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# Exploring the Roles of the Paraeducator in Instruction

# 3

*Robert Morgan*



**W**ith effective training and supervision, paraeducators become valuable team members who actively participate in monitoring and delivering instruction to learners in classrooms. First, this chapter examines the paraeducator's roles in instruction; second, it describes methods the paraeducator can use to deliver effective instruction; third, it warns of excessive prompting, or "taking over"; and fourth, it considers the paraeducator's role in lesson plans, instructional settings, management, groupings, and assessment of learning style.

## Learning Objectives

The content of this chapter will prepare paraeducators to do the following:

1. Describe the paraeducator's roles in instruction (e.g., observer, data collector, monitor, trained assistant in delivering instruction).
2. Describe the use of validated instructional practices across settings and instructional groupings (e.g., one-on-one instruction, small-group instruction).
3. Identify procedures to use and to avoid in prompting learners to perform tasks.
4. Understand the impact of different learning styles and preferences on the performance of individual children and youth.

## Key Terms and Definitions

The following key terms and definitions will be used throughout this chapter.

**Curriculum-based assessment (CBA).** Taking samples from curriculum areas to create an assessment to pinpoint the level of learning for an individual child

**Data collection.** Observing and recording information on a learner's performance

**Generalization.** Performing a learned skill with a different person, in a different place, or with new materials

**Goal.** A general measurable performance standard

**Guided practice.** Guiding the learner in practicing a response

**Independent practice.** Watching the learner perform a response without assistance

**Informal assessments.** Tests of a learner's performance in an academic, social, or other skill area (such as a CBA) that provide information about strengths and weaknesses

**Modality.** The method or medium for learning, such as visual, auditory, or touch

**Model or demonstration.** Showing or telling the learner what to do

**Physical prompting.** A form of temporary help in performing motor activities, such as basic self-help skills

**Prelesson review.** A brief assessment of previously learned skills

**Short-term objective.** Measurable performance standards arranged in sequence to meet a goal

## The Learning Process

Learning is a process involving a learner who is guided by someone more skilled (such as a teacher or paraeducator) towards achieving a preset performance standard. A general measurable performance standard is called a "goal" (Snell & Brown, 2000). Goals may be divided into several

short-term objectives or into smaller measurable performance standards arranged in sequence to meet the goal. Teaching is a process involving (a) pinpointing the learner's performance levels, (b) delivering instruction using lesson plans and instructional strategies, and (c) recording data to determine progress and to make decisions about ongoing instruction. Teaching and learning are complex processes because each learner is unique and brings a dynamic and intricate patchwork of experiences, background, fears, anxieties, and dreams to the situation. Let's take a closer look at four learners and what they bring to the classroom.

## Meet the Learners



### JANALYN

Janalyn is a 9-year-old girl from a low-income family. She attends an elementary school that qualifies for a free-lunch program. Janalyn works with a Title I paraeducator, Hakan, in reading. Hakan provides support for Janalyn's reading effort. When Janalyn finishes reading a sentence, she rarely recalls its meaning because her effort was focused on decoding the seemingly jumbled text. To Janalyn, a sentence like "The cow jumped over the moon" looks more like "Thecomjuwdeponerthewoon." Janalyn reverses letters and does not see separations between words.

Hakan understands that the first issue is to "unjumble" the text. He gently corrects errors and praises Janalyn for effort and success, then, inconspicuously, Hakan asks comprehension questions about the reading. "Can you believe that cow? What did he do?" asks Hakan. Janalyn is drawn back to the story. "He jumped!" she says. "Yes, Janalyn, he jumped. But what did he jump over?" asks Hakan. Janalyn looks back at the words on the page. Unsure, she pauses. Hakan starts, "He jumped over the m——. What did he jump over?" "The moon!" screams Janalyn. "Good. So what did he do again?" Hakan asks. "Tell me the whole thing." "He jumped over the moon," Janalyn responds. "Good!" Hakan pretends to be puzzled. "But wait a minute. Can a cow jump over the moon?" "No, Hakan," says Janalyn. "That's silly!"

