

**A Multi-Site Mixed Methods Study of Paraeducators in Inclusive Classrooms:
Pilot Study Results & Preliminary Analysis of National Survey Data**

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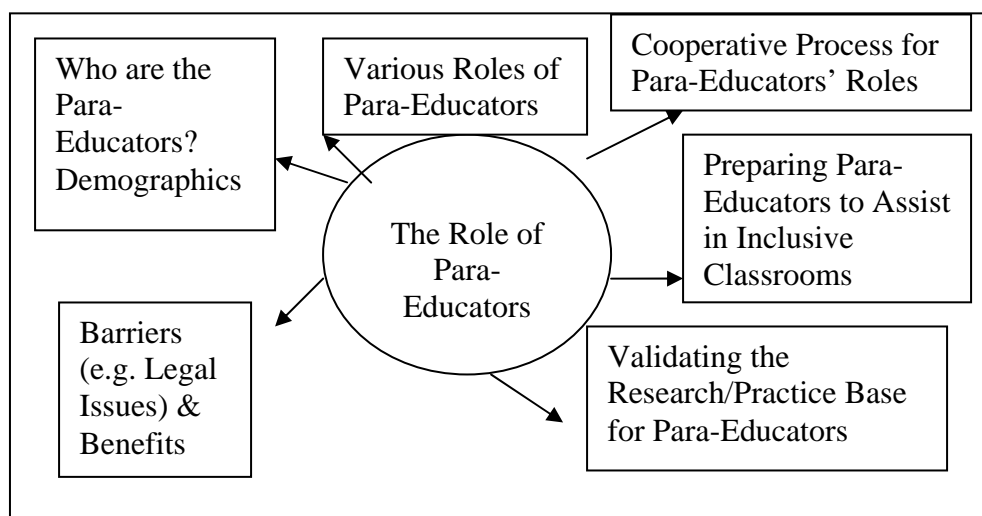
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The authors share the results of an ongoing study of the changing roles that paraeducators may face when they work in inclusive classrooms. The results of the study may fill an identified research gap regarding what para-educators in inclusive classrooms actually do (given that only 7 studies published between 1999-2006). However, many paraeducators experience being unprepared when they work in classrooms that include students with disabilities, students who speak languages other than English, students who are at-risk for school failure, and students from other culturally and ethnically diverse heritages. The content map in Figure 1 represents an emerging model for understanding the role of paraeducators in inclusive classrooms

Figure 1. The role of para-educators



Setting for the Pilot Study

A total of 37 participants attended the session titled, “A Peek in to What Paraeducators Do in Inclusive Classrooms” on May 4, 2007 from 10:30 AM -12:00 PM. Twenty of the participants asked for copies of the completed study and provided email or mailing addresses. Ten participants completed the survey. Of those, eight volunteered to participate in telephone interviews subsequent to completion of the study. One person, a general educator, was particularly concerned about the lack of preparation for supervising or working with paraprofessionals. Instead of completing the survey which was focused on paraprofessionals’ experiences, the teacher wrote a letter (see Appendix A).

Description of the Survey Instrument

Based on a review of the literature, the researchers developed a draft of the survey instrument. The survey instrument was comprised of five sections: definitions of terms (i.e., para-educator, inclusive classroom); demographics (items related to age, gender, ethnicity, linguistic diversity, preparation, prior experience in inclusive classrooms, prior employment or skills, classroom information on number of students

with disabilities and socio-economic status of the neighborhood); items related to attitudes, beliefs, and actions to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale; a series of open ended questions; and a section to solicit volunteers to be interviewed which is handed in separately from the survey in order to protect anonymity of respondents¹.

Data Analysis of the Survey

Descriptive statistics of those who participate in the survey will be analyzed according to frequencies and percentages. The survey items will be rank-ordered from highest-rated to lowest-rated. Inferential tests will be conducted on the highest and lowest rated survey items to determine if statistically significant differences exist according to setting (low vs. high socio-economic setting), socio-economic status of the neighborhood, ethnic or cultural and linguistic differences, and so on.

Results

The results are reported in the following sections: Job Titles, Characteristics, Settings, Preparation, Classroom Activities, Challenges and Issues, Advice, and Survey Feedback.

What are Pilot Study Paraeducators' Job Titles?

The survey respondents wrote the title of their positions, including paraprofessional (N=3), para-educator (N=2), instructional aide (N=2), Title 1 para, teacher assistant, and campus supervisor.

What are the Characteristics of the Pilot Study Paraeducators?

In this section, the demographic results are described. All respondents were females with the majority indicating they were between 29-38 (N=4); 3 reported they were between 39-48; 2 were between 18-28; and 2 were over 59 years of age. Respondents came from diverse regions of the United States: the northeast (Connecticut), the northwest (Washington, Wyoming), the Midwest (Kansas, Wisconsin, South Dakota), the southwest (Arizona, New Mexico), and the west coast (California). Respondents were ethnically and linguistically diverse. Although the majority of respondents reported their ethnicity as white (non-Hispanic), three were American Indian/Native Alaskan (Dakota Sioux, Laguna, Navajo), and two were Hispanic. There were no respondents who reported black (non-Hispanic) or Asian or Pacific Islander. The majority reported they spoke English only while four respondents reported they could speak a language other than English (i.e., German, Keres, Dakota-Sioux, and Navajo). All respondents specified they had a friend or family member with a disability (one person specified her son).

¹ FIU Institutional Review Board Approval #011207-01 & Miami-Dade County Public Schools Research Committee Approval #1321. The author thanks Cristina Devecchi, Ph. D.(c), Cambridge University, for suggestions to add questions related to non-school-related work experiences to gain a more comprehensive picture of what paraprofessionals bring to the classroom.

Where do the Paraeducators Work?

As shown in Table 1, the grade levels of the classrooms in which they work include special education, high school, and combined classrooms (e.g., special education and secondary classrooms, special education and elementary classrooms, and one person who worked in early childhood, elementary, and special education classrooms).

Table 1. Grade Level of Classrooms Where Pilot Study Paraeducators Worked

Type of Classroom	N
Special education	3
Secondary education	4
Elementary education	0
Early childhood education	0
Other (campus supervisor)	1
Special education and secondary education	1
Elementary and special education	1
Early childhood, Elementary and Special Education	1

Regarding the socio-economic status of the neighborhood in which schools are located, the majority (N=6) of respondents reported they worked in low SES neighborhoods. There were three respondents who worked in middle SES neighborhoods, and one who worked in a high SES neighborhood.

