Paraprofessional Collaboration Toolkit

Practical Strategies for Alignment, Communication, and Maximizing Student Support

Purpose & Importance

Paraprofessionals are essential partners in supporting students with disabilities. Effective collaboration between special educators and paraprofessionals ensures consistency, reinforces instructional goals, and improves student outcomes. This toolkit provides clear role definitions, communication strategies, and actionable tools for maximizing collaboration.

Clarifying Roles

Task	Special Educator Role	Paraprofessional Role
Delivering Instruction	Plans and designs lessons, adapts materials, models strategies.	Implements instruction as directed, provides feedback on student performance.
Behavior Support	Conducts FBA, designs behavior plans, trains para on strategies.	Implements strategies consistently, collects behavior data.
Data Collection	Determines what data to collect, develops collection tools.	Records data accurately and promptly using provided tools.
Family Communication	Leads communication with families, provides progress updates.	Shares relevant observations with teacher to inform family updates.
Accommodations & Modifications	Determines appropriate supports, trains para in their use.	Ensures accommodations are provided as directed.

Collaborative Communication Systems

• Daily brief check-ins before or after school to align on priorities.

• Use a shared notebook or digital tool (e.g., Google Doc) for updates.

• Clarify preferred communication method(s) for urgent issues during the day.

• Schedule weekly or biweekly collaboration meetings.

Aligning on Goals & Strategies

Paraprofessionals should always know the key IEP, academic, and/or behavioral goals for the students they support. Linking daily actions to these goals ensures that support is purposeful and progress is measurable:

• Review IEP goals together and discuss how they translate into daily practice.

• Highlight priority skills or behaviors to target each week.

• Share progress data regularly to adjust strategies.

Maximizing Effectiveness in Different Settings

Inclusion/Classroom Support

• Circulate to check in with multiple students as appropriate.

• Use proximity and subtle prompts to support engagement.

• Assist with accommodations without drawing unnecessary attention.

Pull-Out or Small Group Support

• Follow lesson plans provided by the special educator.

• Maintain a brisk pace while ensuring comprehension.

• Track progress on targeted skills for each student.

Professional Boundaries & Expectations

• Stay within the scope of assigned responsibilities while showing initiative.

• Avoid making instructional or program changes without teacher input.

• Maintain confidentiality of student information at all times.

• Seek clarification when unsure about instructions or expectations.

Quick Reference: Do's & Don'ts

Do	Don't
Ask clarifying questions when unsure	Ignore data collection responsibilities
Offer feedback on strategies that seem effective	Contradict teacher instructions in front of students
Model patience and positivity with students	Share student information with unauthorized individuals

Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

• Schedule a 5-minute check-in with your para/teacher partner before the day starts.

• Review one IEP goal together and decide how to support it in class.

• Identify one new strategy to try together and collect data on its impact.

Collaboration Planning Template

Use this template to align roles, strategies, and communication plans.

Student(s) Supported	*[List names or initials]*
Priority Goals This Week	*[List academic/behavioral/IEP goals]*
Strategies/Accommodations to Use	*[List strategies/accommodations]*
Data Collection Plan	*[Specify what, how, and when to collect data]*
Communication Method & Frequency	*[E.g., daily check-in, shared doc, weekly meeting]*