

Exploring the Role of Special Education Paraeducators

Programs 1-3 Participant's Packet

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Program 1: Overview

Program 2: Providing Positive Behavioral Supports

Program 3: Assisting in the Instructional Process

People who provide assistance to students with moderate and severe disabilities go by a variety of job titles such as “personal aide” or “instructional assistant.” In this six-part series, we’ll be using the job title *paraeducator*. By any name, these individuals play a critical role in meeting the needs of students in special education.

“Para” means “along-side”—as in someone who works “alongside” an educator—like the way assistants in the medical and legal fields are called paramedics and paralegals.

A paraeducator is a school employee who provides instructional or other direct support services to students. This person works under the supervision of a certified, licensed teacher.

To explore the role of the paraeducator in the education of students with disabilities, we’ll visit classrooms and talk to teachers and paraeducators at Brookside Elementary in Jessamine County, Whites Tower Elementary in Kenton County, Lincoln County Middle, and Woodford County High.

The first program provides an overview of the paraeducator’s responsibilities as part of a team of people helping students with disabilities succeed in school. Subsequent programs explore how to manage misbehavior, provide instruction in school and community settings, and provide health and personal care to students. A final program for teachers and administrators looks at how schools can effectively use—and support—paraeducators.

About This Packet

The materials in this packet include biographies of the presenters, outlines of the three programs, and materials related to the content of the programs.

A second packet—for Programs 4, 5, and 6 of the series—is provided on the KET professional development web site.

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Meet the Presenters

Four special education teachers and seven paraeducators appear in this series. They include **Lou-Ann Land**, special education teacher, and **Bonita Creech**, paraeducator, from Brookside Elementary School in Jessamine County; **Jean Clayton**, special education teacher, and **Sally Wright** and **Debbie Zion**, paraeducators, from White Tower Elementary School in Kenton County; **Mark Hurte**, special education teacher, and **Annette Noland**, paraeducator, from Lincoln County Middle School; and **Sally Miracle**, special education teacher, and **Carla Carmicle** and **Billie Jean Patton**, paraeducators, from Woodford County High School.

Professional Development Credit

Stage of Participant Development: Practice/Application

The Kentucky Department of Education has approved all KET Star Channels Seminars for professional development credit if schools or districts choose to include them in their professional development plans. Districts or schools may choose to include preparation and/or follow-up time as part of professional development. For example, if a teacher participates in one 90-minute program and spends an additional 30 minutes in related activities, he or she could be awarded a total of two hours professional development credit.

Individual teachers who wish to use these videotapes for professional development credit should check with their school professional development chair or with their district professional development coordinator.

Professional development can also be used to satisfy requirements for the fifth year program. Contact your local university or the Division of Teacher Education and Certification at 502-564-4606 for more information.

Program Agendas

Program 1: Overview

This program summarizes the paraeducator's role and responsibilities as part of a team of people helping students with disabilities succeed in school.

Agenda

- General job description of the paraeducator working with students who have moderate to severe disabilities
- Teachers and paraeducators discuss the role of the paraeducator in their schools.
- Definition of the responsibilities of teachers and paraeducators
- Sharing information, data, and input into IEP (Individual Education Program)
- Legal and ethical guidelines that apply to students with disabilities
 - Using appropriate terms and phrases
 - Confidentiality
- Closing thoughts from teachers on the benefits of having paraeducators and from paraeducators on the rewards of working with students with disabilities

Program 2: Promoting Positive Behavior

Managing student behavior is a major concern of teachers and paraeducators because it directly affects learning. Very little gets accomplished in a disruptive classroom. This program explores behavior management plans and the paraeducator's role in implementing them. You'll see specific behavior plans as well as a menu of strategies that can be used to help students improve their behavior.

Agenda

- Distinguishing the roles and responsibilities of teachers and paraeducators involving behavioral issues
- Understanding the reasons for negative behavior and the "ABC's of Behavior"
- Being prepared to manage negative behavior
- Quick, effective behavior management strategies
- Developing a menu of reinforcers to encourage positive behavior
- Most-to-least prompting

- Formal, written behavior management plans
- Guidelines to using praise to reinforce positive behavior
- Ethical considerations in behavior management

Program 3: Assisting with the Instructional Process

Special education is experiencing a shortage of teachers, yet students with disabilities have a legal right to an appropriate education. Paraeducators are helping to fill the gap. Paraeducators play an important role in instructional activities, helping students learn and achieve more than they might otherwise.

Paraeducators help by participating in educational team meetings, preparing instructional materials, assisting with teacher-led instruction, collecting data, and providing direct instruction to students under the supervision of the teacher.

This program explores the many ways in which paraeducators assist in the education of students with moderate to severe disabilities—in general education classrooms, resource rooms, and self-contained classrooms, and with individuals and small groups of students.

Agenda

- Sources of information about student goals: Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and Individual Education Programs (IEPs)
- Defining accommodations and modifications
- Prompting methods: verbal, visual, and physical
- Teachers share how they prepare paraeducators to provide instruction
- Classroom video of teachers training paraeducators in instructional strategies
- Defining systematic instruction and seeing it in action in classroom video
- Using paraeducators to train and supervise non-disabled students to work with students with disabilities (classroom video)
- Supporting students with disabilities in general education classrooms (video of students and paraeducators in classrooms and of a conference between a general education teacher and a paraeducator)

Teacher Responsibilities:

Teachers have the primary responsibility for a student's education.

- Deciding on the types of instruction, supports, and services the student needs
- Determining student's goals and objectives
- Preparing lesson plans
- Modifying the curriculum and determining adaptations
- Ensuring that student's IEP is implemented
- Evaluating the effectiveness of student's IEP
- Evaluating student's progress
- Involving student's parents
- Working with other service providers

Paraeducator Responsibilities

Paraeducator's primary responsibility is to perform the tasks assigned by the supervising teacher, under his or her guidance.