When describing the classrooms in which they work, paraeducators said they work with one to twelve students with disabilities. Two respondents (ABQ 1 and 3) explained that there were only a few students in the classroom where they work (3-12 in one, and 9 in the other). Other respondents (ABQ 3, 4, 5) reported from 11-31 students in the classroom where they worked with between 2-6 students with disabilities. These numbers are in keeping with the types of classrooms reported in Table 1. Paraeducators who work in secondary or elementary classroom where students with disabilities are present are more likely to be in classrooms with higher enrollments compared to those who work in special education resource or self-contained classrooms where enrollments tend to be low.

Many respondents described their work with respect to the content of instruction. One respondent (ABQ9) explained, "I work with 6th grade math, science and 7th grade science, and social studies where there are ten students with disabilities. The students are learning to speak English as a second language as they are all Native Americans." Another respondent (ABQ8) wrote, "I work with 7th graders [who are] learning math, science, and social studies." Another respondent (ABQ10) described her role this way: "I'm at a charter school [where] I'm a one-on-one teaching assistant. When my student is absent, I do inclusion with six students in different classes all day. The students are all learning to speak English as a second language."

Other respondents added details about the types of disabilities or challenges their children face. For example, one respondent (ABQ1) wrote, "Most of the children that I work with are low level learners not necessarily learning disabled." Another respondent ((ABQ2) explained her campus supervisor role this way: "Some of my students speak Hispanic, Asian, or [Pacific] Islander languages. And I'm with them outside of classes. I walk the hallways and the back of the school." Another respondent (ABQ6) wrote, "I'm in a Title 1 setting. This is just one 5th grade class where I work with [children in] 5th-8th [grades]." Another respondent (ABQ9) wrote, "[My children have] behavior issues due to a lack of academic self-esteem."

How are Pilot Study Paraeducators Prepared?

When asked about their preparation to work in inclusive classrooms, the majority (70%) indicated they had received no preparation: three respondents wrote "None" and four respondents did not respond to this item. However, although she did not characterize this as preparation, one respondent (ABQ6) wrote that she had completed 120 hours of observation hours in k-12 settings which could be considered a form of preparation for working in inclusive classrooms. Another person (ABQ3) noted that her primary job was to help the students in the classroom (without explaining how she learned to do that).

Three respondents wrote that their preparation for working in inclusive classrooms consisted of meeting and planning with the teacher. Respondent #4 wrote that she had the habit of doing the assignment ahead of time so she could help the students. One respondent (ABQ9) wrote that she "reviewed lesson plans with the co-teachers." Another respondent (ABQ10) wrote this description: "I meet with general education teachers for the day's lesson before the students come in, and I ask questions."

The paraeducators brought a wealth of prior experiences to their roles. Nine of the ten respondents indicated they had prior employment experiences or prior experiences working in inclusive classrooms as classroom aides, volunteers, or tutors. Experiences included craft instructor, secretary, fast food manager, worker for Headstart at a Bureau for Indian Affairs Elementary School and Summer Youth Coordinator for the tribal community, Substitute teacher & kindergarten teaching assistant, special education, early childhood, and volunteer. One person wrote a richly varied list of five types of employment: "pre-school teacher, transportation clerk, meat-order filler clerk, copier for a company, waitress."

What Do Pilot Study Paraeducators DO?

Respondents rated instructional strategies that typically occur in inclusive classrooms according to the literature review (e.g., Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007). They circled a number from one to five which represented the extent to which they used that strategy during their work with students, where one indicated "not at all", three indicated "somewhat", and five indicated "a great deal." Table 2 shows the range and

average of the ratings for each strategy. Cooperative learning groups was the highest rated strategy, followed by the cooperative strategy “think-pair-share” (a dialogue technique to allow students to orally practice answers before sharing with the class), and peer tutoring arrangements. Two techniques received lowest ratings (carousel feedback and discussion cards).

Table 2. Pilot Study Paraeducators and Their Use of Instructional Strategies

Strategy*	Range	Average
Cooperative learning groups	3-5	3.5
Think-pair-share	1-4	2.8
Peer tutoring	1-3	2.5
Carousel feedback	1-4	2.0
Discussion cards	1-3	2.0

*Note: A rating of 1=“Not at all”, 3=“somewhat”, and 5=“A great deal”

Paraeducators rated their beliefs about the work they do and the children with whom they interact. All respondents rated the statements according to a five-point rating scale. A rating of one indicated their level of agreement was “not at all”, a rating of three indicated “somewhat”, and a rating of five indicated “a great deal.” Table 3 displays the range and averages for the statements in order of highest to lowest rated statement. Half the respondents explained who it is they ask when they want support for further differentiating instruction for the students with whom they work: other teachers in the school, the classroom teachers with whom they work, and the education coordinator at the school.

In conclusion, overall, it can be seen that the paraeducators in this pilot study can be considered resourceful and bring a positive mental attitude towards their work with children and youth.

Table 3. Pilot Study Paraeducators and Their Beliefs about Their Work

Beliefs	Range	Average
I think that a student who has trouble learning is an instructional challenge rather than a student problem.	2-5	4.3
I access support when I need to further differentiate my lessons.	1-5	4.2
I can use different classroom routines to help meet diverse needs of my learners.	1-5	3.8
I think that not all students must do the same activity in the same way.	2-5	3.7
I know how to use flexible grouping when I work in the inclusive classroom.	1-5	3.7

Note: A rating of 1=“Not at all”, 3=“somewhat”, and 5=“A great deal”

What Issues or Challenges Do Pilot Study Paraeducators Face?

The literature is very clear about the issues that must be addressed when paraeducators work in inclusive settings (e.g., Devecchi & Rouse, 2007; Doyle, 1998;

Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Rueda & Monzo, 2002). These issues include not being asked for their opinions about the children with whom they work, lack of time to collaborate, lack of training, and lack of supervision.

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents reported that they needed more training (80% or eight said “yes” while two said “no”). On the other hand, supervision for these respondents seems not to be an issue given that the majority said they received good supervision (80% or eight said “yes” compared to two who said “no”). The majority of respondents said that the teachers who work with them ask for their opinions about the children in the classroom (70% or seven said “yes” while three said “no”). As for time to collaborate with the teachers, half (50%, N=5) said they had time and half said they did not.

Two issues were raised that were not explicitly stated in the survey. One issue that a respondent noted is related to teachers who do not want paraeducators in their classrooms. She wrote, “Teachers’ don’t help you or want you in there.” Another issue relates to the rural or urban nature of the settings in which paraprofessionals work. In the words of one respondent (ABQ5), “It might be helpful to understand rural small districts. Our school has only 265 students, k12, all in one building. Our paras work in all areas of the school, all levels, often on the same day. Paras have to be very flexible and must deal with [children at] all grade levels and disabilities. I do not think that we receive [sic] the training that we need, nor do we have proper supervision. Our classroom teachers do not know what a para’s role is nor how to supervise paras that are placed in their classrooms. Frustration levels are very high because roles are not clarified with teachers, students, and paras.”

