

High Leverage Practices for Paraprofessionals

Tool

Paraprofessionals are an underutilized resource in communities. Equipping paraprofessionals with understanding and ability to implement high-leverage practices (HLPs) maximizes support for students with disabilities.

Below is a sample of our guide that illustrates the HLPs that paraprofessionals can use when supporting or delivering SDI. While all of the HLPs included are best practices, teachers and paraprofessionals must together consider the strengths and needs of each individual as documented in their IEP, classroom observation, assessment, and interviews, when making decisions about which to plan and implement.

Specially designed instruction (SDI) is systematic, purposefully planned instruction to meet the unique needs of a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

HLP	What is it?	Why is it important?	What does it look like?
Support Strategy Development (S 2.2)	Graduated levels of support for students to plan effective strategies for setting goals, monitoring their own progress, and problem-solving as needed.	For students who struggle with executive functioning, figuring out what tools are needed and how to leverage them in a lesson can feel insurmountable. Providing models or embedding prompts can offer new ways of approaching their work.	The educator designs a checklist or planning template for a learner to use when completing an activity, and the paraprofessional checks in and provides support using the tool throughout the lesson, as needed.
Offer Alternatives for Auditory and Visual Information (S 5.8)	Include an alternative format for information that is presented in an auditory or visual format.	Information conveyed solely through sound or visual representations is not equally accessible to all learners. To ensure all learners have access, it is essential to provide alternatives.	When providing directions for how to complete a peer activity, the educator and paraprofessional decide to print the directions and distribute them for students to follow along and reference during the activity.
Provide and Gradually Release Scaffolds and Support (S 5.9)	Planned academic and behavioral support for students with included plans for the intention of fading and removing the support gradually over time.	Plans made to support students with tools such as sentence starters, manipulatives, graphic organizers, and additional prompts should be made and provided only when deemed necessary and with the intention of fading or removing the support over time in order work towards independence.	When providing additional on-task focusing prompts to a student, the paraprofessional takes notes on how many times they needed to prompt the student to take action over the course of a week to discuss with the teacher ways to reduce the number gradually in the coming week(s).

CEC Core Competencies for Special Education Paraprofessionals Key
S 2.2 Support students with disabilities in their use of self-assessment, problem-solving, and other cognitive strategies under the guidance of the instructional team
S 5.8 Make responsive adjustments to instruction under the guidance of the instructional team
S 5.9 Provide least intrusive levels of support, fade support, and fade physical proximity from students with disabilities under the guidance of the instructional team

Ready to access the full guide?
 Scan the QR code to connect with our team.



¹ Council for Exceptional Children (2022). Core Competencies for Special Education Paraeducators. Retrieved from <https://exceptionalchildren.org/paraeducators/core-competencies-special-education-paraeducators>