

Investing in Paraeducators:

A School's Journey to Develop,
Empower, and Transform In-classroom
Paraeducator Support



National Education Association
ESP Webinar

May 18, 2023

Eric W. Underhill, MAT, M.Ed, CSML



Eric W. Underhill, MAT, M.Ed
Principal

Carl Sandburg Middle School
Fairfax County Public Schools

Learning Targets

Today, I will be able to:

Understand how targeted professional learning for paraeducators positively impacts employee equity.

Identify ways to apply strategies and structures presented within my school or division to create optimal student learning supports in co-taught settings.

Develop concrete action steps to build the agency and effectiveness of paraeducators as it relates to their role in supporting students with disabilities.



Program Leadership Overview

**DEFINING THE PROBLEM &
IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES**

Swanson Middle School Arlington Public Schools, VA	Shirley C. Heim Middle School Stafford Public Schools, VA	Carl Sandburg Middle School Fairfax Public Schools, VA
1100 Students (Grades 6-8)	1000 Students (Grades 6-8)	1465 Students (Grades 7-8)
12 Paraeducators	6 Paraeducators	16 Paraeducators
Suburban Setting	Suburban Setting	Suburban Setting
Starting Year 2017	Starting Year 2021	Starting Year 2023
Implementation Year 6	Implementation Year 2	Implementation Year 1
Division Vertical Pilot 2019		
Division wide implementation 2021		

Learning from Paraprofessionals as a New Assistant Principal (SMS 2017)

**DEFINING THE PROBLEM &
IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES**



Paraeducators

Often Overlooked.
Critical to Schools.

Waterfall Activity 1: We are going to place responses into the chat and then press enter together at one time.



As paraeducators, what challenges do you face in your current school or program?

What is something you need to feel more efficacious/confident in your role?



**DEFINING THE PROBLEM &
IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES**

This is an equity issue.

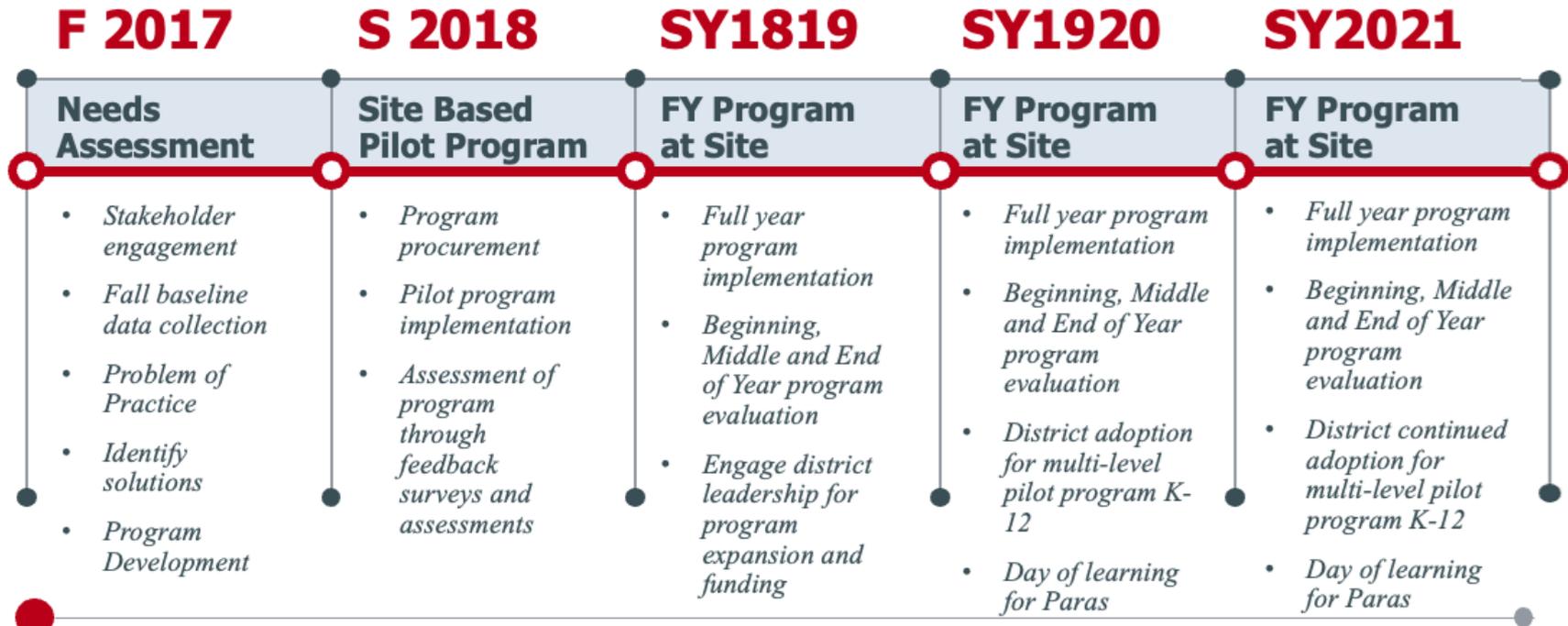
- Student support in classrooms
- Co-teaching / team-taught
- Professional training and development
- School scheduling
- Content knowledge
- Workforce Investment



EQUITY

Site Based Timeline

Building Sustained Capacity & Efficacy of Paraprofessionals



**DEFINING THE PROBLEM &
IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES**



Starting with Data

Describe the level of support the assistant provides to struggling students in MATHEMATICS.

Check all that apply.