What Opinions and Advice do Pilot Study Paraeducators Offer?

It is touching and revealing to read what respondents wrote about the most important part of the work they do in inclusive classrooms. All respondents described their work in terms of helping children. In fact, the majority of respondents focused on helping their students learn. Listen to their voices as they explain the most important part of the work they do in inclusive classrooms: “help the student” (ABQ3); “help the students finish their work and stay on task.” (ABQ1); help them get their work done” (ABQ2); “help students one-on-one” (ABQ4); “help in all areas” (ABQ6); “one-on-one instruction” (ABQ7); “working with a student to help understand the lesson” (ABQ8).

Others were clear about an expanded definition of who they were teaching. For example, ABQ5 wrote “I make myself available to all of the kids not just to those with disabilities.” ABQ9 wrote, “I assist students with strategies that are easier to understand and I make my special education students good about learning.” And ABQ10 wrote, “The most important part of the work I do in inclusive classrooms is meeting the students’ needs and working with their IEP goals.”

Table 4. Pilot Study Paraeducators Speak about Vexing Issues They Face

Issue	N (%)
I need more training in order to work with children with disabilities. COMMENTS: ABQ4: We must all keep learning. ABQ5: Training is continual as things are constantly changing. ABQ6: I would need training to work I a self-contained (special) classroom. ABQ8: I always need training on new labels. QBQ10: I need more training on the disabilities of the students.	8 (80%)
When I work in inclusive classrooms, I receive good supervision. COMMENTS: ABQ5: I am pretty much on my own. The teacher doesn't know that they need to supervise nor do they have training on how to supervise. ABQ8: I receive good supervision from the regular education teacher. ABQ9: I receive good supervision from the regular teacher but I need better supervision from the special educator. ABQ10: I receive good supervision from the general education teacher and the special education teacher.	8 (80%)
The teachers I work with ask my opinion about the children in the classroom COMMENTS: AbQ4: I am an equal. ABQ9: At times I feel the teacher feels too overwhelmed with such a big classroom (6 th grade inclusion). ABQ10: They ask for my opinion every day during end-of-day feedback.	7 (70%)
I have time to collaborate with the teacher(s) that I work with. COMMENTS: ABQ4: We have a great relationship. ABQ5: We have no set collaboration time. ABQ6: Not as much as I would like! ABQ10: I collaborate during prep hours or morning-lunch breaks or after school.	5 (50%)

Other respondents explained some of the circumstances in which they work with children. For example, listen to the para-educator whose job title is “campus supervisor”: “I’m out in the hallways or we go to the Library. And I take my time with them, just being there for them, and sometimes I have to go in a classroom so they will be nice to the teacher. Or they are being bad and I walk with them, then I walk them back to class” (ABQ2). As shown in Table 4, pilot study paraeducators were willing to explain the vexing issues they face, and the facilitating factors that help them do their work.

The respondents were generous to offer advice about what other paraeducators should know about inclusive classrooms. As shown in Table 5 the comments were organized into two categories. “Be Willing to Ask” includes advice to ask questions, read books, collaborate and communicate with others to learn strategies to help the

children. Another category is “Be Flexible” where the advice is to be prepared to be busy, and to work with some people who may not know exactly what to do with you.

One para-educator (ABQ7) wrote, “*We are so lucky to be in an inclusive classroom (^_^).*”

Table 5. Advice about Inclusive Classrooms for Other Paraeducators

Category	Comments
Be Willing to Ask!	Ask questions (ABQ9). You should learn about how to help them and what the focus should be for each child (ABQ6). Ask questions, read books. You control how involved you are in the classroom (ABQ7). You need to communicate with the teacher and the special education teacher on strategies for students (ABQ5). Collaborate with each student’s general education teachers on a daily basis (ABQ10).
Be Flexible	You are very, very busy (ABQ8). Sometimes the special education teacher doesn’t know what to do with you (ABQ4)

What Do Pilot Study Paraeducators Say about the Survey?

Overall, the survey itself was positively reviewed by the respondents. No question marks were inserted to indicate confusion, and half of the respondents (50% or N=5) wrote “Yes” to the question “Do you think these questions will help the research team know more about what paraprofessionals actually DO in inclusive classrooms?” No one wrote comments for how to improve the survey.

One participant at the workshop (who did not complete the survey) is a representative of the American Federation of Teachers who mentioned a national online survey of paraeducators (FT LeaderNET, 2007). The focus of the survey is to help the AFT understand the nature of paraprofessional work post-NCLB due to the requirement that direct supervision of the paraprofessional must be provided for the paraprofessional to provide instructional services. In that survey, respondents are asked to describe their worksite, type of students, years in current position, years with current employer, age, and level of education. Questions related to activities pre-and post-NCLB include being asked to substitute for a teacher and/or being asked to provide instructional support without supervision of a teacher.

The co-principal investigators on this research project will add similar items in order to increase the likelihood of making meaningful comparisons between the survey results. In addition, two new issues will be added to the survey to reflect those that were spontaneously raised by the respondents to the pilot test (i.e., issues that might be

specific to rural or urban settings, and issues related to working with teachers who don't want paraeducators in their classrooms).

Discussion

National statistics on paraeducators in the classroom indicate more than 525,000 are currently employed in FTE positions nationwide (NCES, 2000). Of that number approximately 290,000 or 55% are employed in inclusive general and special education programs, self-contained and resource rooms, transition services and early childhood settings serving children and youth with disabilities. Approximately 130,000 (nearly 25%) are assigned to multi-lingual, Title I or other compensatory programs. The remaining 20% work in pre-school and elementary classrooms and other learning environments including libraries, media centers, and computer laboratories. In comparison, the majority (80%) of the respondents in the pilot study were employed in inclusive general and special education programs; 10% (N=1) worked as a campus supervisor (i.e., school hallways). In terms of the nature of the needs of the children with whom they work, the respondents to the pilot study matched the national statistics: 60% worked in low SES schools (such as schools eligible to receive Title 1 compensatory support) and 30% worked with students in bilingual settings. In summary, the settings in which the paraeducators in the pilot test worked match the national statistics. The paraeducators who responded to the pilot study worked in a variety of classroom settings, ranging from special education classrooms, to secondary classrooms, to creative combinations of classrooms, and even the hallways and the library and school grounds (i.e., campus supervision).