**SKYLOR**

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Skylor is a 14-year-old boy with autism spectrum disorder. Although Skylor is well accepted in his general education junior high classes, his academic skills are far below what would be expected for his age. He can recite his name, address, and phone number and can read some basic vocabulary words. However, he does not hold a pencil for more than a few seconds; instead, he flings it to the floor. Skylor seems to dislike holding things in his hands, especially if they produce a scratchy sensation, like a pencil on paper. His special education teacher and an occupational therapist developed a program to teach Skylor to hold a pencil with an adapted device. The device resembles a soft golf ball with a hole through which the pencil is inserted. They have asked the paraeducator, Robin, to work with Skylor in holding his adapted pencil in writing and arithmetic activities.

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**KIMBERLY**

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Kimberly is a 10-year-old girl with fetal alcohol syndrome. Although Kimberly has no verbal language, she is learning to use a communication board with a synthesized voice. As Kimberly touches pictures on the board mounted on her wheelchair, the computer serves as her voice. The teacher, Shu-min, is teaching Kimberly to respond to questions by pressing keys labeled “yes” or “no.” Shu-min has asked her paraeducator, Jeff, to assist Kimberly by guiding her to use the communication board.

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**ANTONIO**

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Antonio is an 8-year-old boy who is learning to speak English. Antonio struggles to distinguish between the names of letters and their sounds. The same basic word list confronts him each day as if he had never seen it before. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ruiz, are new to the United States and understand Antonio’s problems. They, too, struggle with a

new language. A paraeducator in the classroom, Maria, assists Antonio in learning English. Maria introduces new words and shows how they represent objects or actions in Antonio's daily routine. She makes a list of new words each week and sends them to Mr. and Mrs. Ruiz.

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## The Paraeducator's Role in the Learning Process

Hakan, Robin, Jeff, and Maria play important roles in the learning process. Although planning instruction is the teacher's role, trained and well-supervised paraeducators may

1. deliver instruction to individual learners or small groups;
2. instruct learners in academic subjects using lesson plans and instructional strategies developed by teachers or other professional staff;
3. perform informal assessments of a learner's skills or behaviors;
4. record data on observations of a learner's skills or behaviors;
5. monitor learners performing independent practice of learned skills; and
6. use developmentally and age-appropriate instructional procedures.

The paraeducator's role varies depending on the age and characteristics of the learner, the type of school environment, and the job description developed by the district. Generally, given training and supervision, paraeducators perform specific tasks that include the following:

- *Academic tutoring and literacy development.* Some paraeducators spend much of their time working with individual learners or small groups. Like Hakan, many paraeducators work in Title I programs to assist children who have academic limitations and who are from low-income or economically disadvantaged families. They might read to learners; listen to learners read; and assist learners with math, language, writing, spelling, and other academic assignments. Paraeducators who assist in academic tutoring may demonstrate (i.e., model) correct responses, ask learners to imitate the model, await a response, praise and recognize correct imitation, or correct errors.

- *Activities of daily living.* Paraeducators who work with learners with more significant disabilities might assist in activities of daily living (such as health care, personal hygiene, dressing, laundry, etc.). These skills are usually taught in environments in which the skill is performed. For example, a paraeducator may assist in the teaching of hand-washing at a sink in the school restroom by demonstrating a specific task (such as turning on the hot and cold water), asking the learner to imitate the model, and praising or correcting the learner's response.

- *Inclusive classrooms.* Trained paraeducators play a major role in the inclusion process by helping learners in general education classrooms. In addition to playing important roles in academic instruction, paraeducators may introduce the learner to classmates and assist in teaching social skills.

- *Community and employment environments.* Some paraeducators assist individual learners who go to community sites for health care, therapy, or job training. For example, job coaches work with youth in an employment setting by teaching job tasks, "shadowing" the learner during performance of the task, gradually reducing support over time, and assisting in development of "natural supports" among other employees and supervisors.