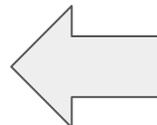
- 1-Support is task oriented (complete the problem / write this step down etc.)
- 2-Support is behavior oriented (correcting / redirection of misbehaviors)
- 3-Support is generally passive (assistant is present in class, requires prompting to engage with students, observer like)
- 4-Support is generally active and engaging (assistant seeks out students in needs and regularly offers support)
- 5-Support is content oriented (basic level - teacher must teach the content to assistant before they assist students)
- 6-Support is content oriented (Intermediate level - assistant sometimes requires the teacher to teach them content for effective support to be provided- limited working knowledge of content is evident)
- 7-Support is content oriented (Advanced level - assistant demonstrates appropriate content knowledge to effectively assist students with learning content (can provide additional examples, content support, manipulative assistance, prompts through effective questioning)
- 8-Support provided demonstrates assistant's appropriate knowledge and use of additional function calculator (yellow)
- 9-Support provided demonstrates assistant's appropriate knowledge and use of scientific calculator
- 10-Support provided demonstrates assistant's appropriate knowledge and use of a graphing calculator (Algebra I or higher)
- 11-Support provided demonstrates assistant's knowledge of the order of operations (GEMDAS)
- 12-Support provided demonstrates assistant's familiarity with positive and negative integers
- 13-Support provided demonstrates assistant's basic knowledge of identifying a mathematical expression.
- 14-Support provided demonstrates assistant's familiarity with understanding charts, diagrams, content imagery
- 15-Support provided demonstrates assistant's familiarity with online calculator
- 16-Support provided demonstrates assistant's familiarity and use of formula sheet

DEFINING THE PROBLEM & IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

TEACHER STAKEHOLDER SURVEY DATA

ASSESSING BASELINE SUPPORT IN MATHEMATICS

**MATH COACH, DIVISION
SPECIALISTS, AND TEACHERS
HELPED DEVELOP THESE
LOOK FOR ITEMS FOR THE
SURVEY**



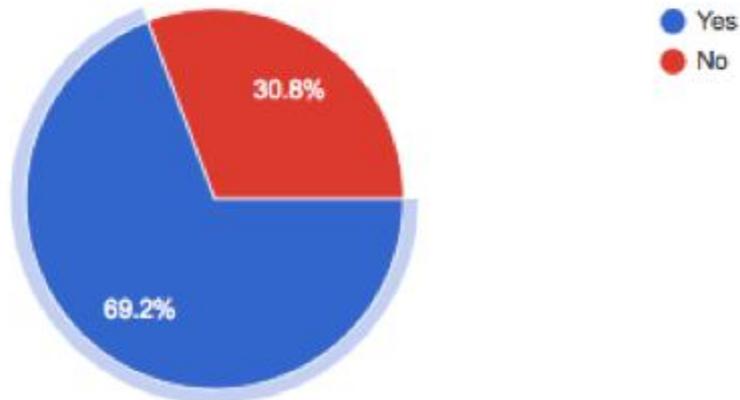
DEFINING THE PROBLEM & IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

TEACHER STAKEHOLDER SURVEY DATA

In previous years (2017/2018 or before), have assistants in your classroom expressed concern regarding their knowledge of the content area?



26 responses

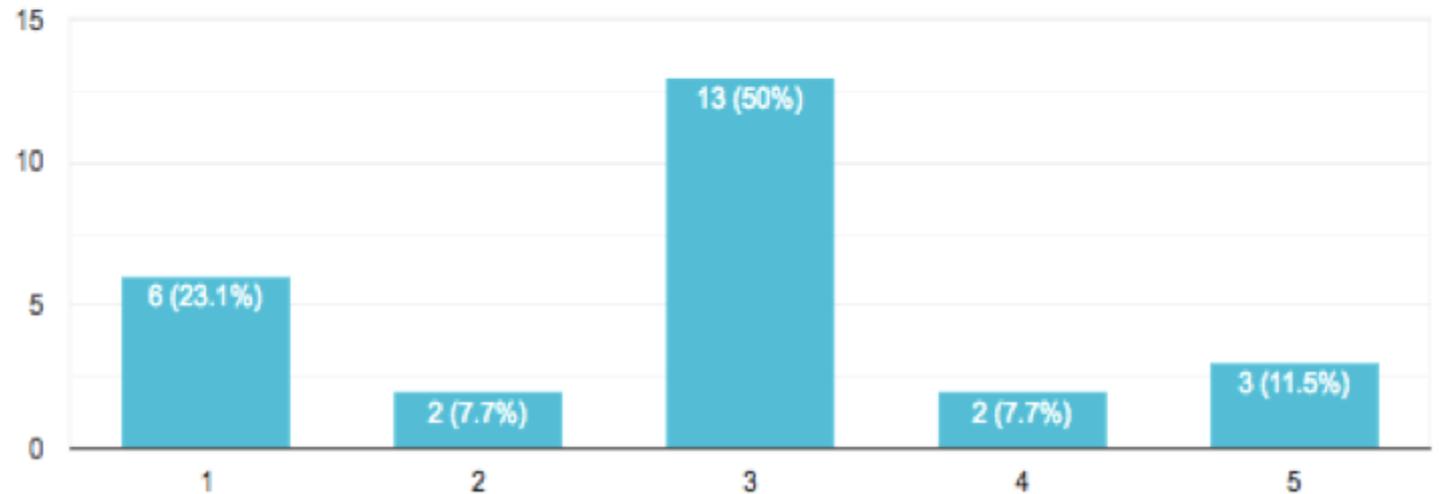


DEFINING THE PROBLEM & IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

TEACHER STAKEHOLDER SURVEY DATA

Describe the assistant's knowledge of the content area you teach.

26 responses

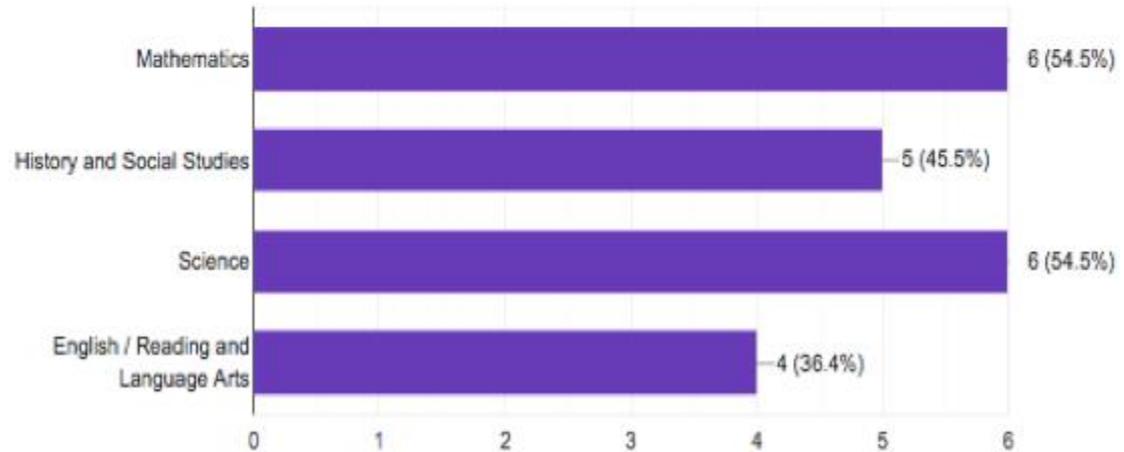


DEFINING THE PROBLEM & IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

PARAPROFESSIONAL SURVEY DATA

Select the content areas where you are identified as being highly qualified

11 responses



A large group of skydivers in various colorful suits (red, green, blue, yellow, black) are falling against a clear blue sky. They are scattered across the frame, some in freefall and others in formation. In the center, there is a dark gray rectangular box with white text.

