

3

The Shifting Roles of School Professionals

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

The presence of paraeducators who provide instructional support to students *changes the role of the classroom teacher*. Some teachers welcome the changes. They recognize that students who need special education services or students with limited English language proficiency wouldn't thrive in general education classes without additional assistance. Early childhood and early childhood special education teachers also recognize that a full caseload or classroom of students with a wide range of unique needs means that they, working alone, cannot possibly provide an appropriate amount of personal attention and care for each child. These teachers regard the work that paraeducators do as necessary to their success and to the safety, health, and academic success of their students.

Today's teachers also know that the assistance they receive from paraeducators has its price. It means that they lose some of the personalized one-to-one contact with students. Sometimes, this loss of contact also means sacrificing some control. One teacher talked about the paraeducator in her classroom: "Sometimes she does more individual instruction with the kids than I do. She is the teacher when I'm not there" (French, 1998).

CONSULTING AND COLLABORATING TEACHERS AND RELATED SERVICE PROVIDERS

In consulting and collaborating teacher and service provider models in special education, Title I, and ESL-bilingual programs, the role of the professional is already vastly different from the role of the traditional classroom teacher.

Figure 3.1 is a model that illustrates the decrease in control that teachers and service providers may experience as they move away from an educational model that emphasizes individualism and individual teachers in classrooms. The shift toward the right side of the horizontal axis represents the increases

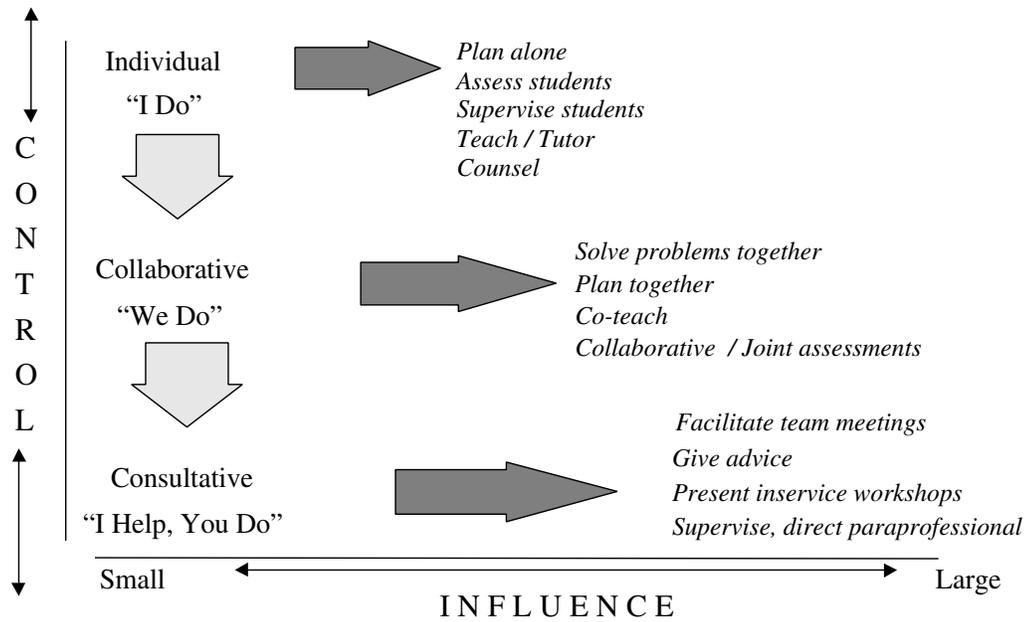


Figure 3.1. Continuum of Approaches for School Professionals

of potential influence a teacher has on students' education through collaborative and consultative work. Supervising and directing the work of paraeducators represents a maximum increase of influence on large numbers of students' educational experiences, but a loss of control over the specific daily events. The role of teachers and other service providers in schools becomes more like that of a middle-level executive, an engineer, or a doctor or lawyer, who consults with colleagues, diagnoses and plans, and then directs the work of paraprofessionals in order to meet the needs of the client or patient. In this case, the professionals plan curriculum, instruction, and appropriate adaptations and direct the paraeducator in helping to carry out the plans.

PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND SUPERVISION

In many ways, this change of roles signifies a shift to a more professional status for teachers. There has been much discussion over the years about whether teaching is a profession and how teacher qualities compare to the qualities of other professionals. Most agree that a profession is formed when members of an occupation have a knowledge base (as in engineering and medicine) and use that knowledge base to guide practice. There is also much agreement that, in professions, being prepared is essential to being a responsible practitioner and that unprepared people should not be permitted to practice. There is agreement that professional status is given to an occupation when there is a high degree of uncertainty in everyday practice that requires judgment. "Judgment," says Shulman, "is the hallmark of what it is to be a professional" (1998).

