Using Behavior Skills Training to Train Paraprofessionals

Cortney Fish, MSW, BCBA, LBA
Why do we utilize paraprofessionals?
Short-Sighted Problem Solving

• Culture of hiring paraprofessionals as a “quick fix”
  Giancgreco, Breor, & Suter, 2011

• Paraprofessionals are often left on their own to make decisions while remaining inadequately trained and supervised
  Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; French, 2001; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002; Giangreco, Edelman, et al., 2001; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001
Keep A Focus on The Future
The focus of adult support is to teach the use of tools and strategies to foster independence. Adult support should not be the tool.
Adults with Autism

• Overall, adults with autism have poorer outcomes than other groups of adults with disabilities

• Following school, many adults fall off the “Services Cliff”

![Bar chart showing outcomes for adults with autism between high school and early 20s.]

Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study-2
Growing number of paraprofessionals in U.S. schools

- Paraprofessional support can allow access to less restrictive environments
- Having paraprofessional support is often perceived by teachers and parents as positive even though it may not be beneficial to students
- Despite frequent use, little research on effectiveness and impact on student outcomes

(Giangreco, Suter, Doyle, 2010)
Prior to training, paraprofessionals were either uninvolved or hover over the students with ASD

(Feldman & Matos, 2013)
## Promoting Independence

**Finding the Balance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refrain from hovering...</th>
<th>Not enough engagement...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased or prolonged dependence</td>
<td>Lack of engagement with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased peer interactions</td>
<td>Inappropriate engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased attention from others</td>
<td>Increased self-stim behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling embarrassed/stigmatized</td>
<td>Decreased skill acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of personal control</td>
<td>Loss or regression of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased behavior problems</td>
<td>Increased behavioral problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing a Plan for Paraprofessional Support
Is Everyone on the Same Page?

- Often discrepancies over the expected role of the paraprofessional (by administration), perceived role (by teacher) and role taken (by paraprofessional)

- Mismatch between expected types of support
  - How to support students across activities and settings
  - Primary instruction v. supplementary instruction
  - Planning and adapting educational activities
  - Role in assessment
  - Communication with parents
  - Clerical duties

(Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010)
Is Paraprofessional Support Necessary?

• School teams need to systematically plan how to use paraprofessional support

• Need to identify:
  - Areas of student need
  - Environments that the student needs support in
  - The skills the student will need to develop in order to be more successful and independent in that environment
  - Put plans in place to teach the student to access resources in the environment or request assistance when needed
Once Support Needs are Identified, Our Job Does Not Stop There...

- Evaluate ongoing support needs to refine amount and level of support provided by paraprofessional
  - Temporary or ongoing support
  - Inclusion considerations
  - Use of natural supports and tools for independence

- Paraprofessional Use Data Collection Tool
  - Data collected on when support provided is necessary
If the paraprofessional is completing the form, only document **necessary** support **NOT** pro-active support.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SETTING</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured Activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic - independent</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic - group work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic - teacher led</td>
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<tr>
<td>discussion/lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Down time / wait time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy Task</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating (art, industrial tech)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of redirection/reminder</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less than 5 minutes (but more than 1 statement or prompt)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>more than 5 minutes *write how long sustained engagement was necessary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF SUPPORT</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wrote for the student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>organized the task for the student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broke the task down step by step</td>
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<tr>
<td>helped the student understand content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>engaged to prevent behavioral/emotional breakdown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prompted to maintain engagement in task</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clarified task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other: *please specify below</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Graphs of Paraprofessional Use

**Frequency of Use Across Settings**

- General Education: Math - 67%
- Special Education: ELA - 33%
- Transitions - 0%

**Activity**

- Unstructured: 0%
- Structured: 0%
- Transition: 25%
- Independent Work: 38%
- Group Work: 25%
- Teacher Led Discussion: 13%
- Down Time: 0%

**Type of Support Provided**

- ware for student: 0%
- organized task for student: 13%
- broke the task down step by step: 13%
- helped the student understand: 0%
- engaged to prevent: 0%
- prompted to maintain engagement: 0%
- clarified task: 68%
Graphs of Paraprofessional Use

**Task**

- Reading: 0%
- Writing: 63%
- Listening: 38%
- Creating: 0%
- Easy: 0%
- Difficult: 0%

**Duration of Support**

- Statement of redirection: 50%
- Less than 5 minutes (more than 1 prompt): 38%
- More than 5 minutes: 13%
- More than 10 minutes: 0%
- Pulled out of activity: 0%
Implementing a Plan for Paraprofessional Support
Training and Support is Essential

• Paraprofessionals report dissatisfaction with their job
  – Lack of respect
  – Unclear roles
  – Insufficient training

(Chopra, et al., 2004)
Activity

• Get into pairs
  – Person A: Paraprofessional
  – Person B: Student

• I’m the teacher
Behavior Skills Training
Behavior Skills Training

• A skill acquisition procedure that incorporates the following components:
  – Instructions
  – Modeling
  – Rehearsal
  – Feedback

Remember the 4 steps!