Developing Questions for Your Team

From the **teacher** perspective

What questions might you ask teachers to get a sense of what they believe strengths, growth opportunities, and professional learning might be beneficial for paraeducators in your school?

From the **administrator** perspective

What questions do you think school leaders should ask of your paraeducator team to get a sense of your role, strengths, growth opportunities or areas of investment?

- From the **paraeducator** perspective

What questions might your fellow paraeducators need to be asked to start the conversation around paraeducator growth, professional development and efficacy?





INNOVATION & CONNECTION
TO SUPPORT LEARNING

Paraprofessional Schedule

2017-2018 Master Schedule

PERIOD 1	PERIOD 2	PERIOD 3	PERIOD 4	PERIOD 5	PERIOD 6	PERIOD 7	PERIOD 8
EL Math 8	EL LAR 6	Math 6	EL LAR 7	LUNCH	Math 7	Science 7	History 7
Science 7	Science 7	Geography 8	Science 8	Duty	Lunch	English 7	Geography 8
Math 7	Civics 7	LUNCH	Algebra 8	LUNCH DUTY	English 8	Math 8	Extended Math 7
Reading	Reading	Geography 8	LUNCH	Math 6	English 8	Science 7	Geography 8
Liaison	Liaison	Science 7	LUNCH	English 6	History 6	Science 8	Liaison
History 6	Civics 7	Science 8	LUNCH DUTY	LUNCH	English 7	Math 7	Math 8

All stakeholders reported that this structure contributed greatly to their concerns.

Paraprofessional Content Focused Master Schedule SY 2018-2019

INNOVATION & CONNECTION
TO SUPPORT LEARNING

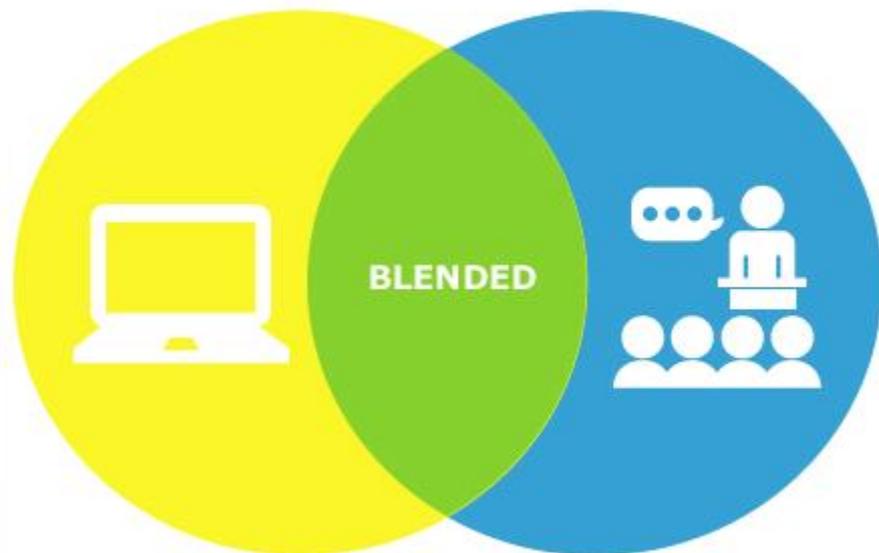
IA	1	2	STAR	3	4	5	6	7	8	Grade Levels	Subjects	Number of Teachers
Para 1	Math 6	Health	Grade 8	Algebra I	Algebra I	LUNCH	Math 6	Algebra I	Algebra I	68	Math	3
Para 2	Science 7	Health	Grade 8	Science 8	Science 8	LUNCH DUTY	LUNCH	Science 8	Science 7	78	Science	3
Para 3	Civics 7	Civics 7	Grade 7	Geography 8	LUNCH	History 6	LUNCH DUTY	Civics 7	Geography 8	678	Social Studies	3
Para 4	Science 7	Reading 6	Grade 6	Reading 6	LUNCH DUTY	Reading 6	LUNCH	Science 7	Science 7	67	Science / Reading /	2
Para 5	Reading 6	Reading 6	Grade 8	Geography 8	Geography 8	LUNCH	Geography 8	Geography 8	Geography 8	68	Reading / Geo	3
Para 6	English 6	English 6	Grade 6	Reading 6	LUNCH	English 6	Reading 6	Health	Health	6	Reading / English /	3
Para 7	Math 7	Math 7	Grade 6	Science 6	LUNCH DUTY	Science 6	LUNCH	Math 7	Math 7	67	Math / Science	2
Para 8	bilingual resource	bilingual resource	bilingual resource	History 6	LUNCH	History 6	History 6	English 7	English 7	67	History / English	3
Para 9		Civics 7	Grade 7	Civics 7	LUNCH	History 6	History 6	Civics 7	Civics 7	67	Social Studies	3
Para 10	Math 6	Math 6	Grade 6	Math 6	LUNCH	Math 6	Math 6	Science 8	Science 8	68	Math / Science	3
Para 11	English 6	English 6	Grade 7	English 7	English 8	English 6	LUNCH	English 8	English 7	678	English	3
Para 12	Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Skills Lunch Duty	Life Skills - Integrated	LUNCH	Life Skills	Life Skills	6	Life Skills	1
Para 13	Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Skills	LUNCH	Life Skills - Integrated	Life Skills	Life Skills	Life Skills	6	Life Skills	1
Para 14	Interlude	Interlude	Interlude	Interlude	LUNCH	Interlude Lunch Duty	Interlude	Interlude	Interlude	68	Interlude	1
Para 15	EL LAR	EL LAR	EL	EL LAR	LUNCH	EL LAR	EL LAR	EL LAR	EL LAR	678	EL LAR	3
Para 16	DL	DL	DL	DL	LUNCH DUTY	LUNCH	LUNCH DUTY	DL	DL	78	Distance Learning	NA

What is an area of professional learning that you would like to focus on in your work?

