

Investing in Para Educator Capacity

**Presenters: Cara Olson Sawyer, Jeanne Zuniga,
Kelly Raf, Carol Sweeney and Dr. Regina Moreno**

Professional development opportunities for para educators in a
special education setting.

Introduction

- Cara Olson-Sawyer, Special Education Supervisor, MESD
- Kelly Raf, Special Education Supervisor, MESD
- Carol Sweeney, Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA), MESD
- Jeanne Zuniga, Special Education Coordinator, MESD
- Dr. Regina Moreno, Director of Special Education Programs,
Concordia University

Who are you?

Context

Multnomah Education Service District (MESD)

- Who are we?
- Who do we serve?
 - Hospital School Program
 - Youth Corrections Education Program (YCEP) & Juvenile Detention Education Program (JDEP)
 - Alternative schools (Helensview, Wheatley, Arata Creek)
 - Long Term Care and Treatment (LTCT)
 - Outdoor School
 - Migrant Education
 - Functional Living Skills Program

Partnership

Concordia University, College of Education

- Concordia University (CU) is a private, non-profit liberal arts university located in NE Portland with a mission to prepare leaders for the transformation of society
- An integral component of the CU is community engagement.
- The College of Education offers a Master of Education (M.Ed) in Special Education and a Special Education endorsement program

Collaboration:

- MESD supervisor began talking to Concordia University to explore placement options for student teachers
- As relationship developed, training opportunities were identified with the pooled resources of both Concordia University and MESD

Assumptions

- At MESD, paraeducators work with student populations that have significant support needs and often provide the majority of instruction.
- No overview on how to work with students who experience severe challenging behaviors, are medically challenged or just how different types of students need different types of supports (ASD, ED, SLD, OHI)
- However, paraeducators generally do not have access to on-going professional development opportunities. (They receive BBP, OIS, First Aid, Drivers Certification-half day from HR on timecard, overview of the MESD, etc.)

Assumptions

- Online required trainings - no human contact or support.
- Teachers do not have any training in supervising paraeducators.
- Para's need: solid foundation in behavior science strategies (ABA), best practice in evidence based strategies (how to apply instruction/curriculum to varied populations), how to take data that will affect the modification of instruction.

Survey development

- Initial survey- check perceptions regarding needs and self perception of knowledge
- Created a likert scale for degree of knowledge
- Narrative questions to describe their practice
- Embedded likert scale to identify interests

Survey development

- Building the survey (based on field experts and literature review)
- Major areas:
 - IEP knowledge, FAPE & instruction
 - Research based strategies
 - Roles and responsibilities in relationship to daily practice
 - Relationship between communication and behavior
 - Understanding data and its purpose
 - Understanding of culturally responsive practices

Survey results

- Response rate: 35% (40 out of 113)
- Results confirmed the clear need to develop a sustainable series of paraeducator PD opportunities
- Responses based on self-perception of knowledge:
 - **Knowing and understanding the relationship between IEP and FAPE**
 - **Knowing what research-based instructional strategies are**
 - Understanding special education law and how it relates to daily work
 - Understanding national standards and how they relate to and incorporate into special education
- Responses based on perceptions regarding needs and interests:
 - **Direct instruction in academics and communication**
 - Redirection and reinforcement
 - Promoting student interaction with peers
 - Effective teaming
 - **Professional development options**

Training considerations

- Based on the survey results, identified our top priorities for paraeducator training
 - Needs Assessment did not indicate that data collection was in the top three areas of need but administrators did see a need in this area.
- Next step: determine how to provide PD on these topics drawing from state & local experts
- Discussion with district reps: found that that all districts have a similar need for paraeducator PD
- Challenge: providing meaningful PD to paraeducators working a variety of different settings (hospital, FLS, JDEP/YCEP, alternative schools, general ed classrooms)

Designing the training

First Annual Northwest Paraeducator Conference

1. Developed session descriptions
2. Identified potential speakers (experts in the field)
3. Invited speakers: speakers sent bios, presentation outline to review, copy PPT/presentation, materials for paraeducator binder
4. Team reviewed presentations and provided feedback
5. Team developed pre- and post-measures which evaluated content from all sessions (participants assigned numbers to retain anonymity - participants also had option to opt out of completing these measures)
6. Team developed Session Feedback form (to be completed after each session) - also anonymous