Professional judgment is required for all teachers' functions that cannot be delegated to others and for which the teacher assumes final and full responsi-

BOX 3.1**SEVEN EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS
OF PARAEDUCATOR SUPERVISION**

1. Orienting paraeducators to the program, school, and students
2. Planning for paraeducators
3. Scheduling for paraeducators
4. Delegating tasks to paraeducators
5. On-the-job training and coaching of paraeducators
6. Monitoring and feedback regarding paraeducator task performance
7. Managing the workplace (communications, problem solving, conflict management)

bility, even when some of the tasks that lead to completion of the professional responsibilities are assigned to others.

Berliner (1983a, 1983b) first conceived the notion of teacher as executive. He pointed out that schools are workplaces and that, whether in teaching or business, the person who runs the workplace must perform a number of executive functions. Teachers must ensure completion of and remain accountable for their five primary responsibilities. The first four are (1) planning curriculum and instruction for students, (2) assessing students both for program eligibility and for ongoing progress monitoring, (3) teaching or causing instruction to happen, and (4) collaborating with other professionals and families. The fifth responsibility, supervising paraeducators, is characterized by seven additional functions, listed in Box 3.1.

The teaching responsibilities and supervisory functions of classroom teachers vary somewhat from those of the consulting teacher or itinerant service provider. Table 3.1 lists, side by side, the variations on the responsibilities of teachers (including the supervisory functions) for two types of school professional positions—the classroom-based teacher and the consulting or itinerant professional.

**TEAMWORK AMONG PROFESSIONALS
WHO SHARE SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

In combination, Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1 suggest that collaborative teamwork among professionals is essential to effective curriculum and instruction for students whose needs vary and that teamwork in carrying out the seven supervisory functions is also necessary.

In teams with a designated leader, that person is most likely to perform most of the executive functions of paraeducator supervision. However, many school

Table 3.1 Side-by-Side Variations of Classroom and Consulting Professional Roles

Consulting Teachers' and Specialists' Teaching Responsibilities and Supervisory Functions	Classroom Teachers' Teaching Responsibilities and Supervisory Functions
<p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Plan objectives that address IEP goals, language acquisition goals, behavior goals, literacy goals, health goals, etc. ⇒ Prescribe types of adaptations necessary for the student to meet his or her IEP goals, language development goals, behavior goals, literacy goals, health goals, etc. ⇒ Direct paraeducator to complete materials adaptations that support plans 	<p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Plan classroom lessons and units in accordance with district curriculum standards ⇒ Determine how specific adaptations that support individual learning needs should be incorporated into lesson or unit ⇒ Assign paraeducator to complete materials adaptations that support the plans
<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Assess and evaluate individual students for program eligibility ⇒ Assess and evaluate the progress of individual students 	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Assess and evaluate overall academic progress of classes of students ⇒ Provide classroom data about individual students to consulting teacher or specialist
<p>Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ensure the delivery of the student's IEP, language goals, literacy goals, behavior goals, or health goals ⇒ Ensure access to general education curriculum and standards 	<p>Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ensure the delivery of the curriculum and standards appropriate to the grade level, course, or subject area ⇒ Ensure that appropriate adaptations are made for students who have individualized plans
<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ensure that every classroom teacher has at least a thumbnail sketch of the individualized plans for each student on caseload ⇒ Discuss the appropriate adaptations for each individual student with classroom teacher 	<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Obtain information from appropriate consulting teacher or specialist about students for whom any individualized plan exists ⇒ Discuss appropriate adaptations for individual with consulting teacher or specialist

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Table 3.1 continued

Consulting Teachers' and Specialists' Teaching Responsibilities and Supervisory Functions	Classroom Teachers' Teaching Responsibilities and Supervisory Functions
<p>Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Orient the paraeducator to the school building, the staff, the individual students with whom he or she will work, individualized goals and needs of particular students, and the program purposes ➤ Lead the analysis of work styles and preferences for all teachers with whom paraeducator works ➤ Create personalized job description based on program and classroom needs and skills of the paraeducator in collaboration with all classroom teachers with whom the paraeducator works 	<p>Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Orient the paraeducator to the rules, routines, and procedures of the classroom, provide space in classroom for the paraeducator, and introduce paraeducator to students and other relevant adults ➤ Participate in work style and preference analysis, program needs and paraeducator skills analysis, and creation of personalized job description
<p>Scheduling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Set daily, weekly, and monthly schedules for paraeducators based on student goals, classroom lessons, and needs 	<p>Scheduling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Communicate to consulting teacher any classroom, lesson, and unit needs that should influence the schedule
<p>Delegation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delegate and assign tasks and duties to paraeducator regarding delivery of services according to IEP, language, behavior, literacy, and health goals 	<p>Delegation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delegate and assign tasks and duties to paraeducator that will enhance the content and flow of the lesson or unit in the classroom
<p>Monitor Task Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitor tasks assigned to paraeducator based on individualized goals to ensure they are performed correctly by the paraeducator ➤ Provide timely and appropriate feedback to paraeducator regarding task performance 	<p>Monitor Task Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Monitor assigned tasks and duties assigned to paraeducator that are based on individualized goals and on classroom lesson and unit plans ➤ Provide timely and appropriate feedback to paraeducator regarding task performance
<p>On-the-Job Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Train and coach in the skills required to perform assigned tasks 	<p>On-the-Job Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Train and coach paraeducators in the skills required to perform assigned tasks

