

Coaching Paraprofessionals for Success

Building Confidence, Clarity, and Collaboration

Purpose

Paraprofessionals play a vital role in inclusive classrooms, supporting instruction, behavior, and access to learning. Yet, paraprofessionals often receive limited training or inconsistent feedback. Effective coaching ensures they feel valued, confident, and aligned with instructional goals. This worksheet provides tools, scripts, and structures to help teachers and administrators build strong, trust-based partnerships with paraprofessionals.

The Coaching Mindset

- **Partnership, not hierarchy.** Paraprofessionals are collaborators, not assistants.
 - **Clarity reduces stress.** Clear expectations prevent confusion and burnout.
 - **Feedback builds confidence.** Constructive, specific feedback supports growth.
 - **Consistency equals trust.** Predictable routines strengthen the working relationship.
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Defining Roles and Responsibilities

Task Area	Teacher Leads	Paraprofessional Supports	Example
Instruction	Plans lessons, sets goals	Implements accommodations, supports student engagement	Small-group instruction using teacher's materials
Behavior	Designs strategies, monitors data	Reinforces expectations, uses prompts, collects behavior data	Implements visual supports, reports triggers

Communication	Leads meetings, contacts families	Shares observations with teacher	Provides daily check-ins with student updates
Documentation	Ensures compliance	Records observations or data as assigned	Logs minutes for IEP services

Effective Coaching Framework

Step	Focus	Example
1. Set Shared Goals	Clarify purpose and priorities.	“Let’s focus on increasing student independence this week.”
2. Model and Co-Teach	Demonstrate strategies; invite para to practice.	“Watch how I prompt him to use his checklist, then you try.”
3. Observe and Give Feedback	Focus on actions, not judgment.	“You waited 10 seconds before prompting—that’s excellent fading.”
4. Reflect Together	Use guided questions to improve.	“What worked best for the student today?”
5. Celebrate Wins	Recognize progress and teamwork.	“That calm transition was because of your consistency!”

Feedback Script Starters

Type	Example Language
Affirming	“I noticed how you...” → “That consistency really helped.”
Reflective	“What did you notice about how the student responded?”
Redirective	“Next time, let’s try prompting before giving the direction.”
Collaborative	“How can we divide this responsibility to support both of us?”

Tip: Always end with encouragement and clarity about next steps.

Paraprofessional Coaching Log

Date	Focus Skill	What Was Modeled	Para Response	Next Step
10/28	Data Collection	Modeled frequency tally	Practiced accurately	Review next week

Fostering Independence in Students

A core coaching goal is helping paraprofessionals understand *how and when to fade support*.

Phase	Para Role	Example
Full Support	Provide prompts and model skill	“Let’s do this step together.”
Shared Support	Provide visual or verbal cues	“What comes next?”
Faded Support	Observe and reinforce independence	“You did that on your own—nice job.”

Key Phrase: “Support less, observe more.”

Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	Fix
Role confusion	Review IEP and task chart together at start of each term.
Over-prompting	Teach and practice fading hierarchy (physical → verbal → visual → independent).
Limited feedback	Schedule 5-minute weekly check-ins for updates and praise.
Feeling undervalued	Publicly acknowledge paraprofessional contributions.

Weekly Communication Template

Day	Student Focus	Strategy Used	Observations	Notes/Follow-Up
Monday	Liam	Visual prompts	Improved transitions	Keep using visuals

(Use this form jointly between teacher and para: Google Doc, clipboard, or binder.)

Coaching Reflection Questions

- Do I model calm, respectful communication during stressful moments?
 - Have I clarified roles in writing and revisited them this semester?
 - Do I provide paraprofessionals with both affirmation and direction?
 - Are paras encouraged to share input about what's working?
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Action Starter

- Identify one paraprofessional you work with regularly.
 - Schedule a 10-minute coaching check-in this week to review shared goals.
 - Choose one area (behavior prompting, data collection, or independence fading) to focus on together.
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