The paraprofessionals in the pilot study seemed to characterize their responsibilities as helpers who arranged for more successful learning experiences for students. This is very similar to the goal of differentiated instruction (Hall, 2002; Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007) where lessons are carefully structured to tap into the varied strengths and knowledge bases of the participating teachers. Members of teaching teams who practice differentiated instruction structure multiple modes of access to the content of instruction, multiple ways to show what has been learned, multiple goals of instruction, and varied methods of assessing learning. The paraprofessionals in the pilot study seemed most tuned in to differentiating their instructional strategies for helping their students understand the content or the directions for the assignments.

Many respondents to the pilot study reported experiences that resonate with other researchers in the field. For example, some paraeducators reported that they worked with other children not just the ones they were assigned and that for the students with disabilities with whom they worked, they tried to make the students feel comfortable about what they were learning. This sentiment resonates with the study by Marks, et al., who found that many paraeducators were successful in avoiding the role of hovering over the child. Villa, Thousand and Nevin (2004) emphasize that this "Velcro effect" should be avoided when paraprofessionals work with co-teachers. In fact, many experts agree that the paraprofessional role should more clearly focus on creating interdependence with

the peers in the classroom and independence from adult supervision (Mueller & Murphy, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

A challenge that the respondents in the pilot study raised relates to working with those who do not know what to do with another adult in the classroom. Although the survey was not designed to tease out factors related to more effective working relationships, the respondents were clear about the importance of having time and opportunity to collaborate with the teachers in the classrooms in which they work. This issue has been raised by others (e.g., Pickett & Gerlach, 1997) and has recently been the focus of an ethnographic study of teaching assistants and their co-working relationships with teachers (Devecchi & Rouse, 2007). In that study, Devecchi and Rouse used observation and interview techniques to identify factors that enabled collaboration, namely being approachable and respectful, being professional and competent, sharing knowledge/skills/resources, being autonomous, being flexible and simultaneously having clear roles and responsibilities. The respondents to the pilot survey, however, seemed to report only 2 of those factors, namely the importance of being approachable (as indicated by descriptions of when to talk to teachers about what was expected of them) and being autonomous (as indicated by the advice to “Ask Questions!”). The confirmation of these promising trends awaits the outcomes of the national survey and subsequent qualitative interviews of volunteers to verify and instantiate the survey results.

Conclusion

Overall, the demographics of the respondents to the pilot test favorably compare to the national statistics with respect to (a) where paraeducators work and (b) types of students with whom they work. The results of the ratings on the issues and open ended questions resonate with the results from other researchers in the field. And the nature of the work they do (i.e., the instructional strategies and routines they follow) match the roles and responsibilities described by national experts. The co-principal investigators concluded that the structure of the survey was suitable to the purpose of the national study. They intended to add items to the survey in order to compare results to the national survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers as well as items related to issues explicitly raised by the respondents. In addition, substantive feedback from Nancy French (personal communication, May, 2007) indicated that the items related to inclusive classroom practices may have been specifically and uniquely related to the type of training that paraeducators may have received. Thus, the specific instructional strategies were disaggregated by school site, revealing that those from Miami-Dade County Public Schools were more likely to rate cooperative group learning strategies than any other group. Given the training offered to paraeducators at school sites involved in Florida Inclusion Network grant awards, this result indicates a uniquely contextualized explanation. In revising the national survey, the specific techniques were removed and replaced with more broadly stated types of instructional interactions.

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Paraeducators in Inclusive Classrooms: A National Survey

Teachers often view paras not as a bridge to the special needs students but as a bypass, a way to avoid direct interaction/responsibility." (R59, KY)

"The most important part of the work I do in inclusive classrooms is to support students so they can access the content in a consistent and meaningful manner to them and their objectives." (R6, MN)

"The most important part of the work I do in inclusive classrooms is meeting the students' needs and working with their IEP goals." (R10, ABQ)

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Research Questions

- What are the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators in inclusive classrooms?
- What types of training have been available for the changing role of the paraeducator in inclusive classrooms?

Objectives

- To discover the experiences of paraeducators who work in inclusive classrooms
- To listen to their voices and seek advice
- To enhance the preparation of future teachers who will work with paraeducators

Definitions

- Paraeducator is defined as a teaching assistant, paraprofessional, instructional aide, or educational technician

Definitions

- Inclusive classroom is defined as a classroom where students with and without disabilities learn together and are taught by general educators with support from various other professionals (e.g. special educators, remedial reading teachers, speech/language therapists, etc.)

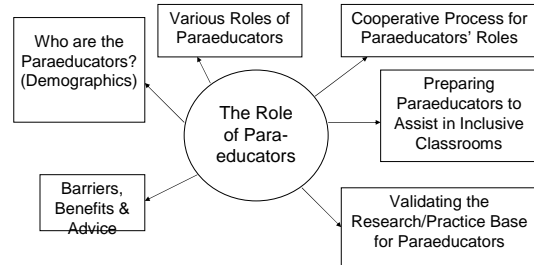
History of Paraeducators in USA

- 1950's - traditional clerical role
- 1970's - transformed into an instructional role
- 1993-2000 - Classroom paraeducators increased by 65% (now numbered over 525,000)
- 2000's - Most work in inclusive or other classrooms and support students with disabilities

State of the Field

- 7 studies published between 1999 and 2006
- Descriptors: paraeducators, inclusive education

The Role of Paraeducators



Pickett and Gerlach

- Well-received handbook for supervisors and paraeducators
- Topics-teaming, evaluation, planning, scheduling

General Educators

- General educators have identified extra classroom support as essential for placing special education students in their classrooms
- Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999
- Mueller & Mueller, 2001
- Piletic, Davis, & Aschemeier, 2005
- Riggs & Mueller, 2001

Teacher Education

- University teacher preparation programs that recruit paraeducators with experience in inclusive classrooms to complete special education certification programs.
- Littleton, 1998; Rueda & Monzo 2002

Rueda and Monzo

- Reported types of activities that paraeducators engaged in
- Input they had in classroom instructional activities
- Assistance they received from teachers and others
- Factors that detracted from or fostered
- Collaborative relationships

Findings

- Schools cultures do not support collaboration between teachers and paraeducators, due to predominately hierarchical structure of social relationships

Findings from Literature Review

- Teachers are unaware that paraeducators possess knowledge of the students' culture and community that is essential for tapping into students' prior knowledge and interests.

