

## The Use and Overuse of Paraprofessionals – Excerpted from Giangreco

Under IDEA2004 an aide is considered a related service. IDEA requires that schools provide students with all “educational and related services” needed to receive a free and appropriate public education” (FAPE).

### Things teachers and principals need to consider / or actions to take:

1. Develop a district standard for when a 1:1 para is needed
2. When does Assistance become Learned Helplessness?
3. If request comes from parent, engage in active listening to discover the underlying reason(s). “Getting help” isn’t sufficient. Has progress been documented?
4. Help staff (and or parents) realize having an assigned 1:1 aide can create a dependency on adult cues/interventions or create a stigma.
5. Having a 1:1 makes “inclusion” more restrictive than participating in a community of similar learners.
6. Does the student need the aide to “*access the curriculum*” and obtain *meaningful educational benefit*? HOW would the aide help the student? Would providing an aide help or make the student dependent and interfere with educational and social development?
7. If the aide is being requested because the current classroom placement isn’t working, remember that LRE is not always the general education classroom.
8. Exactly what will the aide be doing and when and how is it related to the IEP goals? How will the aide get the training needed? How long will it take to hire aide?
9. When the aide discussion comes up never relate it to cost. The decision is based on educational needs not expense.

### AIDE/PARAPROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT

Pick several files of students who have 1:1 aide or whose placements have paraprofessional staff persons and pull schedules for some of your aides/paraprofessionals.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. There is nothing in the IEP about need for 1:1 aide.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. There is an IEP goal for the aide.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Placement is in “Full Inclusion” model which means paraprofessional acts as IEP provider with no planning time in IEP with general or special educator.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. IEP doesn't indicate training needed for aide/para.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. IEP doesn't reflect how student's progress with aide/para will be measured/monitored.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Teacher(s) involved are not trained in supervision.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Aide/para is there for the teacher rather than the student but is in IEP for Circuit Breaker.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Aide/paras teach/instruct in general education setting while special educators re-teach in pull-out settings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Paraprofessionals/aides free up teachers so teachers can meet on the students the paraprofessionals or aides work with in the classroom.

Causes: \_\_\_\_\_ workloads vs. caseloads      \_\_\_\_\_ model drift  
           \_\_\_\_\_ Team bartering                              \_\_\_\_\_ parent requests

### **Social Scripts REFRAME THE ISSUE**

- Focus of IEP services is independence.  
     *A 1:1 aide can create dependence*
- Focus of IEP services is spontaneous generalization.  
     *A 1:1 aide can create prompt dependence*
- Focus of IEP services in inclusive setting is "typicalness".  
     *A 1:1 aide can create a stigma*
- Focus of IEP services is involvement in life of school.  
     *A 1:1 aide creates a more restrictive setting*

### **Questions and Considerations:**

- Exactly what will the aide be doing and when and how is it related to the IEP goals? How will the aide get the training needed? How long will it take to hire aide?
- When the aide discussion comes up they can never relate it to cost. The decision is based on educational needs not expense.
- Make sure that IEP reflects how aide's services will be monitored and how the student's educational progress will be monitored. This is key discussion.
- Use of aide is not a goal (*Fred will complete his assignments with his 1:1 aide*).

- Tone of voice: sympathetic but firm: “I’m sorry. I can’t do it right now.”
- Set some limits. “How would you like this to end? It is now 11:30. Where would you like us to be when we are done?”
- Try good non-verbal signals: move forward to show you are listening, lean back in your chair, unfold all arms, uncross all legs.
- Take notes. It sends the message that there is accountability for the speaker.
- Interrupt the interaction. Announce a break in the meeting. You are buying time to cool down and let the antagonist cool down.
- If you are feeling attacked or unsafe, say so.
- Acknowledge the speaker: “Let’s see if I understand you.” Then repeat back the key facts.
  
- MEDIATION: Simple, clean and you can get a good sense of cases before lawyers get into it. *First check your region’s Mediator’s rep.*
- PARTICIPATE: Lead your staff. Never allow them to face an issue alone and never sit in your office knowing a tough Team is going on without you.
- GO ON THE OFFENSIVE IF YOU MUST: Pick one key issue/case and see it through to the end. Don’t let up and don’t give up.
- THIS IS YOUR DISTRICT: SET LIMITS, EXPAND OPTIONS AND LEAD.  
You have the best job in the system!