Table 3.1 continued

Consulting Teachers' and Specialists' Teaching Responsibilities and Supervisory Functions	Classroom Teachers' Teaching Responsibilities and Supervisory Functions
<p>Manage the Work Environment</p> <p>➤ Serve as team leader of all those involved in the individualizing aspect of the child's education: Manage intrateam communication, instructional or logistical problems, and interpersonal conflicts in the workplace that may otherwise interfere with delivery of student program</p>	<p>Manage the Work Environment</p> <p>➤ Serve as team member, contribute knowledge of curriculum and classroom instruction, participate in effective communications, and share in problem-resolution techniques and conflict management.</p>

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teams are leaderless in the sense that they do their fundamental work without a designated leader and they share the functions of team leadership. Several professional team members may share the paraeducator supervision functions. The lines of authority and communication that are so readily apparent in one-on-one supervisor-supervisee relationships become less obvious when teams share supervisory responsibilities. When this is the case, teams must clarify who will perform the executive functions of paraeducator supervision. Below are three examples of professional teams who share responsibility for the executive functions of paraeducator supervision.

Example 1: General Education Teams

An instructional team may consist of grade-level teachers or subject area teachers who share supervision of a single paraeducator. Initially, they provide orientation to the paraeducator at a team meeting, develop a personalized job description for the paraeducator, and clarify areas where they will provide on-the-job training. The team teachers plan together, determine the paraeducator's schedule, delegate tasks, and monitor the work of the paraeducator. They periodically meet with the paraeducator to communicate team and student needs, explain how to perform tasks, resolve problems and conflicts, and provide performance feedback.

**Example 2: Special Education—
General Education Teams in Inclusion Programs**

A special education team includes various professionals—a school psychologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, school nurse, and special education teacher—all of whom share assessment and planning responsibilities for students with significant needs even though those students receive most of their education in a general education class-

room. The critical feature here is that all the team members except the special education and general education teachers are itinerant. That is, many team members are present in the building only once or twice a week. Thus, the day-to-day scheduling, direction, and monitoring of the paraeducator's work is shared by the general education teacher and the special education teacher (who are present). Even though the two teachers assume the daily functions of supervision, the itinerant professionals provide plans, direction, on-the-job training, and monitoring of the paraeducator's task performance.

Example 3: Paraeducator Supports Students

A third example is where the paraeducator's assignment is dedicated to the support of individual students with disabilities, or groups of ESL students, who spend most of their time in general education classes. In this case, the classroom teacher assumes responsibility for planning instruction for the whole class while the special education professional or ESL teacher assumes responsibility for consulting with the general education teacher, planning the types of adaptations necessary, providing any specialized curriculum or instruction necessary, providing specific on-the-job training to the paraeducator, and monitoring student outcomes.

Each circumstance demands a unique response to the distribution of supervisory functions. Teams may use the following questions to help decide how to assign and share the seven supervisory functions.

Who Plans the Curriculum and Instruction (Including Adaptations)?

This person (or persons) may or may not be physically present. However, this person has the greatest responsibility and is accountable for outcomes. He or she holds legitimate authority for the individualized health plan, behavior plan, or language acquisition plan. This person may have been designated as the case manager or may have signed the individualized plan. This person must, at the very least, provide plans for the specific outcomes for which he or she holds responsibility. This person also provides on-the-job training and monitors the paraeducator's task performance.

Who Directs the Paraeducator on a Daily Basis?

This is the person who is physically present with the paraeducator. In cases where no single professional is physically present at all times, teams may want to identify the professionals who have proximity at various times during the paraeducator's scheduled day. This professional should, at the least, be involved in giving task direction, monitoring task performance, and providing task performance feedback to the paraeducator.

Who Provides Training for Assigned Duties?

This person may or may not be physically present on a daily basis, but must provide the training because of their licensing requirements or specific training or skill. Examples include school nurses who delegate the task of giving med-