The Conference



1st Annual Northwest Paraeducator Training
Building Paraeducator Capacity
March 13, 2015
McMenamins Edgefield Blackberry Hall

Schedule:

- 7:30 – 8:00: Registration
- 8:00 – 9:30: Keynote: Regina Moreno, Mitch Kruska & Jennifer Burger
- 9:30 – 9:45: Break
- 9:45 – 10:45: Session 1: What and why of instruction - Regina Moreno & Ruth Falco
- 10:45 – 11:45: Session 2: What and why of data - Laura Petschauer & Carol Sweeney
- 11:45 – 12:30: Lunch (*provided*)
- 12:30 – 1:00: Teaming keynote: Kris Persson
- 1:00 – 1:45: Session 3: Data in action - Laura Petschauer, Carol Sweeney, Cara Olson-Sawyer & Kelly Raf
- 1:45 – 2:00: Break
- 2:00 – 2:45: Session 3 continued
- 2:45 – 3:00: Wrap-up and evaluation

Keynote

Dr. Regina Moreno, Director of Special Education Programs, Concordia University

Mitch Kruska, Director of Education Programs and Assessment Oregon Department of Education

Jennifer Burger, Special Education Teacher, Hillsboro School District

- History of Special Education and the shift in practice since IDEA 2004; role of the para-educator (national perspective)
- Oregon practices related to IDEA and how it impacts the role of the para-educator
- Brief description of the eligibility categories and what that can look like (include real-life examples). Highlight why these kids require more specialized instruction and what factors need to be taken into account for these complex students. Include a discussion of how different levels of need affects placement for students.

Session 1: What and why of instruction

Dr. Regina Moreno, Director of Special Education Programs, Concordia University

Dr. Ruth Falco, Director of the Center on Inclusive and Effective Educational Practices, Portland State University

The goal of this session is to highlight the paraeducator's role in providing instruction throughout the school day (and not just during seat time or direct instructional time). Help paraeducators identify the teachable moments that occur all day long and how having high expectations plays into that. Discussion of the following quality indicators of instruction and what the paraeducator's responsibility is in these:

- Organization of the teaching and learning environment
- Instructional supports
- Instruction through daily routines
- Commonly used instructional approaches (structured teaching, trial-by-trial , incidental teaching)

Session 2: What and why of data

Laura Petschauer, Education Specialist, Oregon Department of Education

Carol Sweeney, Teacher on Special Assignment, Special Education, MESD

The goal of this session is to help paras understand the legal requirements around data tracking and how data drives educational placement. Without appropriate data, you cannot tailor instruction and set appropriate goals for students. Highlight best practices in data collection (i.e. real-time data tracking, accurate measurement, and consistency across staff).

Teaming keynote

Kris Persson, Principal, Helensview High School, MESD

This session will talk about the importance of team dynamics and the different roles that each person can play in the team. This should cover basic communication strategies and ways to build up teams based on each person's strengths.

Session 3: Data in action

Laura Petschauer, Education Specialist, Oregon Department of Education

Carol Sweeney, Teacher on Special Assignment, Special Education, MESD

Kelly Raf, Special Education Supervisor, MESD

Present different effective, research-based strategies and provide opportunities to practice. Show video clips illustrating various instructional strategies and have staff watch and then debrief. Have participants practice teaching strategies in dyads or triads. Present different data tools and assessment (formative, summative) and provide opportunities to practice and create data sheets based on goals. Discuss how you analyze and review data, look for trends/patterns, and communicate with teachers about these trends.

Session clips



Instructional Video- Discrete trial



Student:

Curricular Area:
MATH

Skill:
Identifies numbers to 10

Goal:
Given a written number between 1 - 10 presented in an array of 3, and the verbal cue "Point to # ___", the student will respond by correctly identifying the cued for number.