- Implement teacher's lesson plans
- Assist students with their work
- Collect data about student's progress and behavior
- Score teacher-developed tests
- Maintain records
- Contribute information and/or attend IEP, IFSP, or other staff meetings
- Enforce behavior management plans
- Supervise students outside the classroom (i.e., lunchroom, playground, bus)
- May do clerical work
- Assist with student's personal care (i.e. toileting, grooming, eating)
- Provide support to students with health care needs
- Provide direct instruction and collect necessary data

Appreciating Diversity

One aspect of interpersonal skills, or knowing how to get along with others, has to do with how we view and treat people who are different from us. Today's public schools are made up of a diverse group of people. Students and staff are different from each other in many ways: age, gender, ethnicity, economic background, religion, lifestyle, values, etc. School personnel are expected to have an attitude of acceptance and appreciation of diversity. This is because it has become well recognized that it is important for students' healthy development that they be aware of and proud of their own unique identities. In order for this to happen, they need to be around adults who model a positive attitude toward diversity. In addition, teachers and paraeducators who take an active interest in understanding the ways their students are different will be better able to understand those students' behavior and, thus, interact with them in ways that will help them learn.

Having a positive attitude toward diversity means not ignoring differences and not holding negative attitudes about differences. Negative attitudes can be expressed in many ways, two of which are stereotyping and labeling. Stereotyping is assuming that all people within a group are the same in some way. Examples of stereotypes are things like "blondes have more fun," or "all fat people have a great sense of humor," or "people with mental retardation cannot learn." Not only are stereotypes incorrect, they are also harmful. Another way prejudices are perpetuated is through labeling, which means referring to an individual by some characteristic (e.g., "the retarded," "the disabled"), instead of referring to the person first, then to the disability (i.e., "Person First Language" – for example, "person with a disability"). Watch for stereotyping or labeling in the way you think and talk about people who are different from you, and work at correcting it.

Different Abilities

One way people are different is that they have different physical, mental, and academic abilities. People with significant problems in these domains are said to have "disabilities." A number of negative attitudes toward people with disabilities are prevalent in our society. These may include ideas that people with disabilities are:

- Emotionally unstable
- Not as competent as other students
- Unmotivated
- Less sociable than other students
- Non-assertive
- Less likeable than other students
- Unhappy
- Less sensitive than typical students

Individual students do have some of these problems, but that is true regardless of whether they have a disability. Furthermore, just knowing that a student has a disability is not enough information to know whether they also have any of these additional sorts of problems. In other words, don't slip into the trap of stereotyping students with disabilities. Like all students, they are unique, and we should take the time to get to know each one before coming to any conclusions about them.

Students with disabilities are **people first**. They have the same general needs for physical, emotional, social, and intellectual nurturing as do non-disabled students. There are several tips for helping paraeducators treat students with disabilities with respect. The first tip is: whenever possible, treat the person with a disability as you would anyone else. For example, consider how you would introduce Jane Smith, who doesn't have a disability. You would give her name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in—such as, she likes swimming, or eating Mexican food, or watching Robert Redford movies. Why should you do it any differently for a person with disabilities?

Other ways of treating a person with a disability as similar to others as possible is to remember that independence and autonomy are important. Allow the person choices whenever possible, and allow him or her to do and speak for him/herself as much as possible. Emphasize abilities, not limitations. Seek to develop with them the same types of warm, friendly relationships you seek with other students. However, remember not to give excessive praise or attention, as this is patronizing. Use the same system of fair guidance and discipline with students with disabilities as you use with students without disabilities. Finally, as you would with all students, encourage students with disabilities to participate to the maximum degree possible in activities with their peers without disabilities.

Another way to be respectful is to use "Person First Language" and to use the most current, preferred terminology to describe disabilities. Here is a short list of some of the preferred terms, and their less desirable counterparts.

Do	Don't
"She has cerebral palsy."	"She has C.P." or "She is spastic."
"He is deaf and communicates in sign language."	"He is deaf and dumb."
"She uses a wheelchair."	"She is confined to a wheelchair."
"He has seizures."	"He has fits."
He has a learning disability.	He is learning disabled.
He has autism.	He is autistic.

Confidentiality is extremely important when working with students with disabilities.

- Keep student information private.
- Don't speak about students to friends, family, or to or in front of other students.
- Don't speak about students to other teachers except on a need-to-know basis.
- If anyone in the school or community asks you for specific information about a student's disability, refer them to the supervising teacher.

Competencies for Kentucky Paraeducators Who Work with Students with Disabilities

*(From the Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute
training program for paraeducators)*

Paraeducators will demonstrate the following competencies:

Standard 1.0

General Knowledge and Values

1. Demonstrate an awareness of the legal rights of children and youth with exceptional learning needs and their parents in educational settings.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of individual learning styles and environmental factors that impact teaching and learning processes.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the differences among the roles and responsibilities of professionals, paraprofessionals, and other support personnel.
4. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of special education processes, procedures, and regulations.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of and respect for social, cultural, linguistic, religious, economic, and ability differences in students and their families.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the similarities and differences among the cognitive, communicative, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children and youth with and without exceptional learning needs.
7. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of Kentucky's educational goals for all students.

Standard 2.0

Maintaining Safe and Supportive Instructional Environments

1. Follow and use prescribed district or agency policies and procedures to ensure the safety, health, and general well being of learners and school personnel, including school emergency procedures.
2. Implement strategies and procedures developed by teachers to maintain safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments.
3. Establish and maintain rapport with all learners.
4. Model and encourage interactions among children, youth, and adults that respect and value individual differences.
5. Implement strategies that promote the learner's independence across all relevant educational settings.
6. Provide opportunities for individuals to make choices across settings and activities.

7. Based on program and learner needs, assist teachers and related service professional in carrying out tube feeding, catheterization, and other health related procedures required by learners who have special health care needs, and maintain appropriate records of these activities.

Standard 3.0

Assisting with Instructional Practices

1. Under the guidance and supervision of a teacher, effectively implement learning strategies, prompting procedures, and other systematic instructional procedures in school and non-school settings using a variety of instructional grouping arrangements.
2. Under the direction of a professional, use developmentally and age-appropriate strategies, equipment, materials, and technologies in a manner that facilitates student learning and accomplishes instructional goals.
3. Assist teachers and other professionals with adapting learning materials and equipment to meet the needs of individuals with different ability levels, learning styles, or language backgrounds.
4. Implement teacher-developed plans or strategies that enhance the fluency, maintenance, and generalization of academic skills.
5. Based on program and learner needs, assist teachers with community-based instruction.
6. Perform routine clerical duties such as preparation of instructional classroom materials; setting up student work areas; and operating office, video , computer, adaptive devices, and other materials.

