

# Navigating the Teacher & Paraeducator Relationship

DNEA Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism

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#### Introduction

There are many staff members that have an important role in the education of students with disabilities. Since teachers and paraeducators work together everyday, creating and maintaining strong collaborative relationships between them is critical. Unfortunately, in classroom today, this relationship is often underdeveloped. From my student teaching internship experiences and the research, I have found this relationship can impact the work environment atmosphere, delivery of instruction (Giangreco, 2003), and student success (Biggs, Gilson, & Carter, 2016). Certainly, this relationship can affect a classroom in many ways. With this in mind, I found it necessary to create a training focused on fostering and nurturing this relationship.

### Methods

- Classroom Experience
- During student teaching experiences, noticed undeveloped relationships, miscommunications and misalignment of expectations between teachers and paraeducators
- Issues observed were: personality conflicts, differences in work/teaching styles, difficulty communicating, lack of common planning and reflection time, and lack of training

Literature Review

- A literature review was conducted to analyze current research regarding promoting staff relationships, supervision training needs and effective teamwork strategies
- Current research does not focus on how to strengthen this relationship (Biggs, Gilson, & Carter, 2016)

**V** Questionnair

- Distributed questionnaire to current teachers and paraeducators in Delaware public schools
- Questions were related to the relationship between the teachers and paraeducators in the classroom

Partnership with DNEA

- Partnered with Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA)
- Created a PowerPoint professional development training to be provided to teachers and paraeducators

Sample Questions From Questionnaire:

"Please provide some examples and ideas that have resulted in a strong working relationship with your team."

"What are some challenges within your working relationship with your team?"

#### Results

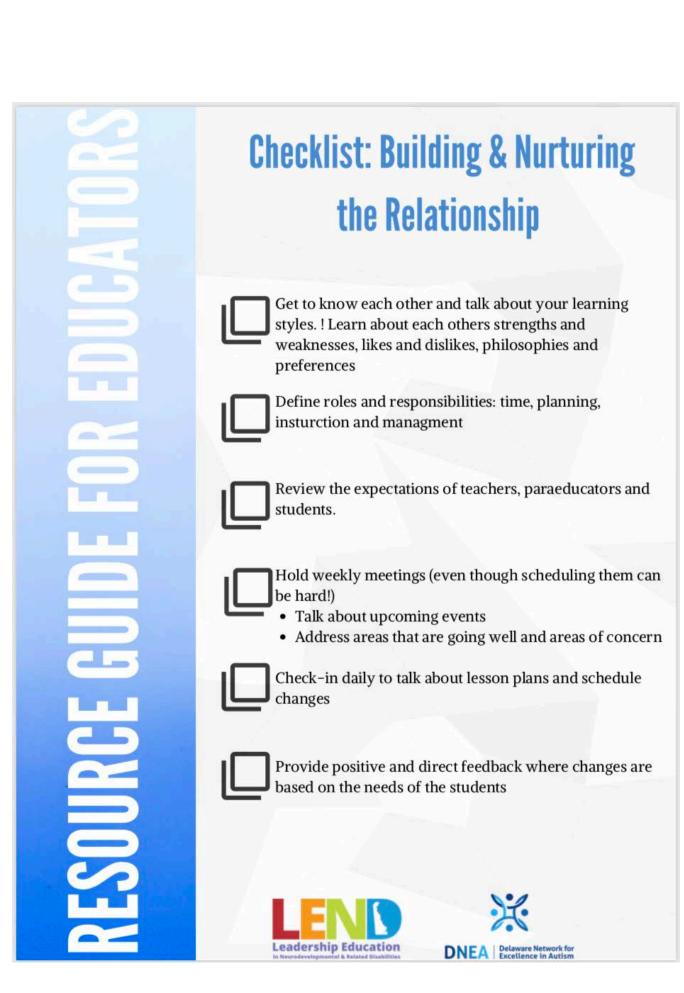
- > Findings from questionnaire:
  - > There is not enough training for paraeducators
  - ➤ Lack of communication between teachers and paraeducators
  - ➤ No definition for paraeducators, their roles, and responsibilities. Therefore each district, school and classroom define the role differently
- ➤ Combined knowledge and experience from current and past teachers and paraeducators with expertise from the DNEA
- > Training will be presented in August/September 2019
- > Delivered to teachers and paraeducators
- ➤ 2 page supplemental resource was created and will be housed on the DNEA website

### Conclusions

- ➤ Understand the current issues within teacher & paraeducator relationship
  - Communication is the root of the problem and the key to the solution (Gerlach, 2016)
  - > Training for paraeducators
  - Training on teacher supervision of paraeducators (Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay & Stahl, 2001)
- > Identify ways to build a positive relationship
  - > Learn about each other's work styles
  - ➤ Define all staff members roles, responsibilities and expectations (Gerlach, 2016)
- Increase awareness of tools and resources to develop and support this relationship
- > The team's common goal is the students!
- ➤ Next steps: extend training to related service providers, other school personnel and families

## Supplemental Resource





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