Findings from Literature Review

- Doyle (2002) suggests that paraeducators and their teachers clearly articulate roles for the following areas:
 - Lesson planning
 - Delivery of instruction
 - Proactive and reactive responses to students' behaviors
 - Strategies to promote ongoing communication, and methods of student evaluation

The Survey

- Comprised of 5 sections:
 - Definition of terms
 - Respondent Demographics
 - Classroom Demographics
 - Responsibilities
 - Beliefs
 - Collaboration
 - Open-ended questions
- Online format (distribution of the website via National Paraprofessional Resource Center)
- Surveys completed between September-December (2007)

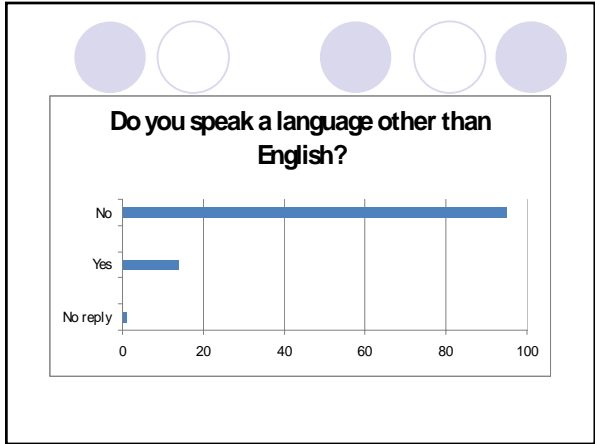
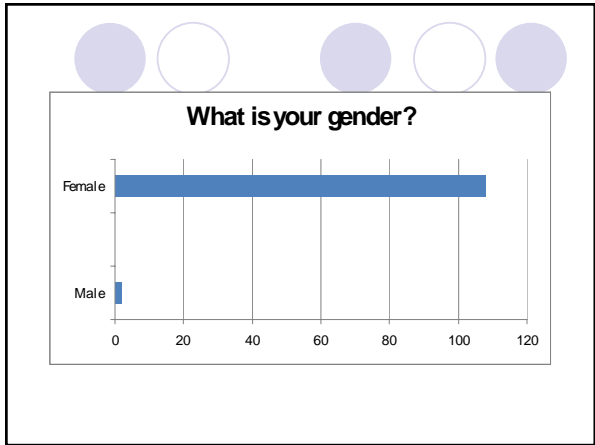
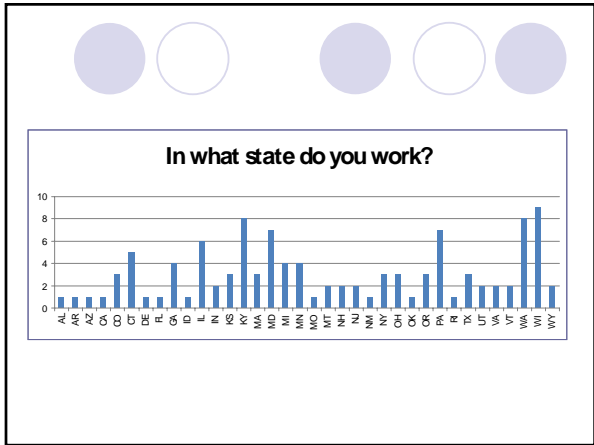
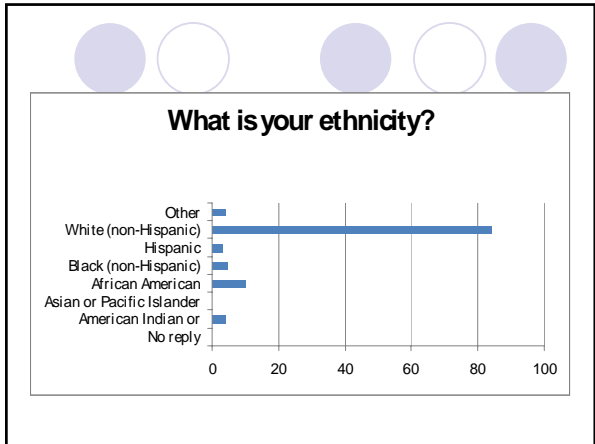
Design

- Multiple methods were used.
- Survey – quantitative (rating scales) and qualitative (open ended questions)
- Face-to-face interviews – allowed participant voices to emerge

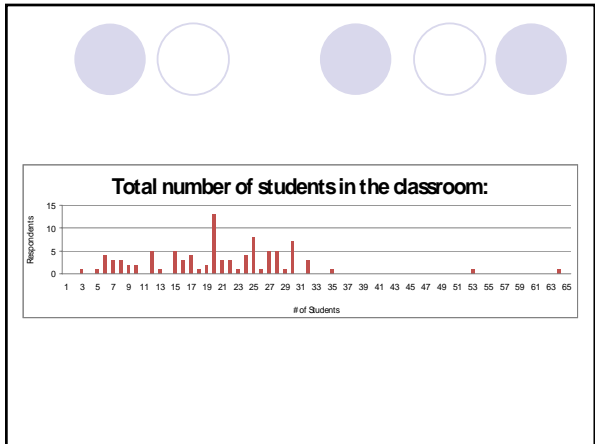
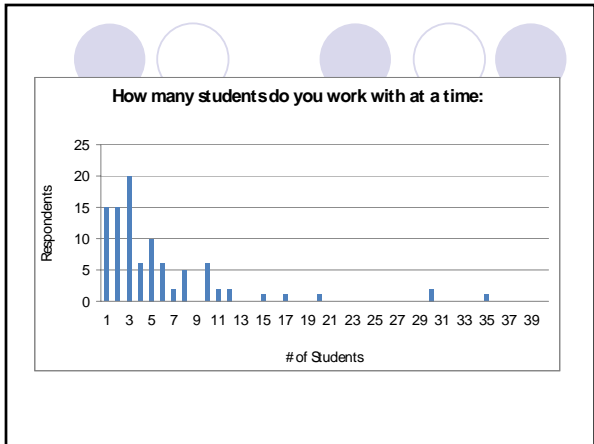
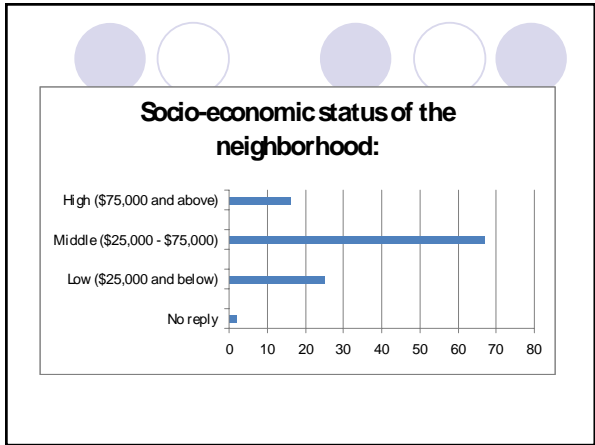
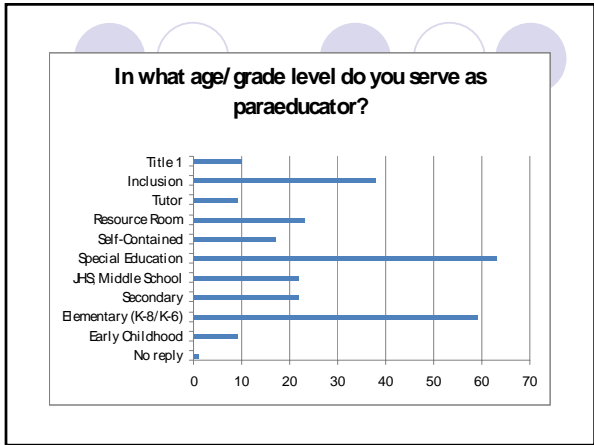
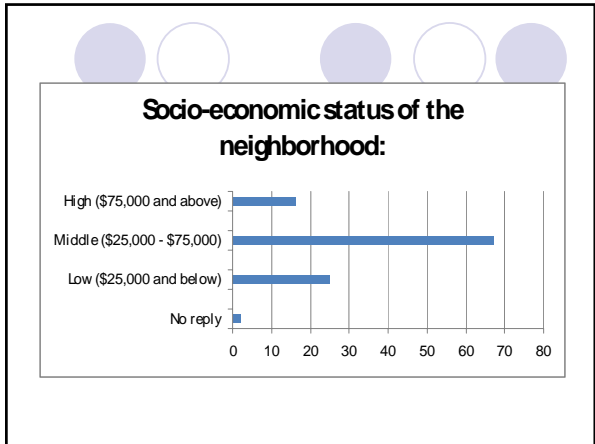
Preliminary Data Analysis— Who Responded?