Standard 4.0

Assisting in Assessment and Evaluation Procedures

1. Assist teachers in monitoring student progress regarding academic performance, social development, and behavior. (For paraprofessionals working with early childhood populations, substitute cognitive development for academic performance).
2. Using various teacher-developed assessment tools, assist teachers in documenting information about learners' strengths, needs, and performance.
3. Under the direction of a professional educator, systematically collect observational and performance data of students with exceptional needs across various settings.
4. Assist teachers and other professionals in maintaining learner records required by district, agency, or state mandates.

Standard 5.0

Managing Behaviors and Enhancing Social Interactions of Student

1. Use age-appropriate language, tone of voice, and reinforcement procedures.
2. Implement teacher-developed behavior plans and techniques that adhere to the laws, regulations, and procedural safeguards concerning the management of student behaviors.
3. Demonstrate effective strategies for the management of student behaviors.
4. Implement teacher-developed strategies and techniques that enhance social skill development in children and youth.
5. Assist teachers and other professionals in modifying the learning environment to manage behavior.
6. Facilitate the development of peer interactions and friendships for students with disabilities in classroom, school, and community settings.
7. Monitor and assist children and youth in non-academic learning environments (i.e., lunchrooms, study halls, playgrounds, and buses).

Standard 6.0

Communicating and Collaborating with Teachers, Parents, and Other Professionals

1. Follow teacher instructions and implement team decisions.
2. Interact effectively with and demonstrate respect for the views, rights, and contributions of parents, teachers, and other school personnel.
3. Contribute relevant, objective information to teachers and other school professionals to facilitate planning, problem solving, and decision-making processes across all relevant settings.
4. Participate as a member of an instructional team (which may include special and general educators, related service staff, family members, and students) to plan and organize learning experiences for students.
5. Participate in team meetings to assist in the development of Individual Education and Transition Plans (IEPs/ITPs) for students aged 3-21 who have disabilities or Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) for children aged 0-3 and their parents.

Standard 7.0

Participating in Professional and Ethical Practices

1. Maintain confidentiality of individual students and their families.
2. Perform assigned responsibilities under the supervision of teachers in a manner consistent with professional and ethical guidelines established by the district, agency, state, or professional organization.
3. Assist teachers and other professionals in protecting the civil, legal, and human rights of children, youth, and their parents.
4. Perform tasks that are within an appropriate range of responsibilities for paraprofessionals.
5. Participate in on-going staff development and self-evaluation activities, and apply constructive feedback to practices within the educational setting.
6. Participate with administrators, consultants, and/or other professionals in designing and implementing comprehensive professional development activities for paraprofessionals.

In addition to the general paraprofessional competencies, we have outlined specific competencies necessary for the position of community-based job coach. A paraprofessional who works as a community-based job coach will be expected to demonstrate the following additional competencies:

1. Assist students in acquiring work-related behaviors, job pursuing skills, and job specific skills needed at school or community work sites.
2. Under the direction of a professional educator, effectively implement individually designed community-based vocational programs.
3. Transport students on and off school grounds, in conformance with local district and state educational agency transportation policies.
4. Provide instruction and support in the following skill areas: leisure/recreation, social development, self-determination, community mobility, and independent living.
5. Facilitate and support student involvement in decision-making.
6. Implement vocational training experiences that sample the range of available job experiences and enhance opportunities for post-school employment, and that are consistent with the Department of Labor regulations.
7. Identify and develop accommodations and natural supports in the work environment for students.
8. Negotiate with employers vocational, evaluation, and training sites that sample the range of available job experiences.

9. Under the direction of a professional educator, utilize transition related assessment strategies and provide instructional teams with relevant information regarding the development of transition-related goals and objectives.
10. Access needed information on community resources available to transitioning students with disabilities and their families.

Importance of Administrator-Teacher-Paraeducator Teamwork

*(From the Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute
training program for paraeducators)*

**Paraeducator knowledge & skills + Supportive working environment =
Satisfied, effective paraeducator & improved student learning**

- Teamwork is required for paraeducators to be as effective as possible
- Administrators' teamwork responsibilities:
 - ❑ Support & guidance for the paraeducator role at the school and district level
 - ❑ Conduct Needs Assessments
 - ❑ Hire & train employees based on Needs Assessments
 - ❑ Provide a job orientation, including a written job description, introductions to key personnel, & a handbook with school policy information
 - ❑ Set & enforce "best practice" guidelines for teacher supervision of paraeducators
 - ❑ Evaluate teachers' supervision of paras
- Teachers' teamwork responsibilities
 - ❑ Classroom-level supervision of paraeducators
 - ❑ Provide a personalized job orientation
 - ❑ Assess & address paras' strengths & weaknesses
 - ❑ Use effective teaching techniques during on-the-job training
 - ❑ Conduct frequent, formal meetings with the para
- Paraeducators' teamwork responsibilities
 - ❑ Take an active role in your success
 - ❑ Show a positive, cooperative attitude about assigned tasks
 - ❑ Seek out training and supervision in conducting new tasks
 - ❑ Participate in frequent meetings with the supervising teacher
 - ❑ Seek information about students and instruction
 - ❑ Provide the teacher with information about students

Use “I Messages” Instead of “You Messages” To Be More ASSERTIVE!

“You Messages” are statements about others that tend to cause problems in communication.

“You Messages” are comments that begin like this:

“You make me so angry when _____”

OR: “You are not being fair when _____.”

There are three problems with “You Messages”:

1. The speaker is denying responsibility for the feeling.
2. The speaker is giving control of his/her feelings to someone else.
3. “You Messages” that express negative emotions can elicit anger, resistance, or other negative responses from the other person (instead of a caring, cooperative, problem-solving response).

“I Messages” promote ownership and control of our emotions and behaviors; they can be used to express all emotions; and, in most circumstances, they can be used to express our feelings and attitudes without seeming to threaten the other person.

“I Messages” have three parts:

1. A feeling/emotion
2. A situation
3. A reason

An “I Message” is stated like this:

“I feel _____ [emotion] when _____ [situation] because
_____ [reason].”