- *Positive behavior support.* Some paraeducators work with learners who engage in problem behaviors. For these learners, the priority is developing appropriate social behavior using positive procedures. For example, a paraeducator receives instruction from a teacher or behavior specialist in how to carry out a positive behavior support plan for a learner who engages in aggressive behavior during math period. The paraeducator works with the learner by encouraging him to raise his hand to ask for help in math instead of ripping up an assignment.

## What Works: Ways To Provide Effective Instruction

Hofmeister and Lubke (1990) considered eight ways to provide effective instruction. These features are (a) assessment to pinpoint skill level, (b) active engagement, (c) instruction that targets the learner's skill level, (d) high rates of correct learner responses, (e) high rates of positive feed-

back from instructors, (f) immediate correction of errors, (g) maintenance of skills, and (h) generalization of skills. Regardless of the skill being taught or the type of instruction being used, these methods play a major role in increasing academic success.

## **Assessment to Pinpoint Skill Level**

There are many different kinds of assessment. Informal assessments are nonstandardized tests of a learner's performance in an academic, social, or other skill area. The informal assessment process involves gathering data on a learner's skills, behaviors, and preferences (Snell & Brown, 2000). For example, a curriculum-based assessment (CBA) takes samples from curriculum areas to create an assessment instrument. A learner is then assessed to determine his or her instructional level in the curriculum. This information is useful in developing Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives and in determining progress over time. Paraeducators can administer informal assessment given adequate training and supervision. In most cases, certification or licensure is not required. Another kind of assessment, called "formal assessment," involves intelligence and achievement tests, which usually require certification or licensure (Snell & Brown, 2000).

## **Active Engagement**

Learners acquire skills when they are actively engaged in the learning process. Active engagement means frequently writing, reading, responding to questions, or practicing new skills. For example, Kimberly, described in the Meet the Learners section, was actively engaged in using her communication board. Several times each minute, her paraeducator, Jeff, asked Kimberly to respond to yes and no questions. Also, Jeff showed Kimberly's classmates how to ask her questions. Kimberly frequently practiced the skills that she would use in her natural environment. Paraeducators actively engage learners by asking them frequent questions, directing them to engage in tasks, and recognizing their responses. When appropriate, paraeducators can encourage learners to communicate with each other.



## Instruction That Targets the Learner's Skill Level

A teacher carefully selects instructional material based on the learner's current skill level. Although the teacher's role is to select instructional material, paraeducators can assist in three ways:

1. *Check for "prerequisite skills" (i.e., those taught in earlier lessons).* Prior to starting a lesson involving new material, ask individual learners to perform tasks or answer questions taught in previous lessons. If the learner cannot perform the task or answers incorrectly, correct the error and report the finding to the supervising teacher. This might mean the learner is not prepared to start a new lesson.

2. *Observe the learner's performance, and pinpoint it in the curriculum.* That is, identify exactly where the learner's skills fall in the sequence of skills taught by a curriculum. Teachers are responsible for identifying the level of instruction for learners, but paraeducators can often pinpoint exactly where a child is performing. For example, the teacher knows that Aurelio is working on 2-digit subtraction with regrouping, but his paraeducator, Vanessa, has observed that Aurelio does not borrow "10" when he tries to subtract. Vanessa can inform the teacher that Aurelio needs more work on how to borrow in subtraction.

3. *Ask learners to perform tasks or answer questions that are equal to or slightly higher than their current skill level.* If a learner appears bored or off task, the learner's instructional level may be set slightly higher. If the learner appears frustrated, the instructional level should be set slightly lower. In either case, report the findings to the teacher.

## High Rates of Correct Responses

Learners should respond frequently to provide evidence that they are learning. Effective instructors (i.e., teachers or trained and well-supervised paraeducators) call on learners frequently to answer questions or to respond during a lesson. Lessons should combine learned material with new material in such a way that the learner responds correctly to 80% to 90% of opportunities (Hofmeister & Lubke, 1990). At these levels, learners can be frequently recognized for their success and remain motivated to receive additional instruction. The remaining 10% to 20% of responses

are errors to be corrected by the instructor. When teachers develop lesson plans, questions or tasks must be carefully crafted to match the learner's performance level. If an instructor "overshoots" a learner's level by including a complex item that results in an incorrect answer, he or she should follow it with a simpler item.