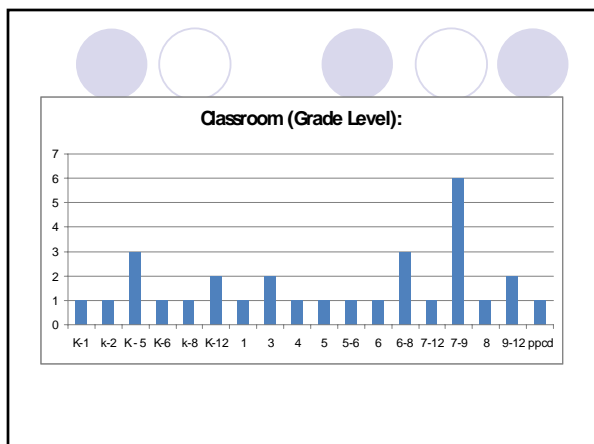
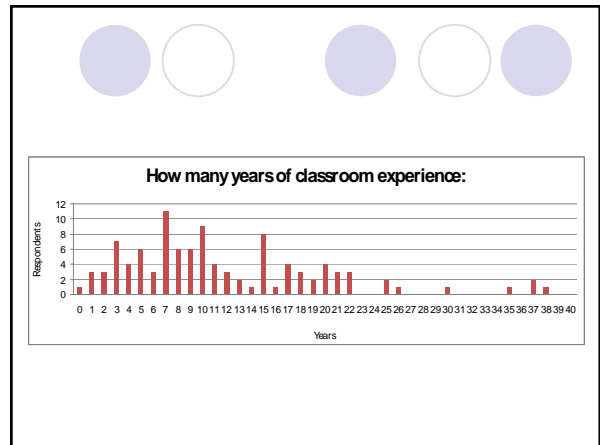
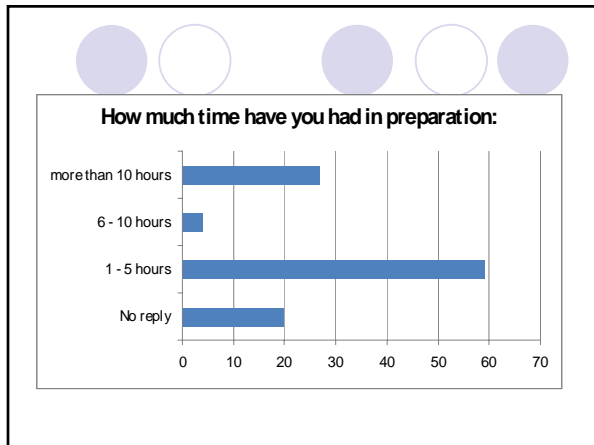
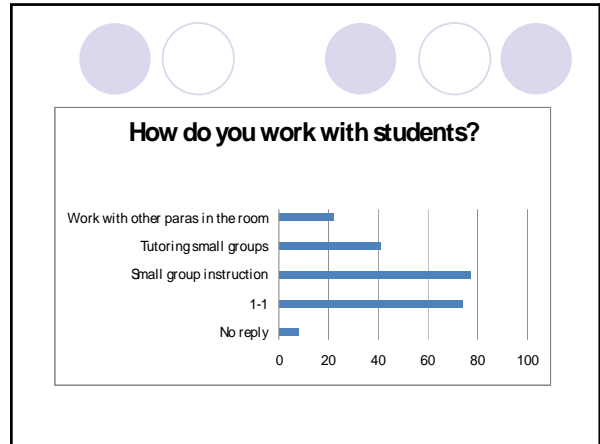
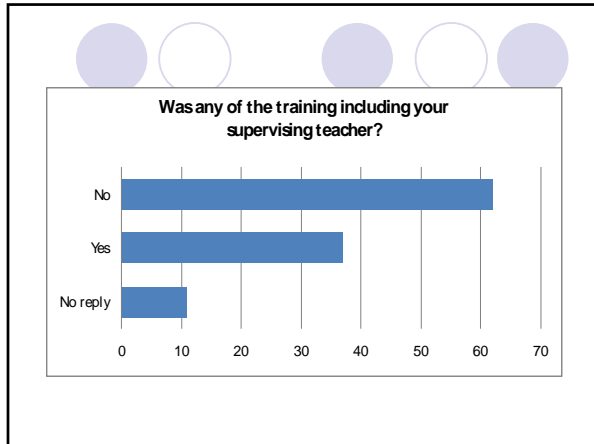
- 120 respondents
- Predominately White, English-speaking, females,
- with 7 years of experience who has a family member or friend with a disability,
- who works in an elementary education inclusion class with 20 students and
- who works in small groups or 1:1,
- who does not meet regularly with the supervising teacher,
- Who hails from 34 of the 50 states
- And report incomes within the \$25K-75K socio-economic range.

