

The Role of BCBAs in Schools: How Effective Support Requires an Effective Team

WASA Special Education Preconference
August 2023

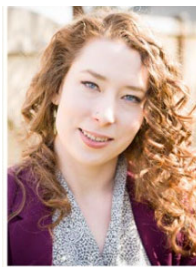


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Today's Presenters



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Vision

All students prepared for postsecondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Mission

Transform K–12 education to a system that is centered on closing opportunity gaps and is **characterized by high expectations for all students and educators.** We achieve this by developing **equity-based policies and supports** that empower educators, families, and communities.

Values



Ensuring Equity



Collaboration and Service



Achieving Excellence through Continuous Improvement



Focus on the Whole Child

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Equity Statement



Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English Learner services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.
- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.



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"...requires education leaders to **examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes** for our students ..."

"...and actively **dismantle systemic barriers**, replacing them with **policies and practices** that ensure **all** students have access to the **instruction** and **support** they need ..."



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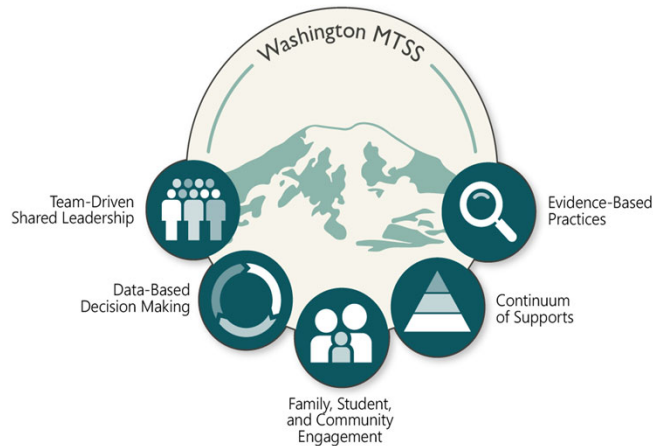
Learning Objectives

In this session, participants will...

- Bust common myths about the inclusion of students with behavior learning needs
- Describe the role of the BCBA and RBT and how to integrate them into school teams
- Learn about how teams can utilize a BCBA's expertise to promote growth for individual students, improve staff use of behavioral systems and supports, and build capacity for positive behavior interventions and supports across the school and/or district

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Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



- is a framework for **enhancing the implementation of evidence-based practices** to achieve important outcomes for every student.
- focuses on **organizing the efforts of adults** within systems to be more effective.
- helps to ensure **students benefit** from nurturing environments and **equitable access to instruction and supports that are differentiated** to meet their unique needs.

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MTSS Continuum of Behavior Supports

Positive behavior support involves instructional practices focused on prevention and teaching key skills, with additional support layered in if needed.

A **few** students will need intensive supports to make progress (for example, direct instruction in social-emotional skills from a school counselor).

Most students make progress with universal supports alone (such as predictable routines, instruction in classroom expectations, and positive recognition for meeting expectations).



Some students need additional targeted supports that can be embedded into routines (for example, a points-based reward system for meeting schoolwide expectations).

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Mythbusting Barriers to Inclusion for Students with Significant Behavior Needs

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Myth #1: Behavior support is separate from general education

"Our school/classroom isn't set up for *kids like this*."

"This teacher *isn't equipped* to work with students like this one."

"This student needs *a separate place* where their behaviors won't disturb others."

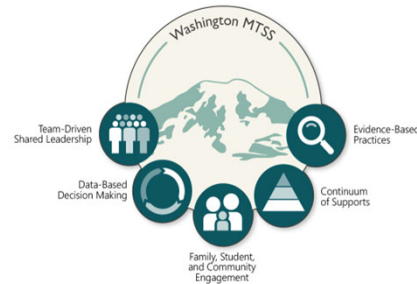


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Busting myth #1: Behavior support across settings benefits everyone

- Every team member has a role in supporting student learning, including learning that relates to behavior
- Intentional teaming, collaboration, coaching, and consultation can build educators' skill and capacity to address student behaviors in general education settings
- All students benefit from strong positive behavior support practices across tiers!



Myth #2: Safety is the most important focus of behavior support practice

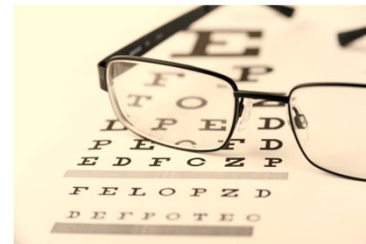
"It's important that everyone understands how unsafe this student is."

