive Needs Questionnaire

1. Is there a safety concern for the student or others? Yes No
Be as specific as possible.

2. Does the student require assistance with basic functional skills?

	Yes	No	Please Describe
Toileting	Yes	No	
Mobility	Yes	No	
Feeding	Yes	No	
Dressing	Yes	No	

3. Are there medical issues? Yes No Describe

4. Do the student's peers include them in classroom activities? Yes No

5. Is the student receptive to peer tutoring and support? Yes No

6. Which of the student's unique needs require Paraprofessional support?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

7. What type of training may be needed for the Paraprofessional? What resources do we have to meet these needs?

8. Does the team believe there is a need for a Paraprofessional for the student?
Yes No

Please proceed to the Paraprofessional Needs Matrix if needed assistance is determined.

II. Paraprofessional Needs Matrix

Student Name: _____ Review Date: _____
 Date: _____
 Classroom Teacher _____
 School: _____
 Paraprofessional Assigned: (If applicable) _____

Unique functional and/or educational needs requiring parapro support	Activity or time of the day	What can the student do independently?	What does the student need assistance with?	What accommodations might permit the student to complete this activity independently?	Identify ways to promote positive social interaction and/or independence	What will be the specific responsibility of the parapro?	Total anticipated time reduction in parapro support by annual review

Total amount of time needed for paraprofessional support _____

Paraprofessional References

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Paraprofessional Planning Tool

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In addition to the lack of evidence for the use of one-to-one adult support, current research indicates that an overreliance on paraprofessionals is associated with unintended detrimental effects. (Giangreco, et al., 2010; Giangreco, 2010). These effects include the student feeling stigmatized, interference with peer interactions, interference with teacher engagement and competent instruction, decrease in independence skills, and an increase in behavioral challenges. As such, assigning one-to-one adult support must be approached cautiously and occur only when other interventions such as visual supports, peer to peer support, positive behavioral supports or current supports in the classroom alone cannot meet the student's academic, social or behavioral needs.

This tool is designed to assist school teams in determining when 1:1 adult support is appropriate and necessary and in designing a plan that includes processes for fading the paraprofessional over time. It also aligns with research recommendations that decision-making processes and tools be developed and used for determining the need for adult support (Giangreco, 2010; Giangreco, et al., 2011). It is important to note that the general use of one-to-one adult support in school should be considered a systems issue and addressed at a systems level (Giangreco, 2012).

STEP 1: Complete the following schedule matrix to determine where the student may need additional support.

Student Schedule	Expectations & Instructional Demands	Current Level of Skills (Compared to Peers)	Current Supports, Strategies and EBPs	Potential Goals & Strategies Needed
<p>In this column, list the student's daily schedule including all primary activities, courses / classes and/or transitions.</p>	<p>In this column, identify the expectations & instructional demands and outcomes during this part of the schedule. Expectations and instructional outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence Skills • Social Interaction Skills • Communication Skills • Engagement Skills • Behavioral Skills • Academic Skills including task initiation & output <p>For example, during "arrival," the expectations may include independently taking off outerwear, getting materials ready, taking a seat, and completing morning work.</p> <p>Include in this section any specific IEP goals targeted during a particular time in the schedule.</p>	<p>In this column, identify the student's performance, compared to peers, during each part of the schedule.</p> <p>Include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Skills • Social Interaction Skills • Communication Skills • Engagement Skills • Behavioral Skills <p>Academic skills including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Task Initiation ○ Output <p>Deficits in these areas may indicate the need for intervention including 1:1 adult support.</p>	<p>List in this column, all the supports, strategies, and/or supplementary aides and services currently in place to support the student. These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual / Organizational Supports / Strategies • Peer to Peer Supports • Functional Communication System • Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports • Evidence-Based Practices • Accommodations / Modifications • Behavioral Response Plan / Crisis Plan • Adult (Paraprofessional) Support 	<p>In this column, based on information in the previous columns, list potential goal areas (areas of need) and strategies needed for the student to independently make adequate progress in all areas.</p> <p>Before considering 1:1 adult support, all other supports to address the challenge should be considered FIRST. One-to-one adult support should be considered the most restrictive support option (Giangreco, 2010). Adult supports should ONLY be used as long as is necessary to teach the student to independently use a system or strategy (e.g. self-management) to address the challenge. If adult support is added, the IEP team should complete the Adult Support Responsibilities Form included in this document.</p>

Paraprofessional Planning Tool

Student Name (DOB): _____ Grade: _____ School: _____ Date: _____

Student Schedule	Expectations & Instructional Demands	Current Level of Skills (Compared to Peers)	Current Supports, Strategies and EBPs	Potential Goals & Strategies Needed