

Hartland Consolidated Schools

Snippets from the Office of Special Education

A Parent's Guide to Paraeducator Supports



What is a Paraeducator?

A paraeducator is a paid school employee whose position provides support to students. Paraeducators work under the supervision of a certified or licensed school professional who is responsible for the design, implementation, instruction, and assessment of student progress.

Paraeducators may assist with:

- Sensory plans
- Monitoring behavior for safety
- Communication support
- Medical or self-care needs

Paraeducators rotate roles and responsibilities frequently to:

1. Promote student independence
2. Increase student adaptability
3. Increase student assertiveness and self-advocacy skills
4. Help students learn from different methods and styles of support

What should I expect?

- IEP teams determine the level of paraeducator support required for FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) and revisit the requirements periodically throughout the school year.
- To promote student independence, the goal is always to decrease the amount of paraeducator support.
- A fading Plan & IEP goal(s) must be written to ensure that student independence increases over time.
- Students are rarely assigned one-to-one support.
- Communication will come from the classroom teacher rather than from the paraeducator.



The goal of the paraeducator is always to enable the student to become as independent as possible.

Questions & Answers

Is the paraeducator responsible for my child's educational progress? No. The teacher is responsible for designing and implementing instruction. The paraeducator is responsible for supporting the teacher's lesson plans.

Should I contact the paraeducator when I have questions or concerns? No. The teacher is responsible for all aspects of your child's education. When parents contact paraeducators instead of the teacher, it puts everyone in an awkward position. Always contact the general education teacher or special education case coordinator when you have questions or concerns.

Can I request that a specific paraeducator work solely with my child? No. Our paraeducators rotate roles and responsibilities frequently. This helps to support student independence and ensures highly effective paraeducators. Keep in mind, paraeducators are assigned tasks rather than students.

Things to consider regarding Paraeducator Support



Unnatural supports can lend themselves to unintended outcomes. We must always be considerate of:

1. Confusion of roles & responsibilities (teachers & paraeducators)
2. Separation from classmates (student & paraeducator work independently on the side)
3. Dependence on adults (student or parent become attached and dependent on paraeducator)
4. Impact on peer interactions (an adult shadow is a stigma and is often intimidating to peers)
5. Limitations on receiving instruction from a highly qualified teacher (paraeducators are not teachers)
6. Loss of personal control (adults tend to make decisions for students)
7. Interference with instruction of other students (students are distracted by the paraeducator)

Sources

Sources for this information include Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Michigan Rules for Special Education Administration (MARSE), LRP Publications, and Legally Speaking: A Staff Training Guide for Communication with Parents and Avoiding Conflicts in Special Education.



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