## **High Rates of Positive Feedback**

Many children have long histories of academic failure and helplessness. They feel anxious and vulnerable when learning a new skill because they fear another failure. Effective instructors recognize each small success for learners. Initially, every correct response should be followed by a statement of praise or recognition (Morgan, Forbush, & Avis, 2001). As a skill becomes mastered, effective instructors gradually reduce praise and recognition.

## **Immediate Correction of Errors**

A learner's errors should not go uncorrected. Imagine the frustration if Antonio, the 8-year-old boy struggling to learn English, continued to practice errors, only to find out much later that they were incorrect. Uncorrected errors can result in incorrect habits and even hinder learning of new skills. Correction should be immediate and delivered in a neutral way using a regular voice tone. Avoid appearing frustrated with the learner. Delayed correction may be ineffective because, to the learner, the feedback is unrelated to the original error.

## **Maintenance of Skills**

Unless skills are frequently practiced, they disappear; therefore, learners must frequently practice skills to maintain them. Even mastered skills can disappear without practice. To the effective instructor, this means scheduling frequent practice opportunities as skills are being learned. In addition, it means arranging frequent checks, even after skills have been mastered.

## Generalization of Skills

Learners rarely perform skills only with the original instructor or only in one location. Learners usually perform skills in situations involving several different people, places, and things. That is, skills must “generalize,” or transfer, to new situations. To the effective instructor, this means checking new skills with a different person, or in a different place, or with new materials.

## Key Steps in Delivering Instruction

Instruction can be delivered to individual learners or to groups. Trained paraeducators may apply the following steps when working under the supervision of a teacher (paraeducators may apply these steps only with training and when working under the supervision of a teacher): (a) getting the learner’s attention; (b) delivering information in short, specific quantities; (c) calling for a response; (d) waiting for a response; (e) affirming correct responses; and (f) correcting all errors (Morgan et al., 2001).

- ◆ *Step 1: Get the learner’s attention.* Instructors should not begin presenting information unless they have the learner’s attention. This is especially critical if working with learners who have severe disabilities or who have problems sustaining attention.

1. Use the learner’s name *before* presenting information.

Incorrect: “Come on, look up here. Hey, up here, Marco.”

Correct: “Marco, look at me.”

2. Obtain eye contact from the learner to establish attention.

- ◆ *Step 2: Deliver new information in small quantities.* Provide a small amount of new information to the learner in a lesson; the amount of new information depends on the learner. If the learner remains engaged and responds correctly to new information, the amount is probably appropriate and therefore may be increased slightly. Ask

the supervising teacher for advice. Instructors present information by telling, showing, or using combinations of telling and showing. Use communication systems that are familiar. For example,

Marco, look at me. Thanks! Watch me. First, I'm going to hold the lace like this. Then, I'll put the lace through the hole like this. Marco, it's your turn. Hold the lace.

- ◆ *Step 3: Call for a response.* After presenting information, it is the learner's turn. Make sure learners understand when it is their turn to respond.
- ◆ *Step 4: Wait for a response.* For most learners, pause at least 3 to 5 seconds. It is often helpful to count silently to yourself. Do not interrupt the count by responding for the learner. If you do, you may be denying the child a valuable learning opportunity. If the learner does not respond, call again for a response.
- ◆ *Step 5: Affirm correct responses.* Praise and describe the correct response and then move immediately to the next learning task or next trial.
- ◆ *Step 6: Correct all errors.* Again, always correct an error. Do not allow errors to go uncorrected.