Criteria: First 3 trials correct for 3 consecutive sessions before moving to next teaching step, per number

Common Core Connection: PK.CC.1-2 Count to 20; Represent a number of objects with a written number 0-5

Materials: Flash cards, distracters on flash cards (numbers/icons/colors that the student already knows)

Goal Date Start: 3/13/15

Teaching Steps:

Step 1. Present new number. Say "This is ____, point to/touch ____"

Step 2. Present the new number with 2 known distracters. Say "Point to/touch ____"

Step 3. Present the new number with 3 known distracters and say "Point to/touch ____"

Data code: + = correct response 0 = incorrect response

Reinforcement for correct response: Verbal praise, High 5

Correction Procedure: Model correct response then recue

Between documented trials, cue student to identify a number/icon/color he/she already knows.

DATE↓	STEP↓		DATE↓	STEP↓		DATE↓	STEP↓		DATE↓	STEP↓		Known Distracters
		#:			#:			#:			#:	Numbers:
												Pictures:
												Colors:

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		#: 5			#:			#:			#:	Numbers:
3/13	1.	+++										
	2.	0++										Pictures:
	3.	0++										
												Colors:

Instructional Video- Task Analysis



Watch video and practice task analysis data collection

Student:

Curricular Area:
Adaptive/Self-Management
Goal start date: 11/4/15

Hand washing
Routine

Goal: Given an initial cue to wash hands, the student will complete all the steps of the routine (including rubbing hands with soap, rinsing, and drying) independently.

Criteria: on 4/5 data collection days per step of routine

Data collected 1x weekly

Data Code: + = Independent

V= Needs verbal prompting

G= Needs gesture prompts

P= Needs physical prompts

R=Refusal

Reinforcement of correct response: Verbal praise

Correction procedure: Give least amount of assistance to allow success

DATE →										
Initial Staff Cue: "Wash hands"										
Turns on water										
Wets hands										
Gets soap										
Lathers at least 3 seconds										
Rinses hands										
Turns off water										
Gets paper towel										
Dries hands										
Throws away towel										

Student:

Curricular Area:
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	DATE →								
Initial Staff Cue: "Wash hands"	3/19/15								
Turns on water	V								
Wets hands	+								
Gets soap	+								
Lathers at least 3 seconds	+								
Rinses hands	+								
Turns off water	G								
Gets paper towel	V								
Dries hands	+								
Throws away towel	+								

Session clips



Conference Data

Pre- and Post- Tests:

106 participants - 73% response rate (both pre- and post- tests turned in)

No change in score	21 %
Improvement in score	53 %
Decline in score	25 %

Conference Data

Feedback forms



Building Paraeducator Capacity Feedback Form

Assigned #: ____
Date: 3/13/15

Session: Keynote Session 1 Session 2 Teaming Session 3

List 3 things you learned in this session:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List 2 questions that you still have:

- 1.
- 2.

List 1 new idea that came to you from today's presentation:

Conference Data

Top themes based on feedback forms

Keynote:	Professional development Supervising teachers
Session 1:	Instructional strategies Professional development
Session 2:	Data Teaming
Teaming:	Teaming / Interpersonal effectiveness
Session 3:	Instructional strategies Data

Lessons learned

Pre/Post test:

- Not all material was covered in sessions
- Unclear/ambiguous questions
- Uncommon practice which caused anxiety

Feedback forms:

- Feedback declined as day progressed
- Did not ask for future topics of interest

Attendee responses



Summary of Implication

- Professional Development is not just a need for teachers. Paraeducators have identified they have the same training needs as teachers - and in fact, require more because they typically have less formalized training.
- Para educators feel valued and empowered by being offered and receiving professional development.
- The opportunity positively impacts student progress in the classroom.
- Paraeducators need to have program/location-specific training (e.g. general education classroom vs. FLS classroom and new staff vs. veteran staff)

Next steps

- Continue the collaborative relationship with Concordia University
- Continue relationship with Oregon Department of Education (ODE)
- Receive/Analyze feedback from Paraeducator Conference attendees to develop future topics
- Create modules, notebooks, and resources to share with other districts in the state.
- Continue to improve instructional delivery model for special education classrooms
- Continue to communicate these findings with classroom teachers
- Develop teacher (management) capacity to help better support their paraeducators
- ***Continue to develop data collection systems that align student performance to professional development***

Food for thought

"You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand."

-Woodrow Wilson

"In the end, it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are."

-Max De Pree