Respondents' Demographic Details

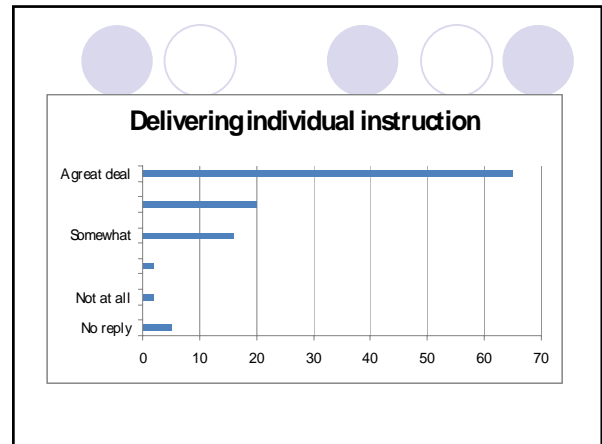
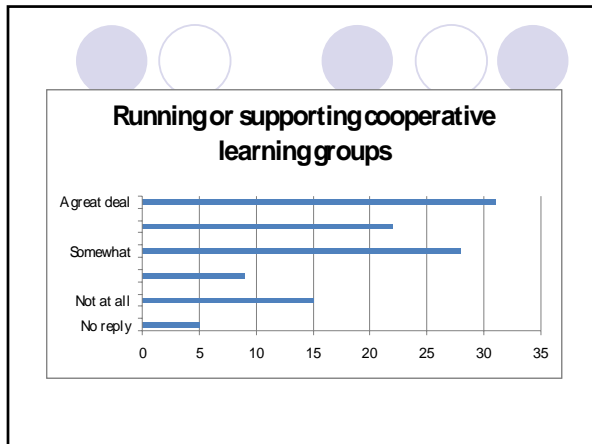


Classroom Demographics





Responsibilities

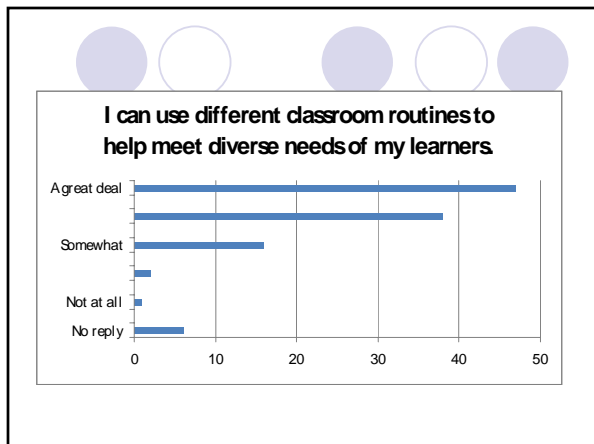
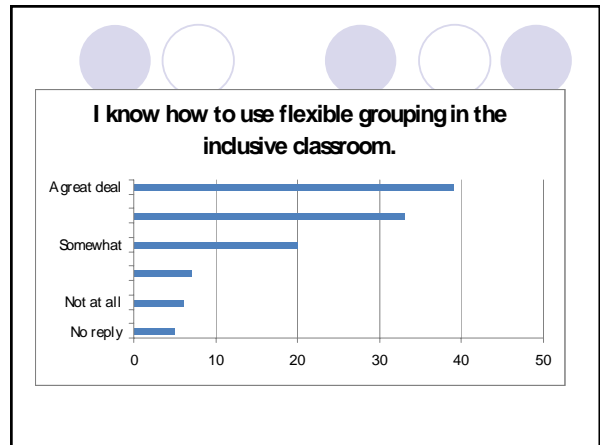
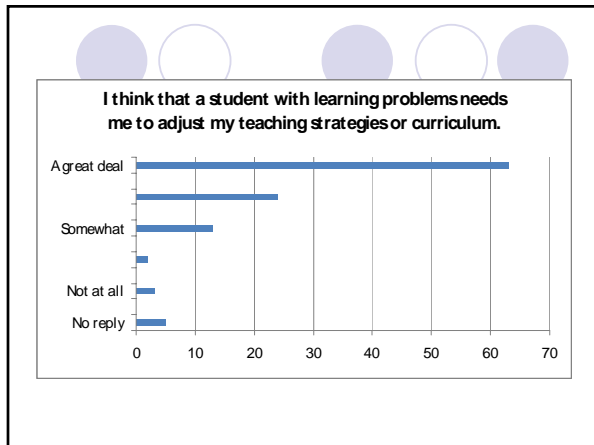
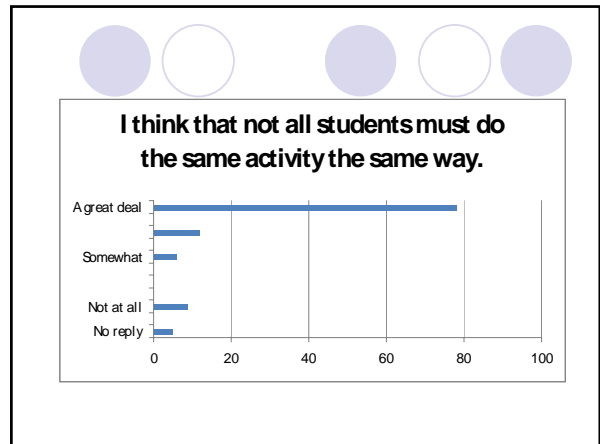
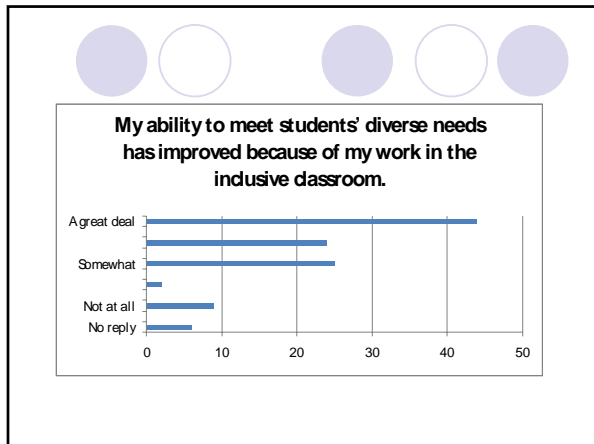


- ### Strategies
- 68% Directing (or re-directing) student behavior
 - 59% Delivering individual instruction
 - 50% Teaching appropriate social skills
-
- 36% Supervising peer tutoring sessions
 - 26% Coaching homework
 - 14% Supporting cooperative learning groups