A Law To Protect the Privacy of Student Records

The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA):

- *Protects the privacy of parents & students*
- *Requires that every school district have a written policy, explaining standards for keeping educational records confidential*
- *A school district receiving federal funds may lose those funds if it discloses personally identifiable information in a student's education records without the proper consent*
- *The following rights are automatically granted to parents through FERPA:*
 - *The right to inspect and review school records*
 - *Opportunity for a hearing to challenge records*
 - *Information that could identify the student is strictly controlled*
 - *Parents' written consent is required for the release of information*
 - *Rights are transferred to students after the age of 18*

Those who may access records without explicit written consent of parents:

- *Teachers or other personnel responsible for the design, preparation, and delivery of education and related services*
- *Personnel who are responsible for the health, safety, and welfare of a student*
- *Paraeducators may access educational records through the classroom teacher and administration, as the local school district permits*

Ethical Guidelines for Paraeducators

“Ethics” – showing a high regard for the right of others

Important Ethical Principles for the Paraeducator Role:

- Maintain a respectful demeanor –
 - Behave professionally by remaining calm, using appropriate language, not acting sarcastic, etc.
 - Do this even if the other person (parent, student, teacher) is not!

- Maintain confidentiality –
 - Keep student information private! Don’t speak about it to other professionals (except on a need-to-know basis), to your friends or family, or to (or in front of) students.
 - This principle is easy to violate – be careful!

- Contribute to positive school-community relations –
 - Convey to community members a positive attitude about your school by focusing on its strengths and positive characteristics.
 - Show a good work ethic, that will reflect positively on you and your school.

Resources

Professional Development Opportunities

Training Being Developed at the Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky for Paraeducators Who Work with Students with Disabilities

Recent federal disability legislation has led to important changes that impact the work of paraeducators. Students with disabilities are now participating to a greater degree than ever before in public education settings. There is an increased emphasis on providing adequate training to school staff, particularly paraeducators, who provide much of the support for students with special needs.

In Kentucky, this need for training is being addressed, in part, by a project supported by a State Improvement Grant. It is a five-year grant awarded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services of the U.S. Department of Education. Main activities of the paraeducator training project include the examination of training issues (obstacles, solutions, preferred training formats), the validation of a set of core competencies, and the development of an in-service training program to help meet the competency goals.

The training program that is currently being developed will consist of approximately 20-30 hours of training material that can be provided to small groups on a pre-service or in-service basis. Training material is organized into seven modules that address the following topics: introduction to paraeducator employment issues (roles and responsibilities, communication and problem-solving skills, and ethical issues); supervisory skills for teachers and administrators who work with paraeducators; providing instructional support; behavior management concepts and techniques; information about disabilities; health-related procedures; and additional skills necessary for paraeducators who work as job coaches.

Training techniques include brief lectures, role-plays, worksheets/handouts, discussion, and small group activities. It is estimated that the program will be completed by July 1, 2001. At this point, a series of training sessions will be arranged for staff from local education agencies around the state. These individuals will then be able to provide the training directly to the paraeducators and related staff (supervising teachers and administrators) in their regions.

Books

Sprick, Randy, Garrison, Mickey, and Howard, Lisa. *Para Pro: Supporting the Instructional Process*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

www.sopriswest.com

ISBN #1-56035-309-3

Provides information to paraeducators that will help them function more effectively and successfully when working with students with disabilities. Each chapter provides detailed

and specific “how to” information as well as self-reflection questions, application activities, and peer discussion topics.

Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach. Anna Lou Pickett and Kent Gerlach, Editors. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Provides teachers and related services personnel including physical and occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and administrators with the skills and knowledge necessary to work more effectively with paraeducators in the schools.

Teacher and Paraeducator Roles in Managing Behavior (adapted from the University of Nebraska’s Project PARA)

Both the teacher and paraeducator are important in managing student behavior. Teachers are responsible for making major decisions, creating a positive classroom environment, writing behavior plans, carrying out interventions, and establishing classroom rules and procedures.

Paraeducator roles include demonstrating, explaining, modeling, and reinforcing appropriate behavior. Additional responsibilities often include observing, monitoring, and recording student behaviors in carrying out a particular behavior management plan.

Paraeducators may observe behaviors that the supervising teacher doesn’t see—in the classroom, the lunchroom, the playground, and the halls. It’s the paraeducator’s responsibility to bring any concerns about student behavior to the teacher.

Paraeducators also complement the role of the teacher because they can respond immediately to students, assist in working with smaller groups and individuals, increase monitoring, provide frequent attention, and help prevent problems and deal with them quickly when they arise.

The table below illustrates possible teacher and paraeducator roles in behavior management:

Roles in Planning and Implementation	Paraeducator	Teacher
Establishes classroom rules		X
Establishes class schedules and activities		X
Observes student behavior	X	X
Designs behavior management plans		X
Establishes objectives for student behavior		X
Selects appropriate reinforcers		X
Records and charts student behavior	X	X
Provides consequences according to behavior plan	X	X
Provides praise to student	X	X
Evaluates intervention effectiveness		X
Provides feedback regarding appropriate behavior	X	X

The main thing to remember is that the teacher always makes the decisions regarding which strategies to use with an individual student. Paraeducators should be trained by the teacher on how to use a variety of behavior management strategies including the ones which should be used for students with behavior management plans.

Reasons for Misbehavior

- Students don't know teacher expectations.
- Students are unaware of when/how often they're behaving inappropriately.
- They don't know what appropriate behavior is.
- Student may need attention.
- Students may feel powerless, so they create their own power

Categories of Misbehavior

- Rule violation
- Early stage
- Chronic

Concepts About Correcting

- Be prepared to know how you'll respond
- Have rules
- Know how/when to implement interventions
- Have a repertoire of procedures to deal with misbehavior
- Remember corrections for specific misbehavior are more effective if they address the underlying problems causing the misbehavior

To Be Successful...

- Plan
- Teach expectations
- Be consistent
- Monitor and review

The ABC's of Behavior

A = Antecedent—What preceded or triggered the behavior?
(Develop an understanding of why the behavior occurs.)

B = Behavior—What happened?

C = Consequences—What does the student get out of the behavior?

Examples:

A = Student leans back in chair.

B = Student falls over backward.

C = Peers laugh and student gains attention, or student is injured.

A = Student is having difficulty reading fluently.

B = Student refuses to read and gets angry and throws book.