Place your answer in the chat.... Wait for the signal to submit your response!



INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING



What is our model of PD for A-scale employees?

Our model is a combination of virtual learning modules and collaborative learning experiences that occur throughout the school year on an on-going basis.

We use a combination of

- TA time
- School PD ½ days
- Division ½ days.

INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING



Why did we choose this model?

Through a needs assessment survey, we identified the need for applicable professional development that will build knowledge, skills and abilities of instructional assistants.

- Content Knowledge Skills
- Specific disabilities
- Supporting Reading / Writing
- Supporting students with cognitive and emotional needs
- Classroom management.

INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING



We utilized *Master Teacher's Para-Educator Online* curriculum modules as a starting point. The modules serve as the base curriculum upon which, we add practical, collaborative and hands on learning experiences.

WORKSHOP



- Reading and Writing Workshop
- Station Rotations in Mathematics
- Document Based Questions in Social Studies
- Measurement and Equipment in Science
- SIOP for English Language Learners
- Discipline and Behavior Management, Positive Behavior Supports

INNOVATION & CONNECTION
TO SUPPORT LEARNING



Supporting Students with Document Based Questions in Social Studies
Eric W. Underhill, MAT

What is the DBQ?

- DBQ stands for Document-Based Question
- It is an essay that requires the student to use historical documents to support their point of view.



The DBQ Process



Using the Think – Pair – Share Protocol

- **THINK:**
 - On the next slide, you will see two questions. Think about your answer to each question.
- **PAIR:**
 - Share your thoughts with your partner.
- **SHARE:**
 - Share your thoughts with the group

• *What questions might you have about this activity?*



1

2



3

Supporting Students

- Where might students experience the most difficulty in the DBQ process?
- How might you be able to support students?



Delve into a Strategy



7

Analyzing Documents

- To analyze documents, we use the acronym APPARTS:
 - A – Author
 - P – Place & Time
 - P – Prior Knowledge
 - A – Audience
 - R – Reason
 - T – The Main Idea
 - S – Significance



8



Take a look at the Documents!



9

Let's Eliminate the Confusion & Frustration



As you analyze each document,
also think of your...



BUCKETS!

You will be practicing the bucketing process as social studies students.

Think about the question below as record any observations you have during the bucketing process.



How might you support students in the bucketing process?

Growing Paraeducators as Leaders



**INNOVATION & CONNECTION
TO SUPPORT LEARNING**

SY 2019-2020 Expanding our work

- Originated in Middle School setting
- Expanded to Elementary School and High School for Year 2
 - Intentional about which schools we selected based on leadership flexibility



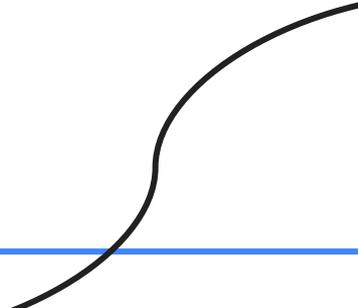
Districtwide Day of Learning: February 12, 2020

- Planned by paraprofessionals, for paraprofessionals
- Paraprofessionals were allowed to choose which sessions they wished to attend
- Hosts were compensated with lunch
- Required support from administrators



5 Volunteers to Share!

What impact do you think this work had on our paraeducators at the school and district level?



Feedback

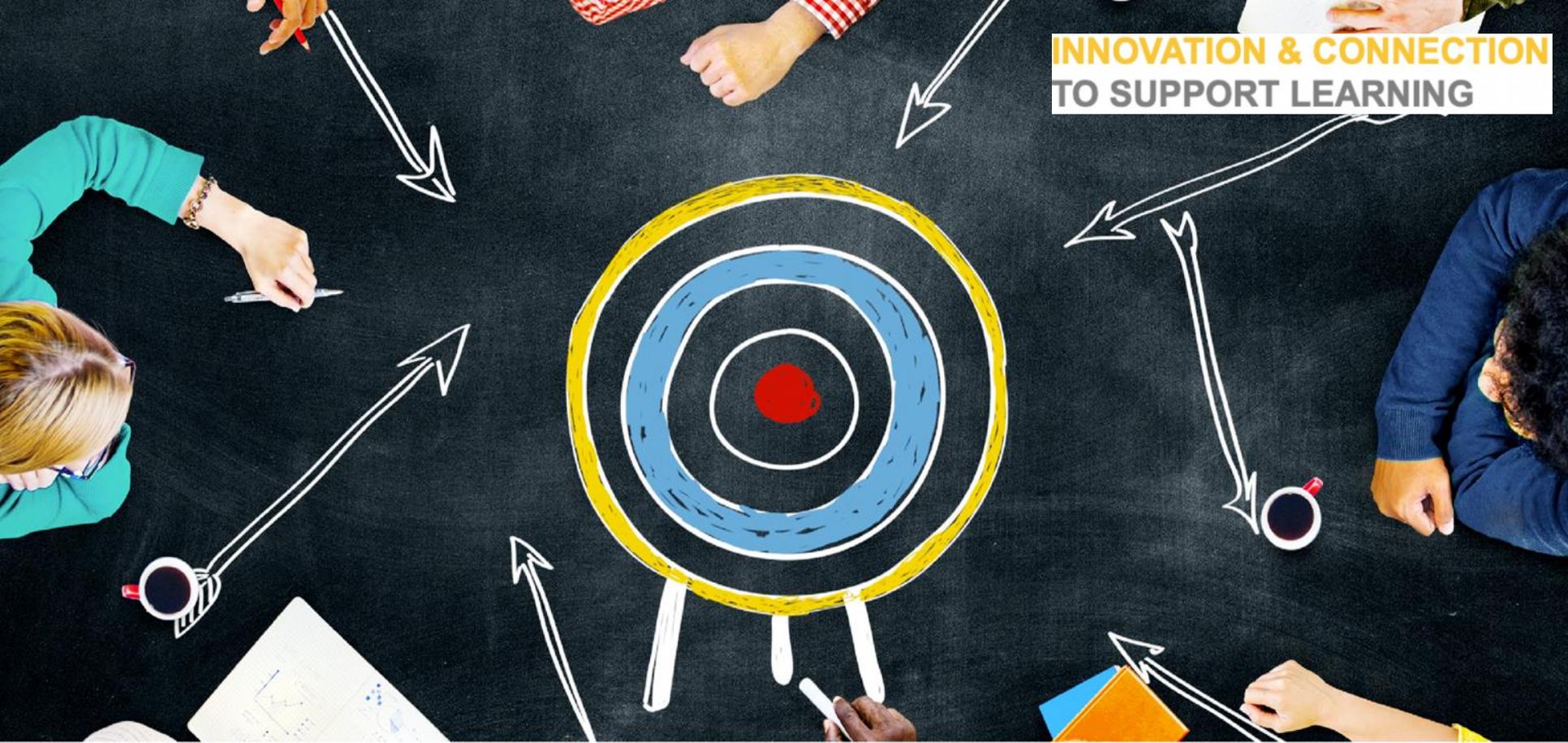
INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING

“I felt like I was treated like a professional today.”

“These are the kinds of sessions I need to help me grow as a professional.”



**INNOVATION & CONNECTION
TO SUPPORT LEARNING**

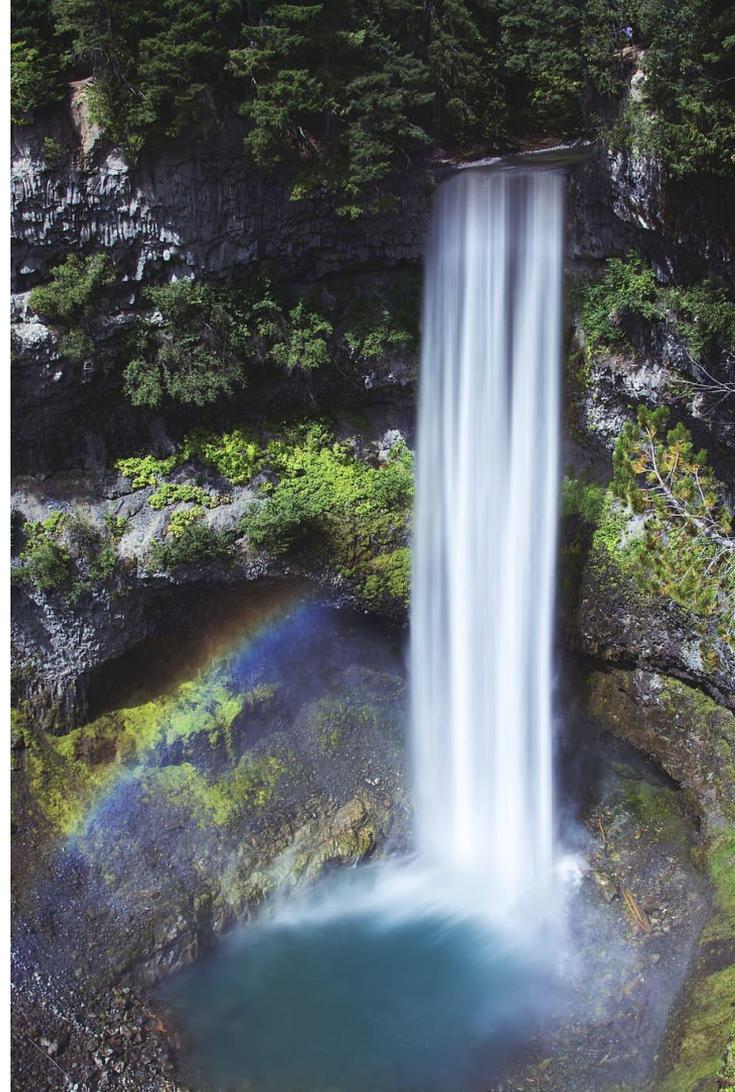


Setting Expectations - Making Sure They are Clear



In your school, are teachers aware of what paraeducator support is supposed to look like in whole group, small group, 1:1, or other settings?

Place your response in the chat and click enter/submit.

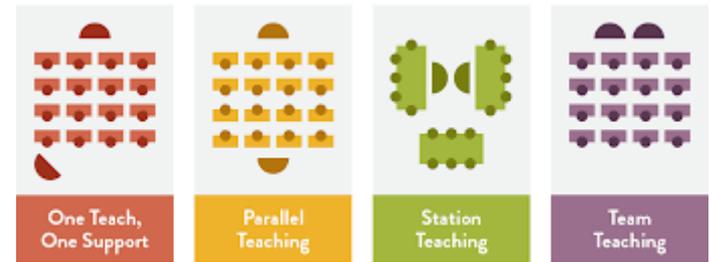


The descriptors below, although not exhaustive, provide highlights of the skills, abilities and expectations for student support in a variety of settings.

Whole Group Instruction Support

- Support all students with directions / activity expectation reinforcement.
- Support students with curricular content
- Support student engagement using proactive instructional supports
- Support student attention to task through use of proactive and instructional strategies
- Support students with content vocabulary
- Support student collaboration and communication through use of instructional support strategies
- Monitor chat function in MS Teams / Manage student use of microphones etc.
- Provide cues for attention, checks for understanding, clarification of direction through chat / small group (recorded)
- Assist students in moving from one group to another / assist in digital transitions

INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING



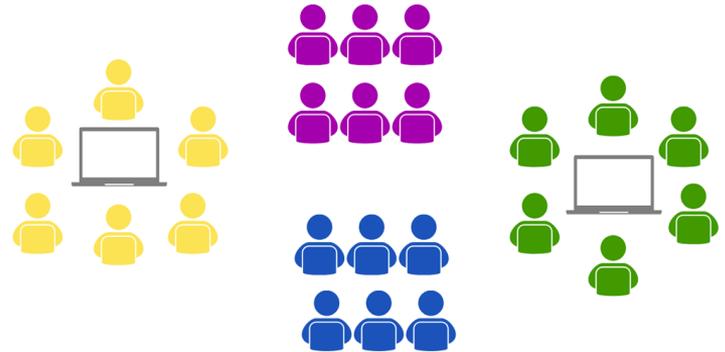
Small Group Instruction Support

- Support student learning at a workshop station / breakout room (recorded)
- Support student understanding of content by leading small group for re-teaching a specific concept, strategy or content. (recorded)
- Support student learning by facilitating a content activity
- Support student learning using small group instructional support strategies
- Monitor chat function in MS Teams / Manage student use of microphones etc.
- Provide cues for attention, checks for understanding, clarification of direction through chat / small group (recorded)
- Assist students in moving from one group to another / assist in digital transitions