"The student *can't be trusted* to be around others until they can *prove* they can be safe on their own."

"Since the student's behaviors are getting worse, we're *restricting their environment* as much as we can."

Busting myth #2: Safety is just one outcome of effective supports

- Best practices in effective behavior support involve:
 - Building communication, social/emotional skills, adaptive skills, etc.
 - Teaching alternative behaviors that meet the same underlying need as an interfering behavior
 - Addressing other possible root causes contributing to interfering behaviors
- When we treat an individual like *they are unsafe*, we can create a self-fulfilling expectation
- Safety is the *result* of effective support, not the actual support itself



Myth #3: Restrictive settings are necessary for “inclusion readiness”

“This student isn’t ready to be around their general education peers.”

“Maybe once the student stops engaging in these behaviors, they can *earn their way back to class*.”

“Inclusion sometimes doesn’t work for *behavior kids*.”

Busting myth #3: All students need practice and experience to learn

- ***Every student is a general education student!***
- Teams should not engage in processes that revolve around a student “proving themselves” or “earning back” their right to access general education settings
- Behavior learning doesn’t happen in isolation – it must occur in the setting in which the skill will be used
- Intentional, manageable, and frequent practice opportunities – designed to result in student success – lay the foundation for continued success in increasingly challenging situations



Myth #4: Behavior support requires *a special person* rather than *a community*

“This student just needs *their person* in order to be successful.”

“Things will be more consistent if there is *just one person implementing*.”

“A 1:1 aide helps keep everyone safer.”

Busting myth #4: It takes a community

- A 1:1 paraeducator cannot replace the need for a *supportive school community* that embraces the student
- Interventions that rely on a single person are destined to fail
- Effective teams avoid the “hero mentality” by layering support so that all team members have a role in behavior support practices

Over-reliance on paraeducators can make things worse for the student:¹

- Reduced interaction and connection with teachers and peers
- Higher risk of experiencing bullying
- Decreased feelings of belonging in the school community
- Increases in interfering behavior



Read more here:

- [Appendix A: Best Practices for Planning Paraeducator Support](#)
- ¹ Giangreco, M. and Hoza, B. (2013). Are Paraprofessional Supports Helpful? *Attention*, 20(4), 22-25.

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Myth #5: A team's work ends when the behavior specialist comes in

“The team can’t be expected to deal with students like this. That’s what the behavior specialist is for!”

“Now that the behavior specialist is here, *they* can help the student and *we* can get back to normal.”

“If only we could clone you!”



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Busting myth #5: A behavior specialist needs a strong team to be effective

- Behavior specialists can be utilized well or poorly
- Without team involvement, the behavior specialist is often asked to provide unsustainable (and constantly expanding) levels of support
- When behavior specialists can spend their time efficiently, they can facilitate improved behavior support across an entire district



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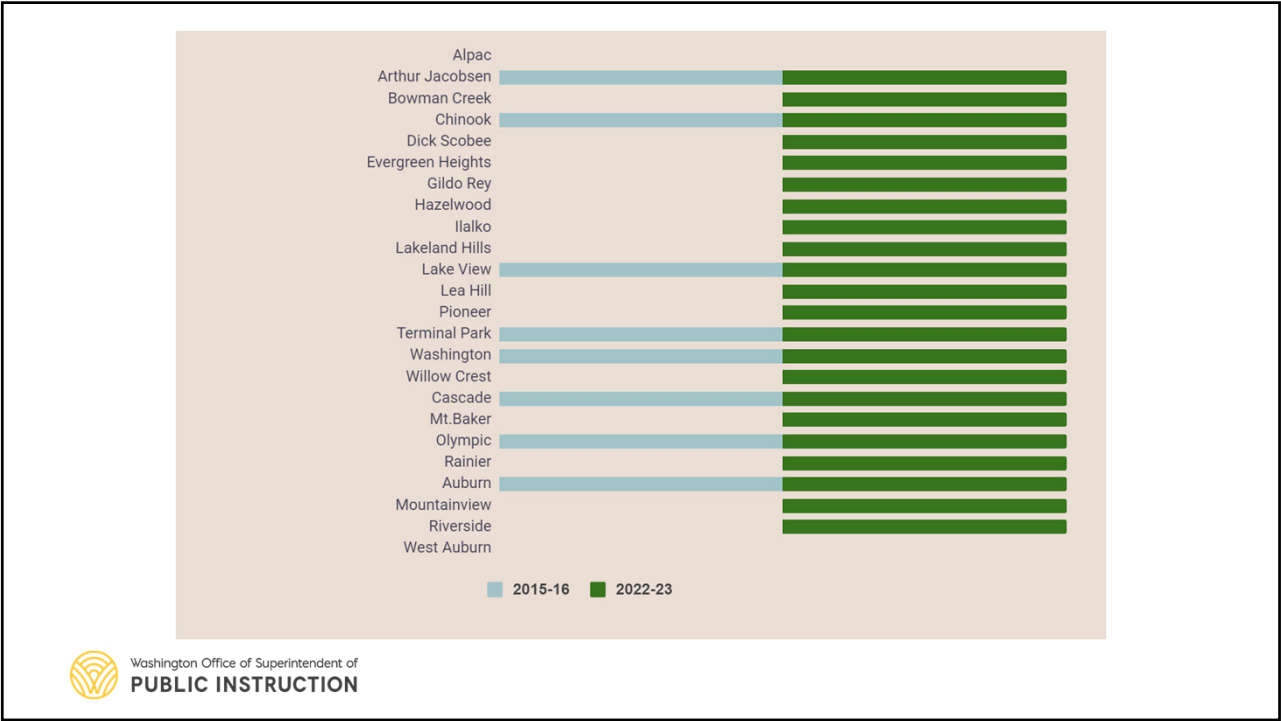