Three different kinds of learner's errors and ways to correct them follow:

- *A learner's error may suggest inattention to the key information.* Many times learners lose track of relevant information or have difficulty distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information. Instructors should break a problem down into smaller steps for the learner. One way is to ask a "leading question." Leading questions prompt the learner to consider the sequence of events (e.g., What happened first? What comes next?) or focus on relevant material (e.g., Where do you write the number you are carrying?). By asking leading questions, the instructor can direct a learner to the correct answer by emphasizing the relevant aspects of the problem. Instructors can use this procedure when a learner is having difficulty with

math problems, reading comprehension, vocational tasks, or other activities composed of multiple steps. For example,

**Leading Question**

What is the first thing you do when you multiply 34 by 6?

That's right, and what is 4 times 6?

Twenty-four is right. And so what do you write down?

**Response**

Multiply 4 times 6.

24.

4, carry the 2...

• *A learner's error may suggest that he or she started the task but became confused.* In this case, the learner recalled the initial part of a task but encountered something that he or she did not anticipate. To correct the error, the instructor should restate the learner's initial response, then ask "What happens next?" or "Tell me more." For example,

OK, you say the boy in the story wanted to ride the horse. That's right. Now, tell me what happened when he tried to get on the horse.

If the learner is still unable to recall the information, break the task into smaller parts. For example,

I don't remember what happened when he tried to get on the horse. When he walked up to the horse, what did the horse do?

If the learner still cannot recall, provide the information to the learner.

3. *A learner's error may suggest that she or he is missing important facts.* If a learner is missing important facts that are necessary to answer a problem correctly or to perform a task, the instructor must provide the information to the learner. If the learner is a part of a group, announce the information to the whole group so the learner is not singled out. Return to the learner at a later time to review the information. For example, Jarron, a high-school-age learner, is a member of a transition work crew learning to mow lawns. Today, he cannot start the lawn mower. His paraeducator approaches and checks the mower, then addresses the entire crew. "Hey, everybody," she says, "Before we can start a mower, we check the height adjustments, the safety start switch, the position of the choke, and what else?" (One crewmember says "Gas tank.") "That's right," she says, "Check

the gas tank. This gas tank is empty. What do we do?" (Another crew-member responds.) "Yes, that's right," she says, "We need to put gas in the tank."

## Physical Prompting

Learners sometimes need physical prompting as temporary help in performing motor activities, such as basic self-help skills (e.g., buttoning, zipping, washing hands). After they have received training and direction from the supervising teacher, paraeducators may use physical prompting with young learners or with those who have significant disabilities. Physical prompting can be used to present information or to correct errors. Here are two guidelines:

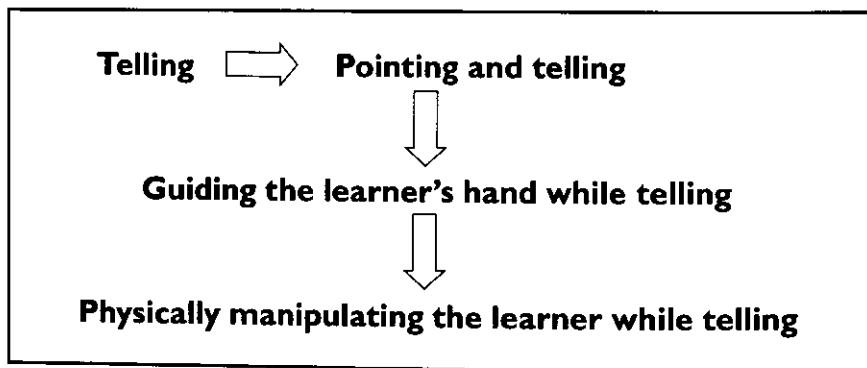
1. Use the least amount of physical prompting necessary for the learner to correct the error. (The learner might become overly dependent on the assistance if an instructor uses too much assistance for too long.)
2. Before using physical prompts, determine whether the learner is comfortable being touched. (Some learners react negatively to physical touch, or a learner's parents or guardians might prefer no touching. Check with the supervising teacher.)