Individual Student Support

- Read aloud support
- 1:1 support as needed (recorded)
- Organizational Support
- Agenda Checks, Assignment Recording Support and Check
- Provide individual prompting / redirection as needed for attention, organization, engagement
- Monitor chat function in MS Teams / Manage student use of microphones etc.
- Provide cues for attention, checks for understanding, clarification of direction through chat / small group (recorded)
- Assist students in moving from one group to another / assist in digital transitions

INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING



Small Group Testing

- Identify and reserve small group testing locations as needed.
- Implement small group testing accommodations as needed.
- Provide read aloud support as needed

Classroom Management

- § Circulate throughout the learning environment to provide supervision
- § Use proximity techniques to support students in remaining on task and engaged in learning activity
- § Ask students questions in proactive manner to determine if further supports are needed
- § Model and reinforce classroom & school expectations
- § Provide prompts for redirection, cues for attention or reminders as needed
- § Provide positive reinforcement

Other classroom supports

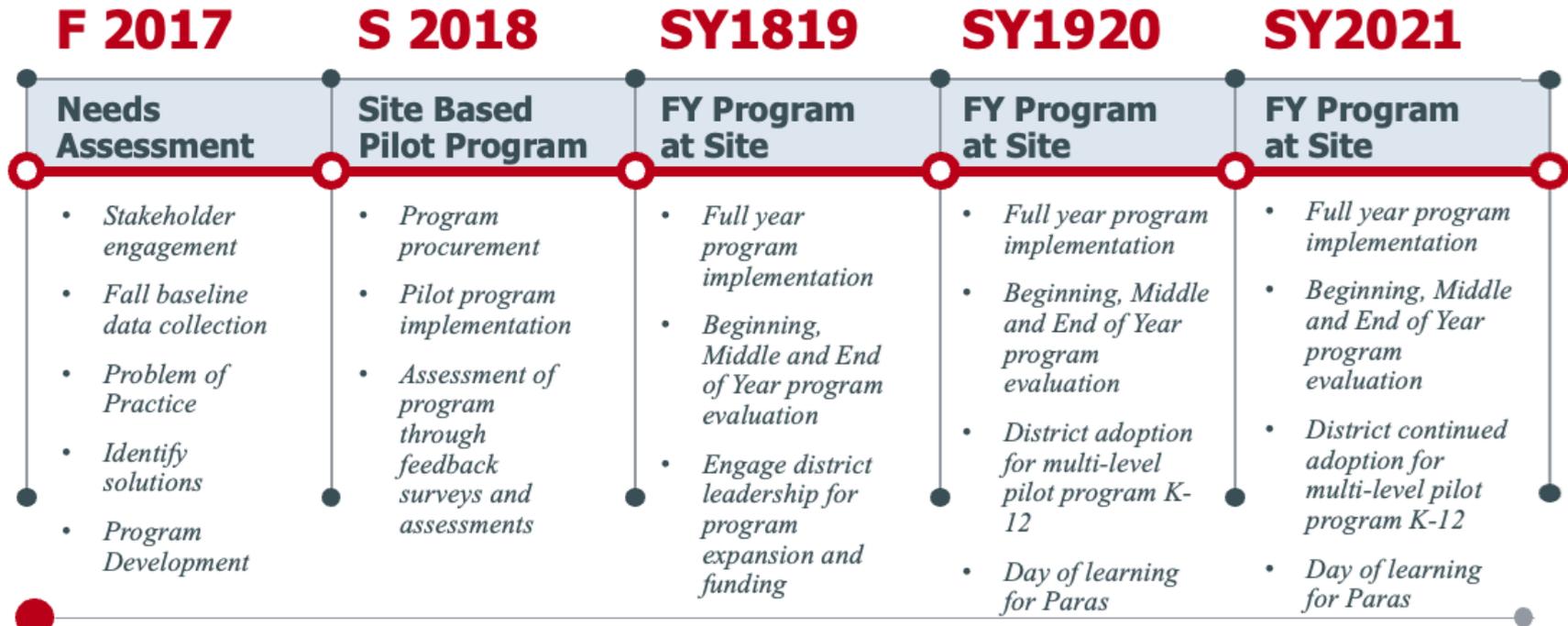
- § Assist in transitioning to small group activity, learning centers, stations or rotations
- § Assist in the distribution of learning materials for activity, learning center, stations or rotations
- § Communicate any student learning needs to the teacher

INNOVATION & CONNECTION TO SUPPORT LEARNING



Site Based Timeline

Building Sustained Capacity & Efficacy of Paraprofessionals





REFLECTION & EVALUATION OUR TEAM'S PERSPECTIVE

REFLECTION & EVALUATION

OUR TEAM'S PERSPECTIVE



Describe how this learning was most useful to your work in the classroom?

13 responses

Canvas

Google

Canvas/Personalized Learning

Helps me to incorporate new strategies when working with special education students in various classroom settings. Helps me to tweak the strategies that I have already been using.

It provided me with more techniques to use with noncompliant behaviors.

It gave clear practical ideas/suggestions of how to help students.