BCBA Collaboration In Action in the Auburn School District

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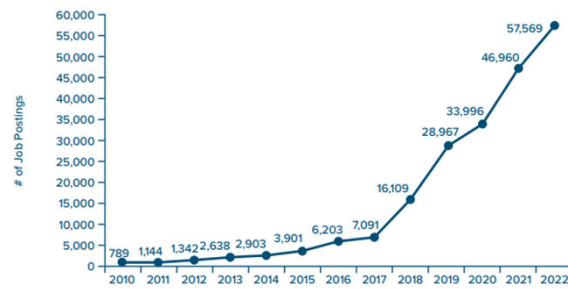
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What is a BCBA?

- The Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) is a graduate-level certification in behavior analysis.
- Professionals certified at the BCBA level are independent practitioners who provide behavior-analytic services.



US Employment Demand for Behavior Analysts- BACB

Typical responsibilities of BCBAs in schools

- Observes individuals and the environment
- Conducts assessments, interviews, reviews records
- Uses data to develop behavior programming that aims to decrease maladaptive behaviors and increase functional behaviors to get needs met
- Supervises Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs)
- Trains and supports staff to implement designed interventions with fidelity
- Prioritizes positive behavior supports
- Collaborates with team members
- Three models: Consult vs Supervision vs Direct Service
- Adheres to BACB ethical guidelines
 - We have limitations - can cost us our certification



What BCBA's don't do

- Create curriculum
- Case manage IEPs
- Practice outside their scope
- Create behavior change programs *until* physical/mental health issues potentially impacting behavior can be ruled out
- Magically identify life altering recommendations for a student after just one short observation

The miracle you are seeking that will change your student's behavior will only be found in your mirror.

What is a behavior technician?

- The Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) is a paraprofessional certification in behavior analysis. RBTs assist in delivering behavior-analytic services and practice under the direction and close supervision of an RBT Supervisor and/or an RBT Requirements Coordinator, who is responsible for all work an RBT performs.



Registered Behavior Technicians

What They Do

- Follows plan with BCBA oversight
- Takes data
- Supports classified staff
- Supports student with teacher-provided curriculum

What They Don't Do

- Create curriculum
- Make changes to behavior plans or programming
- Provide ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) interventions for students they aren't assigned to
- Have direct conversations about student details with parents/staff



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When is an RBT used? (Example)

In the Auburn School District:

- A Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) may be utilized if the IEP team determines that the student requires services from an adult who is formally trained in ABA and who is directly supervised by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) due to the student's complex behavior support needs.
- Further, the students' needs, as outlined in the IEP, are ones that require greater behavioral expertise than what school staff can currently provide.
- Typically, factors such as physical aggression, the need for graphing progress, or implementing behavior analytic interventions in isolation are not reason enough to necessitate a 1:1 RBT.



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Supplement, not supplant



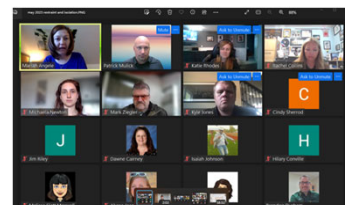
It's not about giving them a smaller mountain to climb, it's about giving them the hand they need to help get up the same mountain everyone else is climbing.



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It is not just about serving students – it is also about helping to build capacity with staff.