Igloos
Must
Remain
Frozen
Behavior Skills Training

• Teaches people what TO do
• Allows for practice so a person can become fluent with a skills/s
• Effective train-the-trainer procedure
• Individualized to each person
Finding the Time

• Special educators only spent 2% of their time for each paraprofessional they supported  
  (Giangreco & Broer, 1997)

• Remember what the goal is
## Communication Log

### Daily Paraprofessional Communication Log

Paraprofessional: ____________________________  Supervising Teacher: ____________________________

Date: ____________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Student(s) worked with</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Questions/Comments</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>
Training Areas to Address:

- General duties
- Autism specific information
- Supporting student independence
- Promoting student communication
- Promoting social skills
- Supporting appropriate behavior
- Data collection
Behavior Skills Training

- **Instruction**
  - Clear and explicit expectations and directions
    - May need verbal and written
  - Importance and rationale
  - When and when not to do something
Behavior Skills Training

- **Modeling**
  - Teacher shows the paraprofessional exactly what you want him/her to do
  - Paraprofessional should be paying attention and asking questions if clarification is needed
Behavior Skills Training

- **Rehearsal**
  - PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE
  - Role playing + real-life situations
  - May need to include prompting
  - Record data if needed
  - Don’t forget generalization
• Feedback
  – Should be specific
  – Be encouraging and include the positives
    • No one likes to only hear the negative
  – Feedback should be provided immediately
## Behavior Skills Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Responsibility</th>
<th>Teacher with Paraprofessional</th>
<th>Paraprofessional Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I DO IT</strong></td>
<td><strong>I DO IT</strong></td>
<td><strong>YOU DO IT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies goals and objectives, provides instruction</td>
<td>Teacher demonstration</td>
<td>Guided Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explains, provides reasons, defines terms</td>
<td>TEACHER: Models, explicitly identifies skills, suggests</td>
<td>PARA: Initiates, approximates, practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Para should ask questions and seek clarification.

Teacher provides feedback; May take data.

(Adapted from Stockall, 2014)
More Bang for Your Buck

_Tie your training to your performance expectations outlined in evaluations._
### Example Paraprofessional Performance Expectations:
Example from Self-Contained Autism Specific Elementary Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Level Performance Criteria</th>
<th>Specific Performance Expectations: Instructional Duties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A. Observes/models methods used by teacher: | Consistently:  
  - Uses ---+p+, assists student follow-through  
  - Adheres to individual behavior plans  
  - Actively engages with students during “downtimes”  
  - Utilizes PRT components to encourages language and social interactions  
  - Uses least prompt hierarchy to promote student independence  
  - Uses Behavior prevention techniques, including an awareness of CPI behavior escalation levels and how to prevent them. |
| B. Reinforces previously taught material: | Consistently:  
  - Reinforces language and social ATTEMPTS  
  - Utilizes downtimes and environment to build in skill maintenance opportunities. |
| C. Executes student learning contracts: | *To be considered meeting expectations, consistently gets through 10 discrete trial programs in a half hour work session. 7-10 programs is considered developing, 6 or less is not meeting expectations.* |
| D. Demonstrates flexibility in meeting individual needs: | Consistently:  
  - Adapts to schedule and routine changes with a positive attitude.  
  - Utilizes individual language, play, behavior, and academic goals during all student interactions. |
| E. Encourages independent student performances: | Consistently:  
  - Uses ---+p+, assists student follow-through  
  - Uses least prompt hierarchy to promote student independence  
  - Refrains from over-prompting  
  - Encourages guided peer assistance in place of self in inclusive settings. |
| F. Follows-through on lessons: | Consistently:  
  - Silently assists other staff members when necessary.  
  - Ends the ---+p+ on a + |
| G. Promotes positive student self-esteem: | Uses a positive or neutral tone of voice in interactions & Utilizes reinforcement that is:  
  - Contingent on behaviors  
  - Natural  
  - Conducive to encouraging social and language attempts through reinforcement and then expansion. |
More Bang for Your Buck

Paraprofessionals can use BST to teach skills to students
More Bang for Your Buck

Students can use BST to teach EACH OTHER!
Shifting Adult Support

- Individual with ASD
- Peer/Sibling/Others
- Adult

This increases the frequency and quality of social learning opportunities in the natural environment.
A Note About Fidelity

- Fidelity
  - Accuracy and consistency of implementation
- Fidelity checklists are great tools to make sure BST is being implemented correctly
  - Can also be used as a visual form of feedback
### PTR Coaching/Fidelity Checklist Example

**Intervention: Fidelity of Implementation Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Name: __________________________</th>
<th>Date: __________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: __________________________</td>
<td>Individual Observed: __________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer: __________________________</td>
<td>Activity Observed: __________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Observed: ______________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Implementation Checklist

For each major objective or activity listed below, please check “yes” or “no” to indicate if it was completed correctly during the observation session. Check “NA” if the objective was not appropriate for the observation. Use the Notes column to comment on the step observed (e.g., positive as well as constructive remarks).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective / Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Setting: Intervention takes place in the designated setting or during the designated activity/routine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Initiation: Intervention is initiated at appropriate time.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Termination: Intervention is terminated after correct child response or after designated criteria is met.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Preparation: Preparation steps are completed in a timely manner.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Implemented</th>
<th>Impact (1 = no impact; 5 = great impact)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Mini schedule of center &amp; group available</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Mini schedule reviewed prior to start of centers</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Prompted Mike to cross off completed items</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Replacement Behavior—Functional</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Reminded Mike prior to transition from preferred to non-preferred to use new behavior</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Prompted Mike to use new behavior at first sign of screaming (e.g., squeal)</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforce Replacement Behavior</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Immediately provided positive comment to Mike for using replacement behavior (within 15 s)</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Released Mike to calming choice for at least 1 minute</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Provided positive comment in warm tone to Mike immediately upon completing transition.</td>
<td>Y N NA</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Putting it all Together

• Activity
  – Get back into your A & B pairs

• What was different about this time?
Presentation Content

Link to handouts:
https://missouri.box.com/v/MOCASEBST

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Thank you!
Questions?