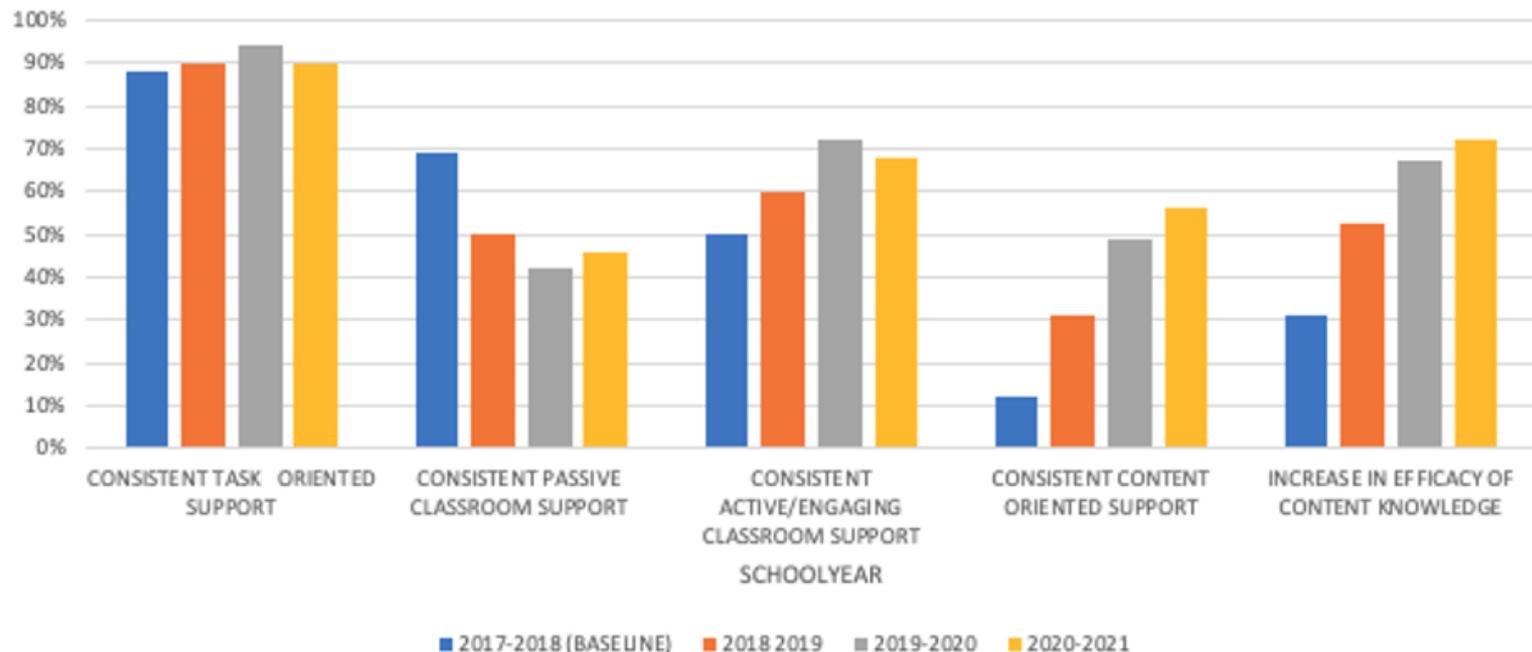
Provides us with topics and information relevant to what we want and has provided new techniques

**EVALUATING PROGRAM OUTCOMES
TO SUSTAIN STUDENT LEARNING**



EVALUATING PROGRAM OUTCOMES TO SUSTAIN STUDENT LEARNING

4 YEAR STUDY OF PARAEDUCATOR CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT
MEASURED BY COOPERATING TEACHER SURVEY RESPONSES
SY2018-2021



Staff Name: _____ Observer Name: _____ Date: _____

A-Scale Look Fors		Observed
Emotional Support	Positive Communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Respect	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Responsiveness to academic and social/emotional needs and cues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student Interaction	Clear Expectations/Transmission of Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Proactive	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Effective Redirection of Misbehavior	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructional Support	Effective Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Communication/Transmission of Concepts/Content	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Feedback Loops	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Encouragement and affirmation	<input type="checkbox"/>

Definitions of Descriptors

Positive Communication Positive comments and expectations

Respect Respectful language, use of each other's names, warm/calm voice, listening to each other, cooperation

Responsiveness to academic and social/emotional needs/cues Individualized support, reassurance and assistance, adjusts pacing/wait time when needed, re-engagement, acknowledgement of emotions and out of class factors, timely response

Clear Expectations Explicit, consistent, students know what to do

Proactive Monitoring, Anticipation of problem behavior, proximity, attention to the positive

Effective Redirection of Misbehavior Use of subtle cues to redirect, problems resolved, little time lost, minimum/no disruption to the rest of the class

Effective Engagement Active participation, sustained attention

Communication/Transmission of Concepts/Content Essential components identified, conditions for how and when to use the concept/content, multiple and varied examples, contrasting non-examples, clear and accurate definitions, effective clarifications, effective rephrasing

Feedback Loops Back-and-forth exchanges, persistence, follow-up questions

Encouragement and Affirmation Recognition and affirmation of effort, encouragement of persistence

EVALUATING PROGRAM OUTCOMES TO SUSTAIN STUDENT LEARNING



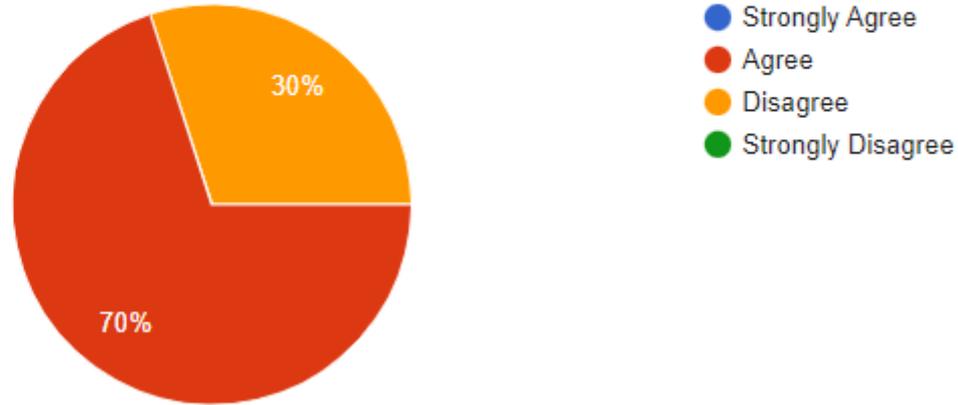
The Carl Sandburg Middle School Journey - Spring 2023



Starting the Journey at Carl Sandburg Middle School-2023

Professional learning provides you with strategies and approaches to support students in learning course content in the areas identified above.