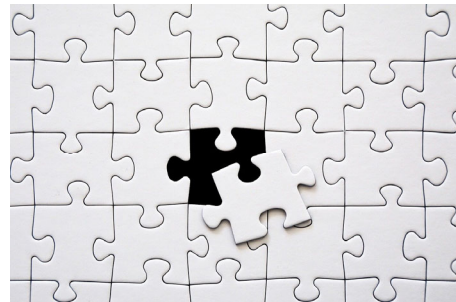
- Systems to address behavior
- Reduction of restraint and isolation
- Model the behavior plan process
- Model innovative interventions
- Model progress monitoring
- Push for inclusion!
- Endless possibilities for PD!



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Other potential benefits of BCBA's in schools

- School staff feeling more supported
- Stronger multi-disciplinary collaboration
- Reduction in staff injuries
- Reduced reliance on self-contained settings and nonpublic agencies (NPAs)
- A greater continuum of services with in-district resources



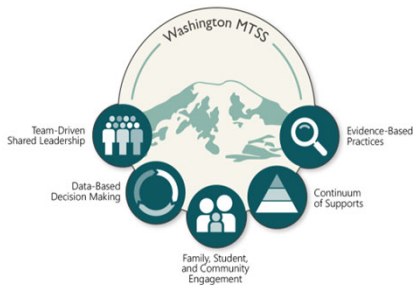
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Providing a student their needed supports does not guarantee that they will succeed, but neglecting to provide them their needed supports does guarantee that they will fail.



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Procedures for BCBA support (Example)



In the Auburn School District:

- The school team has been meeting regularly to plan around the student and design interventions.
- Behaviors are being seen from the student and the team feels that programming that is behavior analytic in nature from someone with more behavioral expertise is required.
- The team is willing to continue to meet regularly and receive feedback from the BCBA, which may include recreating the behavior plan.
- The parent has given consent for BCBA consultation.

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Playing nice in the sandbox

- Schools need to understand the role of the BCBA and what they can expect.
- BCBAs need to understand the varying roles in the schoolhouse, how to best collaborate and how to not step on toes.



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BCBA needs

- An understanding of how the district operates
- Ability to focus on the student being supported
- A good contact in the Maintenance Department
- Time
 - Observations
 - Coaching/Modeling
 - Graphing
 - Program modifications
 - Research for complex cases
 - Supervision of RBTs



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Where it goes wrong with BCBAs in schools

- BCBAs are overloaded
 - Does not get to work on proactive systems
 - May not have time to develop the needed positive relationships
 - Does not have the chance to see the plan all the way through
- Coming in late in the game (after a long pattern of undesired behavior)
- Little buy in from the building staff
 - Can be viewed as a barrier to more restrictive settings and not as support
 - Is not fully integrated as a part of a team in a building

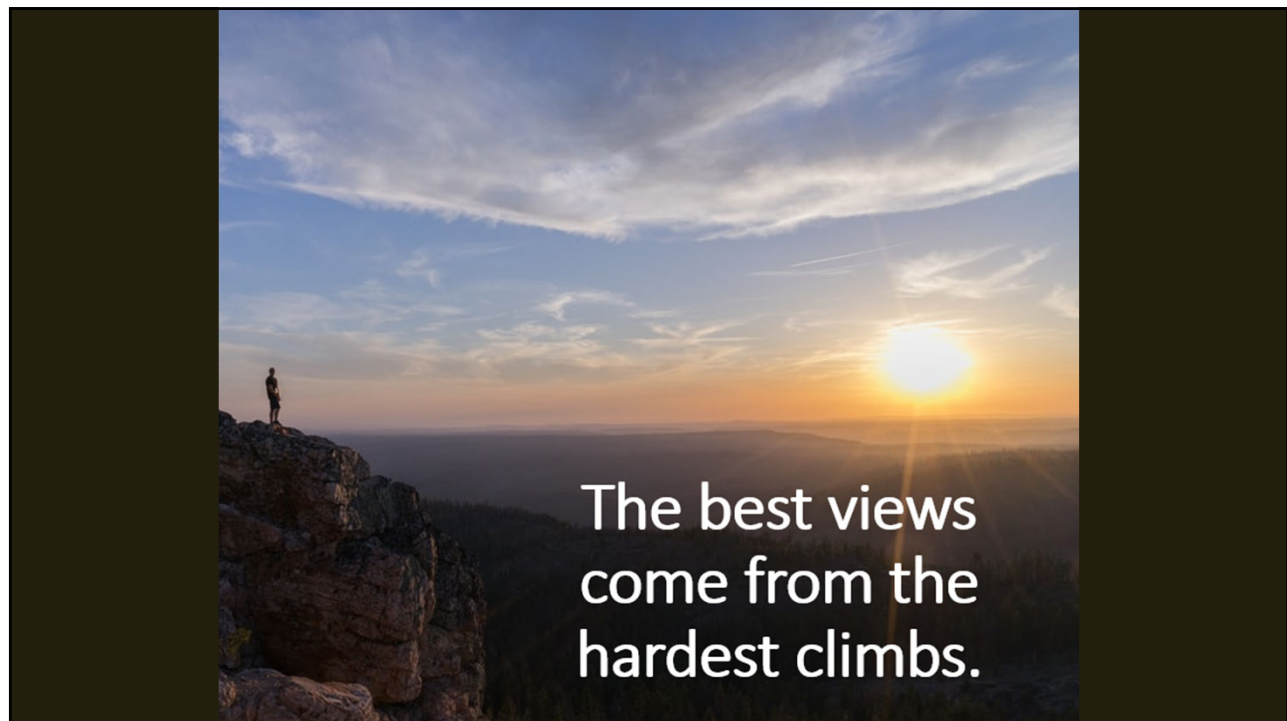
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How it can go right with BCBA's in schools

