**The Role of a Paraprofessional in Special Education**

A Paraprofessional is an integral team player that assists with providing support to students with special needs. According to a Special Education Para Educator job description in the Blue Valley School District, Overland Park, Kansas, the paraprofessional collaborates with Special Education and General Education teachers and staff to provide supervision, personal care, social and instructional support as related to a student’s IEP and related behavior plans. Paraprofessionals work in the general education classroom, resource room, or self-contained classroom within a school. Under the direction of the Special Educator and Classroom Teacher, the Para will assist in implementing plans for instruction and provide modifications and accommodations, as listed on an IEP, that facilitate the special education student’s participation in classroom activities. The Para will also monitor and assist with student behavior, and employ CPI when necessary. Critical information and feedback about the student is provided by the Para to the teachers, so that adjustments in instructional or behavioral plans can be made. The Para also manages instructional materials necessary to support the student, and maintains records that teachers will use in reporting progress. Paraprofessionals attend building meetings, special education meetings, and in-service training in addition to their daily responsibilities. A small amount of a Para’s day may also be spent doing clerical activities such as making copies, preparing instructional materials, etc. The role of the Paraprofessional is critical to the successful implementation of individualized educational plans for special education students. You may see Paraprofessionals in your classrooms or buildings implementing the following functions of their very important role in education (McVay, 1998):

* Managing a small instructional group
* Providing personal care for a physical needs student
* Practicing social skills with a student
* Supervising a test taking environment
* Facilitating student communication and relationships
* Coordinating instructional materials
* Collaborating with teachers and staff

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