When correcting errors using physical prompting, the goal is for the learner to perform the task with the least assistance. Before using physical prompting, tell the learner what is required. Use the least prompting necessary to obtain a correct response, and use a sequence of actions (see Figure 3.1).

## Excessive Prompting and "Taking Over"

Sometimes paraeducators believe that staying near a learner is part of their job and that the best way to help is to take over tasks for learners. These beliefs are false. In fact, staying close to the learner and taking over might be harmful, for several reasons (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997). Staying close and taking over

1. separates learners from classmates,
2. produces dependence on adults,



**Figure 3.1.** A sequence of actions in physical prompting.

3. reduces communication between learners and peers, and
4. restricts participation in instructional activities.

Effective instructors do just enough to allow learners to learn but not so much to deny them learning opportunities. In some situations, it is difficult to tell the difference between what is enough and what is too much. When in doubt, talk to the supervising teacher.

## **The Paraeducator's Role in the Lesson Plan**

With adequate training and supervision, paraeducators may use lesson plans to deliver instruction. Lesson plans are specific, daily instructional activities designed by teachers (Hofmeister & Lubke, 1990) that usually include the following key components: (a) prelesson review (i.e., a brief assessment of previously learned skills); (b) model or demonstration (i.e., showing or telling the learner what to do); (c) guided practice (i.e., guiding the learner in practicing the response); (d) independent practice (i.e., watching the learner perform the response without assistance); and (e) data collection (i.e., recording data on the learner's performance). The paraeducator's responsibilities are to follow the plan, ask questions for clarification, and seek guidance from the supervising teacher to better deliver instruction.

## The Paraeducator's Role in Instructional Settings, Management, and Groupings

Instruction is most effective if it takes place in the setting where the skill will be used. For example, the best place to teach bus safety skills is in and around a school bus. However, because of limitations in schedules or resources, instruction must sometimes occur in other settings. For example, in a classroom setting, to simulate shopping at a supermarket, the teacher may cut out newspaper ads with product prices and have learners compute the costs of a shopping trip.

Paraeducators work with individual learners and small groups. In both cases, management of instruction is important (see guidelines in Figure 3.2).

### Pre-session Management Steps:

1. Prepare and organize the instructional materials.
2. Keep materials within your reach, not the learner's reach.
3. Greet the learners and provide praise for getting ready and having their materials (pencils, paper, etc.) prepared.

### Session Management Steps:

1. State the goal of instruction and the rationale for teaching the specific skill.
2. Particularly when working with groups, announce a few basic rules and expectations. Describe rules for how the learners and instructor will take turns, how learners should get the instructor's attention, and how learners should respond when addressed.
3. Establish positive consequences for following rules. Praise compliance with rules.
4. Seat the distractible or more active learners nearest you.
5. Increase voice volume slightly above conversational level. Use your voice tone to emphasize key points in the lesson.
6. Avoid questions from learners that detract from instruction; instead, politely tell the learner that you will answer the question later. Avoid "going off on a tangent."
7. Position yourself so that learners can see your face and the instructional materials. Do not turn your back to learners or cover your mouth, particularly when working with learners who have hearing impairments.

**Figure 3.2.** Management of instruction with individual learners or groups.



## The Paraeducator's Role with Learners

Janalyn is a 9-year-old girl, Skylor is a 14-year-old boy, Kimberly is a 10-year-old girl, and Antonio is an 8-year-old boy. Like all children, they are unique in their learning styles and preferences. The paraeducator can help to identify the learning style of each learner; more than any team member, the paraeducator is in a strategic position to gather information on how learners learn. The following are questions paraeducators can ask themselves about individual learning styles:

1. What is the learner's most effective and reliable modality (i.e., method of learning)—visual, auditory, or touch?
2. Can modalities (e.g., visual and auditory modalities) be combined to present new information to the learner? For example, can you tell *and* show a learner how to do a task and get better performance than just telling or showing alone? For some learners, combining modalities works very well. For others, this may be confusing or overwhelming.
3. How much new information can the learner manage at a time? To maintain high rates of correct responses, amount of new information should be limited. However, as the learner performs well on smaller amounts, more material can be added. Previously learned material should be frequently reviewed.
4. What positive reinforcers can follow correct responses to enhance learning? Are there "natural" reinforcers to be used (i.e., ones that result from completing the task itself, such as eating a sandwich after making it)?
5. What environments are best for the individual learner (e.g., quiet ones without distractions, environments in which actual skills will be used)?