- District staff understand the scope of practice of the BCBA
- There is a lifeline for BCBA's to reach out to when ethical issues arise
- Collaboration Agreements
 - Provide access to people and records
 - Clear definition of the BCBA's role
 - Clear timeline of tasks to be accomplished and who will do what
 - Clear understanding of the nature and extent of BCBA support for each case



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Learning Objectives Revisited

In this session, participants...

- Busted common myths about the inclusion of students with behavior learning needs
- Described the role of the BCBA and RBT and how to integrate them into school teams
- Learned about how teams can utilize a BCBA's expertise to promote growth for individual students, improve staff use of behavioral systems and supports, and build capacity for positive behavior interventions and supports across the school and/or district

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Questions?



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Resources

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Special education has its fair share of myths and facts about inclusion for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This resource was developed to challenge those myths and highlight the facts of why inclusionary practices work for each and every student.

- MYTH #1: COSTS OF INCLUSION
- MYTH #2: WHO CAN PROVIDE SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION?
- MYTH #3: READINESS FOR INCLUSION
- MYTH #4: CURRICULUM & STANDARDS
- MYTH #5: PARENTS & INCLUSION
- MYTH #6: DISABILITY & PLACEMENT
- MYTH #7: ASSESSMENT & ACADEMICS

<https://tinyurl.com/5ard6mdx>



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Myths and Facts about Inclusionary Practices in WA

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Appendix A: Best Practices for Planning Paraeducator Support

Introduction and Purpose

This best practices document is intended to help administrators and individualized Education Program (IEP) teams effectively utilize and value paraeducators to improve student outcomes and increase meaningful student participation in general education environments. This document acknowledges the vital brought to the education system by paraeducators, provides a vehicle for the thoughtful utilization of paraeducators, and describes the relationship and roles of school personnel as they work as a team, ensuring the most desirable outcomes for students with disabilities.

Paraeducators are Valued and Essential Members of a Student's Educational Team

Paraeducators, also known as paraprofessionals or teacher's assistants, are trained professionals who work in classrooms under the supervision of a teacher or educational staff member (SEA). Paraeducators are essential and valued members of the educational team and are critical to support the social, emotional, academic, and vocational success of Washington's students. Teachers, administrators, and other members of the educational team have a critical role to support paraeducators to be effective in their work by providing resources, support, training and feedback.

Paraeducators assist all students, including those with and without disabilities, with health needs, and with limited English proficiency. They are vital members of the school community and play a key role in bridging the systemic gaps in educational justice for all students by:

- supporting the teaching and learning of all students; paraeducators receive lessons and provide skill and independent practice opportunities with individual students or groups of students;
- assisting students in meeting class and school expectations for appropriate behavior; modeling and promoting appropriate behavior and making small groups to reinforce social skills learning;
- playing an active and essential role in their work with students by providing encouragement, support, assistance and advocacy;
- serving as a force multiplier to support teacher intervention and consistency in educational program implementation;
- facilitating the integration of students with individual needs in typical classrooms and settings;
- building student relationships and connections to the local community.



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TAP 6: Paraeducators and Students Eligible to Receive Special Education Services

Appendix A: Best Practices for Planning Paraeducator Support

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