



# SPECIAL EDUCATION PARTICIPANT'S ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

Communication Between  
Paraprofessionals and Educators

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## Session Objectives (Slide 4)

Participants will...

- Determine strategies to develop and maintain positive relationships with teachers.  
Aligned to CEC Paraprofessional K.7.2: Identify communication styles and strategies for problem-solving and decision-making.
- Implement strategies for effectively communicating and maintaining communication with teachers.  
Aligned to CEC Paraprofessional S.7.1: Establish and maintain professional, collegial, and appropriate relationships with school personnel, students, and their families.

## Pause and Reflect (Slide 9)

Why is communication important? Write your top three answers.

1.

2.

3.

## Pause and Reflect (Slides 11–12)

Circle the rating that most closely aligns to your belief about the following statement:

- I communicate effectively with the supervising teacher(s) with whom I work.
  - 1 – **Never/Rarely** communicate effectively
  - 2 – **Sometimes** communicate effectively
  - 3 – **Usually** communicate effectively
  - 4 – **Always** communicate effectively
  
- I communicate with teachers most frequently using the following method:
  - Face-to-face
  - Text
  - Communication log/notebook
  - Other

## Understanding Communication Styles (Slides 14–15)

**Directions:** Use this table to capture notes on key descriptors of each communication style.

Director	Expresser	Thinker	Harmonizer

## Pause and Reflect (Slide 17)

- What communication style do you feel best describes you? Why?
  - Director
  - Expresser
  - Thinker
  - Harmonizer
- What communication styles do you feel like you encounter most often in your role as a paraprofessional?

## Pause and Reflect (Slide 19)

The biggest challenge to communication I encounter is (select one):

- **Frequency** (When? How often?)

- **Method** (How? Where?)
- **Relationship** (With whom?)
- **Content** (What?)

## Effective Communication Is ... (Slide 20)

In the table, brainstorm examples that align with each element of effective communication.

<b>Considerate</b>	
<b>Clear</b>	
<b>Concise</b>	

## Nonverbal Communication (Slide 21)

**Reflect:**

- How does nonverbal communication *influence* the interactions you have in your role as a paraprofessional?

- How does nonverbal communication *enhance* the interactions you have in your role as a paraprofessional?

## Communication About Students (Slide 24)

**Directions:** Use the table to record notes about the kinds of information you can provide to the teacher and the kinds of information you can request from the teacher.

Information I <u>provide to</u> the teacher	Information I <u>request from</u> the teacher

## Pause and Reflect (Slide 27)

- How do you maintain regular communication with teachers? (In-person meetings/check-ins, notes, communication binder, emails, etc.)

## Reflection and Session Takeaway (Slide 36)

- What are your biggest takeaways from today's session?
- What questions do you still have?
- What is one next step you will take because of today's session?
- Who can support you in moving forward?



# Appendix A – My Communication Behavior (Slide 16)

**Directions:** For each question, select the answer or ranking that most closely aligns with your own communication behavior. Then review the key at the end to learn more about how you rated yourself.

1. If I were to explain something to a group of coworkers and they sat quietly with blank faces, I would:

\_\_\_\_ Try to explain clearly and then move on.

\_\_\_\_ Encourage coworkers to ask questions until I was sure they understood.

2. If a supervising teacher or administrator explained something to me that I did not understand, I would:

\_\_\_\_ Keep silent and check with someone else later to see if they could clarify for me.

\_\_\_\_ Ask the person to repeat his or her explanation or ask clarifying questions of the person.

3. How often do I let coworkers know when I like or approve of something they say or do?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

4. How often do I let coworkers know when I am irritated by or opposed to something they have said or done?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

5. How often do I check out coworkers' feelings and not just assume that I know what they are?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

6. How often do I encourage others to let me know how they feel about what I say?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

7. How often do I check to be sure I understand what others are saying before I think judgmentally (e.g., "I don't agree," "She's right!")?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

8. How often do I check to be sure I understand what others are saying before I express my judgments nonverbally (e.g., head shake, frowning) or aloud (e.g., "I don't agree," "She's right!")?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

9. How often do I paraphrase or restate what others have said before I respond?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

10. How often do I keep my feelings, reactions, thoughts, and ideas to myself during meetings or conversations?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

11. How often do I make sure that all information I have regarding a topic of discussion is known to the rest of my coworkers in the discussion or meeting?

