



Leadership Guide

PARAPROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

This reflective support tool helps leaders assess paraprofessional practices, identify patterns in performance, guide coaching and professional learning, and strengthen a consistent, student-centered approach to support services. This guide supports leaders in moving paraprofessional practice from task-oriented assistance to intentional support that promotes communication, learning, access, participation, collaboration, and belonging across all school environments.

KEY COMPONENTS:

1. Language Modeling and Communication
2. Instructional Support and Learning Facilitation
3. Student Access and Participation
4. Initiative and Responsiveness
5. Professionalism and Role Clarity
6. Collaboration and Teaming
7. Community Engagement and Culture

Improvement Recommendations by Rating Level

IF YOUR PARAPROFESSIONAL TEAM IS EMERGING:

- Clarify paraprofessional roles, responsibilities, and expectations
- Review job descriptions and discuss examples of effective practice
- Provide explicit training on professional boundaries and role clarity
- Establish expectations for language modeling throughout the school day
- Ensure paraprofessionals have regular opportunities to communicate with teachers
- Provide coaching on reinforcing learning and support student independence rather than completing tasks on students' behalf
- Develop systems for paraprofessionals to learn lesson objectives and student needs

Leadership Move: Move from inconsistent, directed support to a shared understanding of what effective paraprofessional practice looks like across settings.

IF YOUR PARAPROFESSIONAL TEAM IS DEVELOPING:

- Increase opportunities for paraprofessionals to participate in lesson preparation and planning conversations
- Provide coaching on recognizing barriers to student participation and communication access
- Strengthen understanding of instructional strategies and accommodations
- Encourage intentional use of ASL and English throughout the school day
- Create opportunities for paraprofessionals to practice problem-solving and decision-making
- Encourage participation in school activities and community-building events

Leadership Move: Shift from general assistance to intentional support for student learning, communication, and participation.

IF YOUR PARAPROFESSIONAL TEAM IS PROFICIENT:

- Deepen understanding of language development and communication strategies
- Provide advanced coaching on scaffolding, questioning, and facilitating student engagement
- Involve paraprofessionals in discussions about student growth and instructional supports
- Encourage mentoring of newer staff members
- Expand leadership opportunities within paraprofessional roles
- Strengthen collaboration with teachers, service providers, and families

Leadership Move: Move from supporting individual classrooms to strengthening the consistency and effectiveness of the educational team.

IF YOUR PARAPROFESSIONAL TEAM IS EXEMPLARY:

- Utilize exemplary paraprofessionals as peer mentors and models of effective practice
- Involve them in onboarding and training new staff
- Highlight and share effective strategies across classrooms and programs
- Create opportunities for leadership within paraprofessional responsibilities
- Recognize contributions to school culture, student success, and team effectiveness

Leadership Move: Steward the work so effective paraprofessional practice becomes part of the school's culture rather than dependent on individual staff members.