C = Staff assist and encourage student, provide alternative reading strategies, or student is sent to the office for discipline.

Principles of Motivation/Reinforcement

Intrinsic motivation:

Engaging in a behavior and the pleasant consequence that occur during and/or after the behavior are *related* to the essential nature of behavior. They like “it” (the behavior).

Extrinsic motivation:

Engaging in a behavior due to pleasant consequences occurring during and/or after the behavior that are *not related* to the essential nature of the behavior. They like (the reward) for the behavior.

Things to remember:

- Reward the desired behavior immediately or as soon as possible after occurrence.
- Tell the student what was done well.
- Be aware of the child’s behavior to determine if the motivation/reinforcer increased the desired behavior or not.
- Educators need to know the child with whom they are working to appropriately choose a motivator or positive reinforcer.
- Behavior that brings rewards will be repeated.
- Behavior that is repeated becomes habitual.

Motivation/Reinforcement

Definition of reinforcement:

An action or event that will increase the chances of the future recurrence of the behavior it follows.

- **Positive reinforcement**—increases or encourages behavior
- **Negative reinforcement**—decreases a behavior
- **Shaping reinforcement**—rewards each successive approximation of the behavior desired. A behavior is set up in small steps and the accomplishment of each step is rewarded rather than waiting until the entire task is completed correctly.

Types of Reinforcers:

Tangible or material reinforcers

- Food
- Sports cards
- Posters
- Performing a class job

Token reinforcers (can be traded in later for tangible reinforcers)

- Tokens
- Points
- Checkmarks

Social reinforcers

- Praise
- A pat on the back
- Thumbs up

Always pair other reinforcers with social reinforcers. Eventually, when the behavior is stable, you will fade the other reinforcer and keep the social reinforcer. This may increase the intrinsic reinforcement.

When Using Praise as a Reinforcer

Praise needs to be specific.

- Specific praise allows students to know what they did well so they can repeat the behavior, i.e. “You did a good job of waiting your turn to talk. You did not interrupt anyone during the discussion.”
- Specific praise sounds more genuine rather than a pattern—“Your paper is very neat and easy to read” versus “good job.”
- Specific praise lends itself to generalization from one learning environment to another.

Smart Start Interactions

Positive/Descriptive Messages	Negative, Cloudy Messages
“In your seat, with quiet feet.”	“Don’t get out of your seat.”
“Keep hands and feet to yourself.”	“No hitting or kicking.”
“Your assignment is due before you go to recess.”	“You need to hurry up and do better.”
“Use kind, encouraging words.”	“You aren’t supposed to be doing that now!”
“Be in your seat, ready to work, when the bell rings.”	“What is it you need to be doing right now?”
“Raise your hand and wait to be called on.”	“No talking without raising your hand.”
“Use walking feet when you are in the building.”	“Don’t run!”

How To Manage Behavior When It Occurs

Paraeducator is <i>assisting the teacher.</i>	Paraeducator is <i>teaching a small group.</i>
	Ignore behavior in some cases.
Use non-verbal communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity • Touch • Eye contact • Gestures 	Use non-verbal communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity • Touch • Eye contact • Gestures
	Give redirective to group.
	Praise students who make appropriate choice.
Give private, quiet redirective.	Give private, quiet redirective.
	Give choice involving a consequence.

Ignore behaviors

Criteria for ignoring behaviors: Ask yourself

- Can you teach?
- Can the student learn?
- Can his/her classmates learn?
- Is the behavior not likely to escalate?

Use nonverbal communication

- Proximity (standing near a student)
- Touch (touch student's back, then move away)
- Eye contact
- Gestures (i.e., fingers to lips, nods)

Use verbal communication

- Tell the entire class/group what you expect.
- Give private, quiet redirective to student
 - talk to the student privately or create an “illusion of privacy”
 - quietly tell student what you expect
 - say, “thank you”
 - move your attention away from student
- If necessary, give a choice involving a consequence
- Consequences must be discussed and sanctioned by the supervising teacher ahead of time.

Be non-intrusive—do not interfere with instruction.

To insure student’s understanding of teacher directions:

1. Pause/acknowledge
2. Prompt the student non-verbally
3. Reinforce students
4. Be non-intrusive

Ethical Considerations in Behavior Management

Behavior management should be viewed as an opportunity for teaching and not an opportunity for punishment.

1. Avoid embarrassing students and offer suggestions in private in the form of constructive criticism.
2. Never engage in a power struggle. Strive for win/win.
3. Don't touch students who are upset, and don't hesitate to get help from another teacher if you need it.
4. Keep your supervising teacher informed about students' behavior, and make sure your records are objective and free of emotion. If a student does not appear to respond to a particular strategy, share this information with the teacher so that the behavior management plan may be modified.

Statewide School Goals

Understanding the values and priorities for the education of all Kentucky students will provide insight into the educational programs and practices occurring in your school.

1. Schools shall expect a high level of achievement of all students.
2. Schools shall develop their students' abilities to:
 - a) Use basic communication and mathematics skills for purposes and situations they will encounter in their lives;
 - b) Apply core concepts and principles from arts and humanities, English/language arts, health, mathematics, physical education, science, and social studies to situations they will encounter throughout their lives;
 - c) Become self-sufficient individuals
 - d) Become responsible members of a family, work group, or community including demonstrating effectiveness in community service;
 - e) Think and solve problems in school situations and in a variety of situations they will encounter in life; and
 - f) Connect and integrate experiences and new knowledge from all subject matter fields with what they have previously learned and build on past learning experiences to acquire new information through various media sources.
3. Schools shall increase their students' rates of school attendance.
4. Schools shall reduce their students' dropout and retention rates.
5. Schools shall reduce physical and mental health barriers to learning.
6. Schools shall be measured on the proportion of students who make a successful transition to work, post-secondary education, and the military.

The Individual Education Program (IEP)

Federal and state laws require that each student who receives special education services must have an IEP. The purpose of an IEP is to ensure that a student is provided with the educational programming and supports that he or she needs in order to learn to live, work, and play in the community. The key goal is *integration* with appropriate *support*. This means that planned activities should take place in the same settings that are used by other students of the same chronological age. At the same time, students with disabilities may need special assistance and modified activities. Therefore, planned support for educational activities should be provided so that the individual may have a successful experience in general education classrooms and programs.