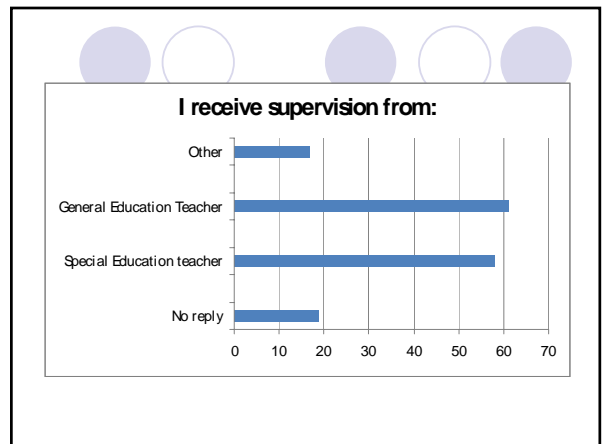
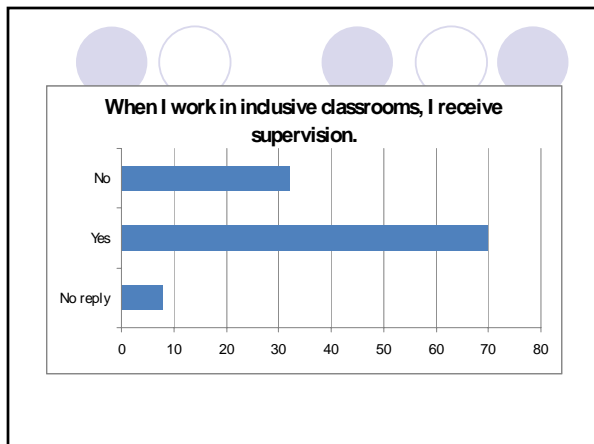
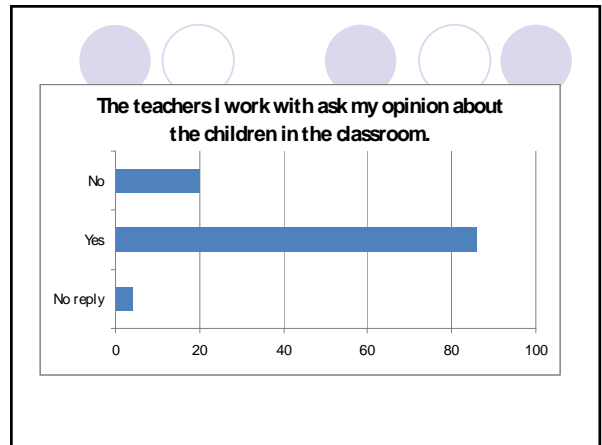
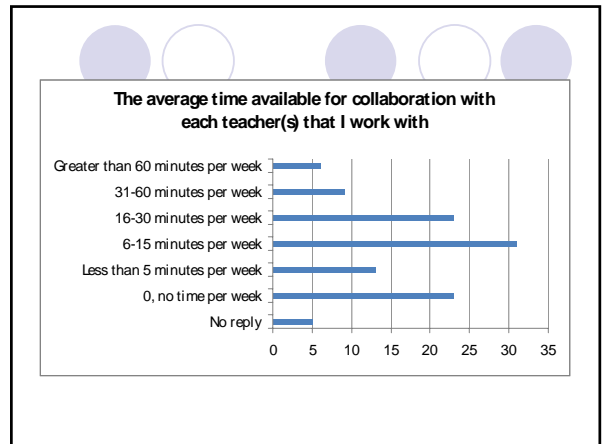
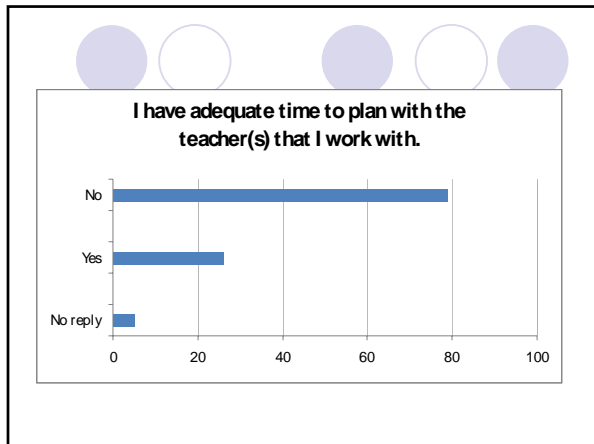
- ### *What do Paraeducators Say About Their Roles?
- Many stated they worked with children and youth who needed behavioral support or social skills training.
 - Others echoed the literature that shows paraeducators in inclusive classrooms working to deliver instruction in reading and math through various activities (e.g., learning centers, cooperative learning groups, and one-to-one interactions).
- *Based on written responses to open ended survey question.

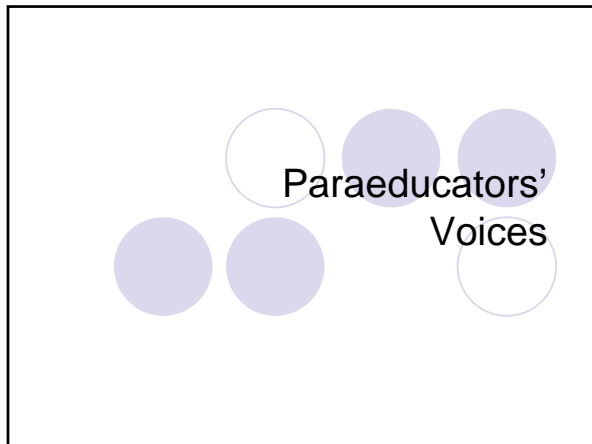
- ### Emerging Role—10% mentioned RtI
- Our district uses RtI. We have used the 'six minute solution' in reading that is very effective. We have resources that push in and pull out as needed." (Respondent 1 from Michigan)
 - "I have coached children in language arts under the supervision of a reading teacher." (Respondent from Rhode Island)
 - "I document notes on each child seen daily to measure progress and give [the notes about] strategies [to the teacher]." (Respondent 2 from Michigan)
 - "I use DIBELS to monitor progress [of all the students]." (2 respondents from Oregon)

Beliefs



Collaboration
and
Training





Paraeducators' Voices

The most important part of the work in Inclusive classrooms:

"Making sure that the student with a disability is not a stand out."

"Supporting the student. Making sure that I am available."

"Make it possible for the student to feel successful."

ParaEducators' Voices

What paraeducators should know about inclusive classrooms:

"Use common sense."

"Have a good working relationship with the teacher."

"Know your responsibilities and get them in writing."

"Your only concern is the student that you are working with."

"Take the lead from the teacher; show respect even if you don't agree."

"Go with the Flow."

"It's important that the regular students see the included students' talents."

"Never hover over one child."

"Some kids have good days and some have bad days - hopefully not at the same time"

- ## Implications
- Continue to acknowledge and collaborate with paraeducators.
 - Clearly define duties and responsibilities regarding instruction, management, and planning.
 - Build in time to meet during the school day.
 - Share goals for students, class and each other.

- ## Implications
- More professional development regarding disabilities, curriculum, methods
 - More grow-your-own programs with IHE
 - Enhance TED programs to include competencies for collaboration and supervision of ParaEducators
 - Create side-by-side programs

THANK YOU