# Facilitator Guide

**TOPIC** Communication and Collaboration

**Unit Effective Communication**

## SCENARIO

Lora, a paraprofessional at a middle school, supports her student throughout the day in various inclusive settings. She often comes up with ideas on the spot that help her student better access the learning content. After implementing these strategies, she notes the results and later shares them with the educator in charge of the student's IEP.

Lora feels confident in her abilities but often finds that the teacher doesn't take her input seriously or use it to make changes for the child. She feels unheard and that the teacher is too busy to engage in problem-solving with her. This has created a communication gap between them.

## PREVIEW QUESTIONS

1.Lora might feel that the teacher doesn't take her seriously. Have you ever experienced something similar, and how did you handle it?

2. What changes could improve the relationship and communication between Lora and her lead teacher?

3. What positive outcomes might result from these adjustments?

4. How could small improvements in communication and collaboration lead to significant gains in student outcomes?

## UNIT BEST BETS...

- Slide Show- Adding Pause for Questions
- Overview-Effective Communication
- Content- Careful Listening
- Link to CASE STUDY

Teach your paras how to take notes in meetings or PD with a Double Entry Journal for better listening!

LINK HERE

## Take Notes

**Think about the most effective team you have been part of and a not-so-effective team you have also been part of. Really—they can be any sorts of teams: at school, at work, at church.**

What do you think made the more effective team work so well, and what made the other team less effective team ? Use the ideas from this unit in your description.

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**Communicating with Students**

## SCENARIO

Veronica Mallory has been a paraprofessional for 30 years. Many of her colleagues—teachers and parapros—have already retired. So, her school, Jefferson Middle, has recently employed a number of new educators. Helping these educators become effective instructors is the challenge now facing long-time principal, Marsha Albright.

As Marsha knows, effective communication between educators and students is crucial to the success of instruction overall. So, she's asked a small team of seasoned educators—the Communications Professional Development Team (CPDT)—to create a series of workshops on communication for new Jefferson Middle School educators.

The principal invited Veronica to be one of the four members of this team. "You're great with the kids," she said to Veronica. "The new teachers and parapros will learn a lot from hearing about how you learned to communicate so well with students and to break down communication barriers."

## DON'T FORGET THESE THINGS...

1. Use the child's name.
2. Find accessible ways to communicate.
3. Insure that high and low tech tools are readily available for peers and teachers to communicate with my student.
4. Use a tone of voice that is pleasant and clear.
5. When giving directions, try to sequence your thoughts in a clear step by step manner.
6. Make sure students feel heard.
7. Stay focused on academic work.
8. Don't forget feedback

## UNIT BEST BETS...

- Slide Show- Adding Pause for Questions
- Para-Student Communication Self-Eval
- Take Notes- Reflections

Have your Paras brainstorm staff members and situations that highlight their positive interactions with students.

## Questions to Ponder

- What circumstances lead to communication breakdowns with students?
- What circumstances lead to improvements in communication with students?
- What signs should educators look for as evidence that a communication strategy is (or is not) working?

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**TOPIC** Communication and Collaboration

**Teaming**

## SCENARIO

Sharon Stewart, the paraprofessional educator from the Introductory Challenge? She had been assigned to help a student with deaf-blindness in the upcoming school year and did not know what to do. She asked various people for ideas but was not sure how to make sense of what they told her. Now that she's back at school, Sharon has been invited to participate as a member of an instructional team. So, she's trying to formulate questions to ask the team to help her figure out how to work with the student.

## OTHER GREAT CONTENT

Read the Grade Level Scenarios depicting two variations of teaming communication. LINK

Click on the Gather a New Perspective and Root your Work in Empathy Links

## UNIT BEST BETS...

- SLIDESHOW- Teacher Based Teams
- OVERVIEW- Great Videos and Resources!
- Content- Data Based Decision Making
- Link to CASE STUDY

Walk through this list of Para Roles and Responsibilities as part of a Data-Based Decision Making Team.

Discuss data jobs they do as paras in your district.

### Take Notes

- **What questions do you think ought to be on Shannon's list?**
- **What should be her expectations about how the team will function throughout the school year?**
- **What suggestions would you give her about how to contribute productively to the work of the team?**

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**TOPIC** Communication and Collaboration

**Communicating with your Supervising Teacher**

## SCENARIO

Sharon Stewart was starting her ninth year as a paraprofessional. Rather than feeling the late August excitement that she usually felt, this year all she felt was fear. She was frightened about starting school because her new assignment would be to work one-on-one with a little girl with deaf-blindness. Sharon had no idea what to do. Not only that, the teacher with whom she normally worked was on maternity leave. Eventually, Sharon decided to talk with several educators who might help her figure out what to do.What she learned from her discussions with the four people allowed her to imagine a workable approach for handling the new challenge. Sharon felt a little better, but she still had a lot of questions.

## CONVERSATIONS

Her **mentor teacher** talked with her briefly but she was busy with her newborn. She said,"Try not to worry. There's going to be a new arrangement at the school this year. The principal calls it a 'teacher-based team'."

Her **principal** was her family friend and they said, "This year we are going to use data to figure out what to try with different students and to see how the methods we try are actually working."

## UNIT BEST BETS...

- Slide Show- Adding Pause for Questions
- Overview- Clarifying Each Others' Roles
- Content- Forthright Conversation Plan
- Link to CASE STUDY

Paraeducators and Special or General Educators can sit together and walk through this list of Cans and Can'ts for Paraeducators and determine how they can make things better.

LINK to CHART

## Take Notes

Feedback is crucial to your professional growth.

**Practical Tips on Feedback.**

Ask your boss if you can have a choice in how you receive feedback. Don't view feedback from your supervisor as all or nothing. Try to find nuggets of truth and ideas for change within their suggestions.

**What is your preferred method of receiving feedback?**

- Written?
- With peers in a small group?
- One on one?

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**TOPIC** Communication and Collaboration

**Confidentiality**

## SCENARIO

https://www.opepp.org/lesson/cc-unit9-introductory-challenge/

Julia Washington is a paraprofessional at Southeast Middle School assigned one-on-one to Marvin Smith, aged 12, a 4th grade student with Down Syndrome and a hearing impairment and he is a student in Mrs King's classroom. Julia has been working with Marvin for two years: this is the beginning of her third year with him. She is very protective of Marvin and friendly with his parents. Ordinarily, Julia's presence in Marvin's life helps protect him from being picked on. Unfortunately, Gene Adams, who also receives special education services in Mrs. King's classroom, has behavioral problems—and an IEP that includes a plan for managing them. Gene is not actually a "bully"—that is, he doesn't go out of his way to torment vulnerable students (like Marvin). But he can be unpredictable and rough. This pattern makes him appear surly—his behavior looks something like bullying.

## THINK ABOUT THIS SITUATION AND THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. If Julia is worried about what Gene might do to Marvin, can she talk to Mrs. King about it? Should she?
2. If Gene shoves Marvin to the floor, what can she tell Marvin's parents about Gene?
3. How should she deal with her opinion about Gene's behavior and how the school should deal with it?

## UNIT BEST BETS...

- Slide Show- Adding Pause for Questions
- POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE
- Video ONE and TWO on FERPA

Work Together with other educators to discuss how you could encourage others to create at positive school culture where gossip and negative student talk does not take place.

## FERPA LAW- LINK

- **what's in a child's school records cannot be shared with anyone else.**
- **Talking about students or their families—talking casually about them with anyone—is always inappropriate.**

**Picture a time when you sat in a teacher's lounge. What did you hear the teacher's talking about... Give examples of how they avoide violating FERPA, Give examples of how they violated FERPA.**

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