Never 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4 -- 5 -- 6 -- 7 -- 8 -- 9 -- 10 Always

## KEY

**Questions 1–2** address one-way and two-way communication.

**Questions 3–4** address your willingness to give feedback to others on how you receive his or her communication.

**Questions 5–6** address your willingness to ask for feedback on your own communication.

**Questions 7–9** address your skills around receiving communication from others.

**Questions 10–11** address your willingness to contribute (communicate meaningfully) about the work being done by you and your coworkers.

# Appendix B – Paraprofessional Survey of Knowledge and Skills (Slide 26)

**Directions:** First, complete the chart by marking your degree of understanding regarding the topics listed, with 5 indicating the highest degree of understanding and 1 indicating the lowest degree of understanding.

Then, circle any items for which you would like additional information, support, and/or training.

**Rating Key**

**5 = Highest** degree of understanding

**1 = Lowest** degree of understanding

*IMPORTANT: This document is not meant to be evaluative in nature. Rather, it is an opportunity for you to reflect on your knowledge and skills as a paraprofessional while also communicating this information to the teachers you work with so they have a better understanding of how to support you in your role.*

KNOWLEDGE	5	4	3	2	1
1. Cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development that impact milestones of students with disabilities compared to typically developing peers.					
2. Educational challenges manifested as a result of varying disabilities.					
3. Effect of disabilities on students, families, and society through the lifespan.					
4. Family systems and their influence on the educational process.					
5. Common concerns of families of students with disabilities.					
6. Effects of cultural and linguistic diversity on the educational process and relationships between school, home, and community.					
7. Characteristics and implications of one’s own culture and use of language, including verbal and nonverbal communication, and how this may differ across cultures.					
8. Effect of speech and language development on academic and nonacademic learning of students with disabilities.					
9. Nonverbal modes of communication used by students with disabilities, including augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).					

SKILLS	5	4	3	2	1
1. Support students' independence, self-advocacy, positive sense of identity, self-control, and self-reliance under the guidance of the instructional team.					
2. Support students with disabilities in their use of self-assessment, problem solving, and other cognitive strategies under the guidance of the instructional team.					
3. Recognize and respect individual differences between culture, religion, gender, and other differences of students with disabilities and their families.					
4. Align communication methods to individuals' language proficiency under the guidance of the instructional team.					
5. Provide opportunities and support for students to understand, acquire, and use verbal and nonverbal means to communicate thoughts and feelings under the guidance of the instructional team.					
6. Reinforce the use of oral and written communication efforts of students with disabilities under the guidance of the instructional team.					

## Appendix C – Interview Template: Teacher Mission and Vision (Slide 30)

**Directions:** Use the table to structure a conversation between you and your supervising teacher.

Question	Teacher Response	How can I support this as a paraprofessional?	Additional Notes and Ideas
What is your vision for every student we support?			
What is your classroom mission and vision?  What action steps will we take to accomplish this?			
What are our <i>short-term goals</i> to accomplish the vision and mission?  What is the timeframe for accomplishing those goals?			
<b>What are our long-term goals to accomplish the vision and mission?</b>  <b>What is the timeframe for accomplishing those goals?</b>			

## Appendix D – Communication and Collaboration Self-Evaluation (Slide 31)

**Directions:** Review your current experience as a paraprofessional by rating the key elements of communication and collaboration between teacher and paraprofessional listed here.

1. The teacher has a clearly defined role for me.
2. The teacher has checked that I understand my role.
3. I know the school and district guidelines regarding paraprofessional roles.
4. The teacher has established clear priorities for student learning.
5. The teacher has communicated these priorities to me.
6. The teacher understands my preferred work style.
7. Regular time is set aside to meet with my teacher.

### Rating Key

- 1 = No attention needed
- 2 = Add to our next discussion
- 3 = Needs immediate attention