

Seeking Examples from the Field

Service Delivery Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals

Dear Colleague,

My name is Michael Giangreco. I work at the *Center on Disability and Community Inclusion* at the University of Vermont. As someone involved in public education, you are well aware that the utilization of paraprofessionals has increased dramatically in recent years and become a dominant model to support the education of students with disabilities within general education classrooms. Although many excellent paraprofessionals provide valuable services in schools, all too often this has led to the least trained and least qualified school personnel being "in charge" of making key decisions or providing instruction to students who present the most complex challenges to learning. Recent research suggests that the inappropriate use of paraprofessionals has also been associated with a series of unintended negative effects (e.g., dependence on adults, interference with peer interactions, lack of involvement by teachers, inadequate access to competent instruction).

Across the country, school personnel have been developing service delivery alternatives to address problems associated with the overreliance on paraprofessionals or their inappropriate use to provide special education supports within general education classrooms. We are contacting you in an effort to identify and document alternatives that may be in use somewhere in your system, regardless of the scope of your efforts. No example is too small -- even an individual student in a single general education classroom.

If your school has recognized problems associated with overreliance or inappropriate use of paraprofessionals and has taken action to do something about, we'd really like to learn about it. We hope you will take a few minutes to respond to the attached 2-page questionnaire and return it us. Depending on how many responses we receive, we will be contacting a subset of people to get more in-depth information.

Thank you for your assistance!

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Example of Service Delivery Alternative to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals or their Inappropriate Use

Person Completing Form: _____ Role: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Name of School: _____ Web Site (if any): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip code: _____

Grades Served: _____ Total number of students in school: _____

of students on IEPs: _____ # of students on free/reduced lunch: _____

of minority students: _____ # who speak English as 2nd language: _____

Total # of paraprofessionals in school (in FTE): _____

of paraprofessionals assigned to special education (in FTE): _____

Check one box that most closely describes your alternative:

(Please use additional copies to report on additional alternatives)

<input type="checkbox"/> Resource Reallocation: Trading Paraprofessionals for Special Educators	<input type="checkbox"/> Reassigning Roles to increase professional educator time with SWD e.g., Paperwork Parapro	<input type="checkbox"/> Peer Support Strategies: social/personal or academic
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-Teaching: Special Education & General Education Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Differentiated Teacher Roles; all instructional faculty are certified teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-Advocacy: involving SWD in determining own supports
<input type="checkbox"/> Dual-Certified General & Special Educator is Classroom Teacher & Case Manages SWD	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving Working Conditions of Special Educators, e.g., caseload parameters	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Building Capacity and Increasing Ownership of General Educators to Support SWD	<input type="checkbox"/> Improving Working Conditions of General Educators, e.g., class size & composition	

SWD = Students with Disabilities

Please briefly respond to the questions below on this page or separate pages:

1. What do you call your alternative approach?
2. Please describe or list the main components?
3. How widespread is its use in your school or system?
4. How long has it been in use?
5. What types of students does it support (category of disability and level)?
6. Who initiated it and why?
7. What are its pros and cons?
8. What impact has it had on personnel and students?

Please send responses to:

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Or reply by email to me at mgiangre@zoo.uvm.edu