IEPs should clearly state the following:

- 1) Personal information about the student (name, birthday, parents' names, primary language, etc.)
- 2) Results of the evaluation that led to the Special Education placement (standardized test scores and testing dates)
- 3) A statement of the student's present level of educational performance and how his or her disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum
- 4) Strengths of the student and his or her environment
- 5) Areas in which the student needs special assistance
- 6) Major, long-term educational and other goals in the student's life
- 7) Measurable short-term objectives that will help the student reach the long-term goals
- 8) Individuals in the school or family who are responsible for assisting the student in successfully completing the objectives
- 9) Special services (instructional resources, materials, and/or equipment) that the student needs
- 10) Exactly how the student will take part in the general school program, and an explanation of the extent of non-participation with peers without disabilities
- 11) Beginning and ending dates for special education services
- 12) How, when, and by whom the plan will be re-evaluated

IEP Team Members

The exact composition of the Admissions and Release Committee depends on the specific student and the nature of his or her disability.

The IEP team includes both general and special education teachers, important family members, specialists, a representative of the school district who is qualified to commit resources, and possibly also the student. If the primary language of the student or his or her family is not English and they communicate most easily in the primary language of the student, the school district is required to have an interpreter present at IEP meetings. This includes an interpreter for people who are deaf. “Specialists” involved in the IEP team may include physical, occupational, and speech therapists, recreational personnel, medical personnel.

Supporting Teachers' Instruction

There are probably many times when the teacher will need to be the primary person providing the direct instruction to students. During these times, there is much that the paraeducator can do to assist or facilitate the teacher's instruction.

Paraeducators can support teacher's instruction by:

1. Reviewing the lesson plan

The format of a lesson plan may vary from teacher to teacher, but most effective lesson plans include the following general components:

- a) A statement of the objective
- b) An outline of the activities and a description of specific instructional procedures to be used
- c) A list of materials and equipment needed
- d) A plan for reinforcement
- e) Procedures for evaluating student performance and record keeping

2. Preparing materials

The teacher may ask you to help by preparing materials for the lesson. This may include adapted materials for students with disabilities.

These are the things you can do to directly facilitate the students in learning the material the teacher is presenting:

3. Modeling appropriate behavior

Model the behaviors that will help make it easier for the student to learn:

- a) Stand at the side of the class, facing the teacher
- b) Show attentiveness to the teacher and the lesson
- c) Assist the teacher by modeling appropriate responses, if asked.

4. Assist with behavior management

5. Plan for follow-up instruction

If your role in a given lesson is simply to observe, you may want to take notes so that you can use the same words and strategies if you're asked to do any follow-up instruction on that lesson later

Assessing Student Performance

“Assessing student performance” means gathering information about a student and making a determination about him or her. There should always be a specific reason that an assessment is done, and the reasons should be directly related to the individual’s life and educational goals.

As you can see, then, assessment is very important to the educational process. Let’s look at the main types of assessment that paraeducators may be involved in.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are always given in the same way, using the same instructions, and materials, and the same scoring methods. Formal standardized tests, such as IQ tests, are done by someone who is highly trained and experienced with the test, such as the school psychologist. For less formal testing situations, for example teacher-developed standardized tests they give repeatedly, paraeducators can be primarily responsible for the activity, as long as the teacher shows them exactly how to give the test and the paraeducator appreciates the importance of keeping the method of administering the test as consistent as possible.

Behavioral Checklists

Behavioral checklists categorize and list specific behaviors, often in specific developmental areas, such as fine motor, cognitive, language, gross motor, etc. Specific behaviors are listed in the sequence in which they occur in a typical development pattern. The person completing the checklist simply checks off whether or not the student is able to perform that specific behavior.

Other professionals who work with a student, such as psychologists and physicians, may request a behavioral checklist be completed on a student so that they may understand the student better and determine the best course of treatment. If a teacher is asked to complete a behavioral checklist, he or she may consult with the paraeducator who works closely with the student.

Direct Observation

Another way to gather information about students is to observe them and record information about your observations in a systematic fashion. The written information that reflects what you observed is called “data,” and it can be used to assist with instructional decisions about the student. Often, this type of observational data provides important information that other tests don’t measure.

Teachers determine what behavior is to be observed, and what method of recording will be used. *Paraeducators* are often involved in the process of actually gathering the data.

There are three main characteristics of good observation data:

- First, the observations need to be reliable. In order to gather reliable data, you must keep your observations objective. Object observation means watching and recording:
 - a) Events without being affected by person biases/prejudices

- b) What is happening without guessing at the reasons that cause the action
- c) Without judging whether it is good or bad
- d) Only behaviors that are observable and measurable.
 - Example of behavior that **IS** observable and measurable: “Frank hit John on the arm twice within five minutes.”
 - Example of behavior that **IS NOT** observable and measurable: “Annie was being her usual schizophrenic self this morning.”
- Second, good observation data is data that has been collected across different times and different settings. For example, it is more helpful to know how often Frank is physically aggressive in different classes over the course of several days or weeks, than it is to know how often he hit others in one class on any one given day.
- Third, it is important that the data observation system be a manageable addition to the paraeducator’s general workload. The data observation sheet should be as simple as possible, and the observations must not interfere with the normal classroom activities.

Methods of Recording Direct Observational Data

- **Narrative form**
This is also called an “anecdotal” record. It means writing your observations in the form of sentences. It is appropriate for behavior that is unusual. For example, it could be appropriate to make a narrative or anecdotal record of an incident involving extreme anger and physical aggression from a student who is usually calm and agreeable.
- **Frequency count**
This means keeping track of the number of times a specific behavior occurs within a specific period of time. Frequency counts are useful for recording behaviors that have a clear beginning and end that last about the same amount of time each time they occur. You simply tally the number of times the target behavior occurred during the observation period.
- **Duration**
This method gives information about how long a given behavior lasts. You record the starting and ending time of the behavior, then compute the length of time taken for the behavior. Duration recording is more appropriate for behaviors that vary in time, as opposed to ones which last the same amount of time each time they occur. An example of duration recording could be for a student who has crying episodes in class. Every time the student cries in class, you would record the beginning and ending times, and then calculate the duration of the crying episode.

