1:1 Paraeducator FAQ

1. **Why should I be concerned about a student having an assigned 1:1 paraeducator?**

   Every child deserves the opportunity to engage with their learning in a similar manner to their peers. While an extra adult can be helpful in getting things done, it can also be harmful to the student’s learning. Often times when a 1:1 paraeducator is assigned we end up inadvertently:
   - Decreasing opportunities for the student to develop valuable peer relationships
   - Interfering with the student’s learning of how to respond to naturally occurring behavioral, social, and academic cues
   - Limiting the student access to the primary teacher’s instruction
   - Denying the student opportunities to be successful on their own
   - Developing an overreliance on adult help with the student

2. **Some students do end up with a 1:1 paraeducator. What makes one student less deserving of this support than others?**

   Every student is on their own journey and requires supports to be based on their own individual needs. As indicated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), special education and related services to students with disabilities must be provided in the “least restrictive environment.” When an IEP Team is considering adult support for a student, all aspects of the student’s program must be considered with the intent of maximizing student independence. This involves asking if this high level of support is not just beneficial, but required in order for the student to access their learning. If a 1:1 paraeducator is assigned to a student then there is also an accompanying plan to build up the student’s skills so that they will no longer need that support. If some students are already at that level of independence, then that is something to be celebrated.

3. **Are paraeducators not valuable resources in schools?**

   Consistent with what you find in all educators, the people who take on the role of a paraeducator are kind, hard-working, and compassionate professionals. It is not the people, but the actual role itself of a 1:1 paraeducator that can negatively impact a student’s growth behaviorally, academically, and/or socially.

4. **The student I am concerned about is really struggling. Isn’t that good enough reason to get a paraeducator?**

   A paraeducator is a means by which a plan is implemented. If there is no plan then there is no reason for a paraeducator. If the plan is solely to have a paraeducator and there is no other planning, then the school has failed the student. If there is a plan (behavior, social, or academic) and a paraeducator is being considered to support with its implementation, utilization of existing school structures to meet the same needs must be considered first. All students are deserving of being taught in the least restrictive environment with the least intrusive level of supports. If the concern is that the student is not keeping up with the learning of their peers, we must remember that the role of special education is to not help students keep up but rather to keep learning at a rate that is appropriate to them as is identified in their IEP.