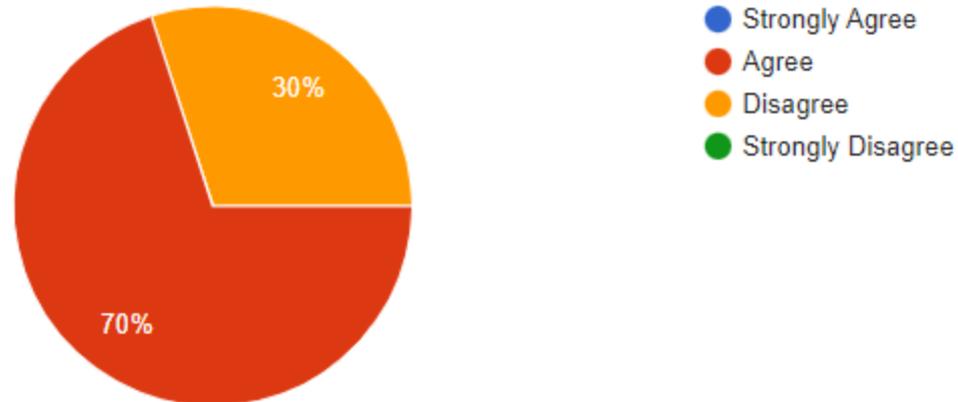
10 responses



Starting the Journey at Carl Sandburg Middle School-2023

Professional learning that is provided to you throughout the year provides you with instructional strategies to support you in your role as an instructional paraeducator.

10 responses



Starting the Journey at Carl Sandburg Middle School-2023

Professional learning that is offered is designed with your role as an instructional paraprofessional at the center of the design.

10 responses

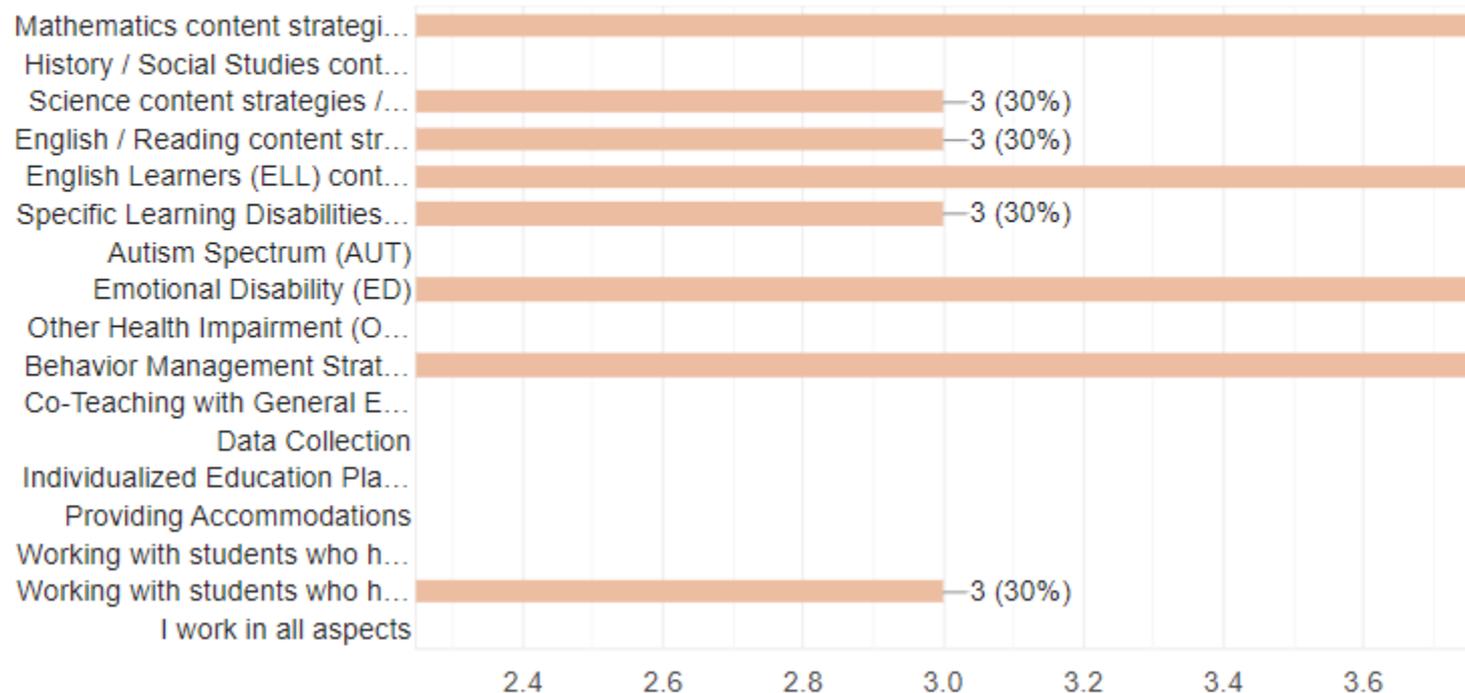


DEFINING THE PROBLEM & IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES

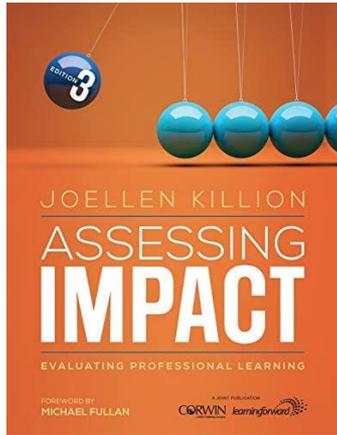
If you could design professional learning specifically for your role as a paraeducator, what would you like it to focus on / include? (Select All that Apply)



10 responses



Resources we used during our journey...



CLASS OBSERVATION SHEET	
Teacher: _____	Observer: _____
Start time: _____	End time: _____
Number of adults: _____	Number of children: _____
CONSIDER items all items required CLASSROOM: <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment	CONSIDER items all items required CLASSROOM: <input type="checkbox"/> Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment
Positive Climate (PC) • Respectful • Positive affect • Positive communication • Support	Notes: Note for change from check to asterisk, asterisk to check. *Check indicates all items being met (note: asterisk after all items met and only when all items met are being met)
Negative Climate (NC) • Negative affect • Negative communication • Negative behavior	Notes: Note for change from asterisk to check, asterisk to asterisk.
Teacher Sensitivity (TS) • Awareness • Responsiveness • Adaptive flexibility • Student connection	Notes: Note for change from asterisk to check, asterisk to asterisk.
Support for Student Professional (SP) • Knowledge and Shared Goals • Support for Autonomy and Leadership • Student Engagement	Notes: Note for change from asterisk to check, asterisk to asterisk.