Curriculum-Based Assessment

Curriculum-based assessment means administering “mini-tests” to a student on a regular basis to gather information about the student’s progress with the curriculum. This information is used to monitor how well the student is learning the content of the curriculum, to identify particular problems the student may be having with the material, and to design interventions to help the student with those difficulties. It is time consuming because it is individualized and on-going, but it is a critical part of good instruction for students with disabilities (especially those with learning problems).

The mini-tests used for curriculum-based assessment must require the student to produce original responses (as opposed to true/false or multiple choice). This enables the teacher to not only calculate the percent of items the student got correct, but also to examine the student’s thinking processes as he or she worked through the test. These assessments identify patterns that can help the teacher know what to re-teach, and give the teacher insight into the types of strategies to use when re-teaching.

It is often very motivating for a student if you involve him or her in charting and monitoring his or her progress. The teacher is responsible for establishing a system of curriculum-based assessment, but the paraeducator may be trained in how to administer and score the mini-tests.

Supporting Instruction in Content-Area Classes

Paraeducators can help carry out and support interventions the teacher designs. Examples include:

- highlighting textbooks
- being or training a class note taker
- maintaining a class notebook with assignments, handouts, materials, etc.
- preparing adapted materials for students
- prompting students to make correct responses
- training a peer partner to assist the student
- providing follow-up instruction

During follow-up instruction, the paraeducator can:

- Provide additional instruction
- Follow the basic format of effective instruction: 1) I Do It. 2) We Do It. 3) You Do It.

During small group instruction, the paraeducator can:

- Use effective instruction.
- Gain students' attention
- Review necessary pre-skills
- State goal of the lesson
- “I Do It. We Do It. You Do It.”
- Review the critical lesson content
- State the content of the next lesson
- Assign independent work.

Checklist for Preparing for Small Group Instruction

- Have I reviewed the lesson plan?
- Do I feel adequately prepared to use the instructional techniques?
- Do I know how to begin the lesson?
- Do I know what to do when the students respond appropriately?
- Do I know how to handle inappropriate responses?
- Am I prepared for off-task student behavior?
- Do I understand the recording procedure?
- Do I have the materials ready?
- Do I know how to use the materials?
- Do I have the teaching area arranged efficiently?
- Is the teaching area comfortable for the students and myself?
- Do I know how to conclude the lesson?

It is important for the paraeducator to consult the teacher about the anything they do not thoroughly understand.

After the lesson:

- Have I recorded behavioral observations about the student(s)?
- Have I completed the record of the students' performance?
- Am I ready to evaluate the session with my teacher/supervisor?

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations do not alter the curriculum.

They are supports or services provided to help a student access the curriculum and validly demonstrate learning.

What are accommodations?

An accommodation is an adaptation that result in the student with a disability accomplishing the same goals and objectives as the non-disabled students, and does not fundamentally alter the general education program.

An accommodation...

changes the conditions by which a student with a disability accomplishes the same task as the non-disabled student.

Accommodations...

are used to minimize the impact of a disability and circumvent deficiencies in specific academic areas.

Examples:

Oral testing
Hearing aids
Using a calculator
Preferential seating

Modifications alter the curriculum.

Modifications change the content and performance expectations for what a student should learn.

What are modifications?

A modification is an adaptation that results in the student with a disability accomplishing different goals and objectives as non-disabled students and fundamentally alters the general education program.

A modification...

alters the task in a way that the student is able to accomplish a different, perhaps related task assigned to the non-disabled peers.

Modifications...

are used to remediate deficiencies in specific academic areas by bringing the goals and objectives of the curriculum in closer alignment with a student's present levels of educational performance.

Examples:

Using an alternative set of spelling words
Reading with instructional level materials rather than grade level materials
Learning addition with manipulatives rather than long division with peers

Paraeducator's role with modifications and accommodations:

- Participate in on-going communication with teacher before making any changes in student's instruction
- Clarify modifications with teacher before class, not in front of students or peers
- Communicate modifications or accommodations to the student in private
- Establish on-going modifications or accommodations (e.g., the student always completes the off items in math, the student always writes phrase answers rather than sentences) with the teacher.
- Paraeducators should check with the supervising teacher to discuss ideas before making any changes in student's instruction.

Providing Direct Instruction with Training and Guidance from the Teacher

Paraeducators help to increase the opportunities for students to master both academic and non-academic skills by providing one-on-one instruction that has been developed by a teacher to meet the specific education needs of a student.

Systematic Instructional Procedures

Special education teachers use many concepts and procedures to teach functional, academic, and social skills to students with moderate to severe disabilities. Listed below are a few of the most commonly-used concepts and procedures. If a paraeducator's supervising teacher frequently uses other techniques, he or she will need on-the-job training in the use of these techniques. Included in the discussion below are discrete and chained tasks, task analysis, and prompting procedures (a system of least prompts and constant time delay).

Discrete vs. Chained Tasks

When designing systematic instruction, one thing the teacher must determine is whether he/she is trying to teach the student a "discrete" or a "chained" task. Discrete tasks are ones that require the learner to make a single response. Examples include reading words, matching prices to coins, and indicating a preferred activity by pointing to a picture of the activity. In contrast, chained tasks are tasks that require the learner to make two or more separate, yet sequential, responses. Examples include hand washing, making a bed, and cooking. Discrete tasks may be taught separately (e.g., counting, labeling coins) or taught as a step within a larger, chained task (e.g., counting coins before putting them in a vending machine to buy a snack).

For chained tasks, the teacher must perform a *task analysis* before proceeding with instruction. A task analysis means generating a list of all the steps a student needs to do in order to complete the task. In order to create the list, the teacher might observe other students complete the task, talk with experts, or complete the task him or herself, to make sure he/she knows what all is involved in performing the skill. Talking to an expert might be important when teaching skills for use in a specific environment. For example, for a student who wants to get a job as a housekeeper at a hotel, the task analysis should reflect how the task is performed with the materials in that setting.

Prompts

Prompts are often involved in instruction. There are generally seven categories of prompts:

6. *Independent prompt* – verbal or written command to perform an *entire* task

7. *Verbal prompt* – verbal or written command to perform *a step* within the task
8. *Pictorial prompt* – picture or drawing of a step within the task
9. *Gestural prompt* – movement that directs a student’s attention toward an object or act that constitutes a step in the task
10. *Model prompt* – a demonstration of the desired behavior for that step
11. *Partial physical prompt* – brief touching, tapping, or nudging to help the student perform that step in the task
12. *Full physical prompt* – full physical guidance **WITHOUT** force to help the student perform the step in the task

You can see that these prompt categories are arranged from least to most intrusive or controlling. (That is, it allows a student more autonomy to use a verbal prompt than a partial or full physical prompt.) Even though physical prompts are more “intrusive”, they are sometimes necessary. It’s the teacher’s job to consider the pros and cons of each type of prompt and to consider the individual needs of a student when deciding which prompt(s) to use in a given situation.

Prompts can be used *singularly* (that is, just using one type of prompt with a student), *in combination* (using more than one type), or as part of a *system*. Many different types of “prompting systems” are used to teach students with disabilities. They are used because they have been shown to be effective teaching strategies and because they minimize the number of errors students make when learning a new skill.

System of Least Prompts

The system of least prompts is a technique for teaching that involves initially low levels of student assistance and increasing the degree of assistance, as needed. The teacher decides how the system is established (i.e., the task to be taught, which prompts to include in the prompt hierarchy, the length of time that will be used between prompts, and the reinforcer that will be used). A simplified prompt hierarchy that many teachers use is: verbal, model, partial physical, full physical. The teacher performs a task analysis if it is a chained task and arranges the prompts in a hierarchy from least intrusive or controlling to most intrusive or controlling.

During an instructional session, the student is first asked to perform the task. (Eventually, this command alone should lead the student to perform all the steps in the task. But before the task is learned, it will take repetition of the command, along with the system of prompts and reinforcement, to help the student through the process.) The teacher or paraeducator waits the specified length of time (for example, 5 seconds). If the student performs the first step of the task correctly within that time, the instructor provides reinforcement. If the student makes an error or has no response, the first prompt in the hierarchy is given and then the instructor waits the specified period of time. If the student performs the step correctly within this time, the instructor provides reinforcement. If the student makes an error or has no response, the next prompt in the

hierarchy is given and the wait-period is provided. This continues up through the last level of prompt, if necessary. Once the student has completed the first step in the task analysis, he/she has the opportunity to perform the second step in the task analysis. The instructor waits the specified length of time, giving the student the opportunity to perform Step 2 independently (without any prompting). If the student does not perform the step within the time interval (e.g., 5 seconds), the first prompt is given. The same procedures for working through the prompt hierarchy (from least to most intrusive) are used with each step in the task analysis until the entire task is completed.

Here is an example of how the system of least prompts could be used. For some students, learning self-care tasks is a high priority. A system of least prompts could be used in the following way to teach *hair-washing*, for example:

Student: Jerry

Teacher: Ms. Sorenson

Task Analysis:

1. Gather materials
2. Go to sink
3. Turn on water
4. Wet hair
5. Open shampoo bottle
6. Squeeze shampoo into hand
7. Rub shampoo into hair
8. Rinse hair
9. Turn off water
10. Towel-dry hair
11. Put shampoo bottle away

Prompt hierarchy selected for this student:

1. Verbal
2. Partial physical
3. Full physical

Wait period selected – 5 seconds

Reinforcement selected – verbal praise and a pat on the back

In an instructional session with a student named Jerry, the teacher, Ms. Sorenson, would start out by guiding Jerry to the bathroom and giving the task command “Jerry, wash your hair.” The teacher would then start counting silently to five, giving the student up to five seconds to begin performing the first step in the process correctly. If Jerry does begin to gather the materials within five seconds, Ms. Sorenson would provide verbal praise by saying “Good job!” and would pat Jerry on the back. The teacher would then begin counting to five silently, to give Jerry the chance to begin the second step in the process by himself. If he goes to the sink within five seconds, Ms. Sorenson says “Yes, that’s right!” and pats Jerry on the back. Again, she waits for up to five seconds for Jerry to initiate the next step in the process.

If at any point in the process, Jerry responds incorrectly or does not begin the next step within the five-second time period, Ms. Sorenson simply begins moving down the hierarchy of prompt types. For example, she will start with a verbal prompt (e.g., “Jerry, go to the sink”). If Jerry has no response or an incorrect response in the five-second wait period following this first prompt in the hierarchy, then Ms. Sorenson would use a partial physical prompt simultaneously with the verbal prompt (physical prompts should always be accompanied by a verbal prompt). A partial physical prompt for Step 3 (“turn on the water”) might be a gentle nudging of Jerry’s arm in the direction of the water faucet. At the same time that Ms. Sorenson provides this partial physical prompt, she states, “Jerry, turn on the water.” If five seconds pass and there is still no correct response, Ms. Sorenson should provide a full physical prompt, by placing her hand over Jerry’s hand and guiding it to the faucet and turning the faucet on, using his hand. Full physical prompts are not done with force. If the student resists the paraeducator’s guidance, the paraeducator should discontinue the prompt and inform the teacher.

Constant Time Delay

This is another instructional procedure that can also be used with either discrete or chained tasks. Again, the supervising teacher is responsible for deciding how to set up this prompt system. The teacher must decide what prompts to use, how long the delay period will be, how many trials there will be, what reinforcement techniques to use, and what data collection system to use. These decisions are based on the strengths and skills of the individual student, as well as on the nature of the task being taught.

Basically, constant time delay has two phases or parts. The first phase involves giving a command or asking a question and immediately ensuring that the student answers or performs the task. These are called “zero-second trials” and teachers or paraeducators do several of them in a row during the first phase of constant time delay. For example, when working on picture identification with a student, the para might ask, “What’s this?” He or she immediately answers the question and the student repeats the answer. After doing this a specified number of times, the para moves into phase two of constant time delay. In this phase, the para waits a specific number of seconds (for example, four seconds) between the time that he or she asked the initial question and the time when the prompt is provided that ensures the student will answer correctly. The paraeducator or teacher does this as many times as necessary for the student to learn the task or

answer. Initially, reinforcement is provided for all correct answers; as learning occurs, however, the paraeducator gradually changes the reinforcement schedule so that the student is only reinforced for correct unprompted responses. You provide reinforcement for all correct answers initially; as learning occurs, however, you gradually change the reinforcement schedule so that the student is only reinforced for correct unprompted responses.

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