Answers to these questions will assist the paraeducator and teacher in tailoring the learning experience to the needs and preferences of the individual learner. The paraeducator and teacher may want to create an "individual profile" describing the learning style of each learner.

### Summary

This chapter examines the paraeducator's role in the instructional process. Although paraeducators are becoming more integral parts of class-

room instruction, their instructional roles must remain distinct and separate from the roles of the teacher. Paraeducators can do much, however, to strengthen the instructional process. Paraeducators should dedicate their efforts to supporting teachers in creating and maintaining the best possible learning environment for all learners. This commitment requires examining the features that make instruction effective and practicing the key components of effective instruction.

## ACTIVITIES

1. An effective instructor asks learners frequent questions and gets several responses per minute. Even within the context of routine tasks, effective instructors can generate questions. For example, while walking with a learner to the general education class, an effective instructor can ask questions about shapes of bricks in the wall, signs on the wall, colors of coats on racks, numbers on classroom doors, school rules about walking in hallways, spellings of names of people encountered in the hall, and so forth. Select a routine task, describe the location of the task, and write a list of five questions that you could use to engage a learner during this task.
2. The next time you work with learners, count the frequency of your “good job” statements. Also, count your specific praise statements (e.g., “Nice work—you tied both shoes!” “Excellent work on your math today—90% correct!”). Which statements are higher in frequency? Specific praise statements are advantageous over “good job” statements because they inform the learner of the precise action being recognized. Resolve to finish the statement: “Good job.” That is, when you catch yourself saying “good job,” at least finish the statement by telling the learner, for example, “Good job for finishing your math assignment.” If you are working with your teacher or another paraeducator, ask him or her to assist you in finishing “good job” statements.
3. Interview three teachers. Ask each of them “What makes instruction effective?” Write notes on their answers and then compare the three sets of responses. What similarities and differences were found?
4. Read the case study that follows and answer the questions, either individually or in a group-discussion activity.

**TAMIKA**

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Tamika was a paraeducator working at Lincoln High School. She was supervised by Mrs. Charles, the resource teacher, but she often accompanied learners to general education classes. During fourth period she worked with Rashan in his 10th-grade literature class. Rashan was a poor reader who expressed strong dislike for his literature class and for Tamika. Mrs. Charles developed lesson plans adapting reading activities to Rashan's instructional level. Tamika's job was to carry out the lessons in the literature class. After days of painstaking trials with Rashan, Mrs. Charles and Tamika considered a different approach. Somehow, they needed to make reading a relevant and useful skill for Rashan. Mrs. Charles suggested that Tamika ask Rashan questions about his interests. She reasoned that she and Tamika could design reading instruction around Rashan's favorite topics. Rashan refused to respond to the questions. Mrs. Charles and Tamika brainstormed other ideas. They wrote partial sentences with no endings, such as "If I could go anywhere right now, I would go \_\_\_\_\_." Rashan immediately responded to these sentences by describing his interest in contemporary music, particularly hip-hop, soul, and blues. Mrs. Charles and Tamika researched musicians, lyrics, songs, and pop culture. They developed lesson plans based on Rashan's favorite artists. At first, Rashan objected and pointed out errors in his teacher's information. Mrs. Charles saw her error as an opportunity. "Okay, Rashan, I don't know who Robert Johnson was. So help me out. Where can I find out about him?" Rashan was now a partner in developing his lesson plans. He and Tamika found books at the library. Tamika purchased magazines on pop music for Rashan to read. They found connections between literature class topics and music. Rashan slowly began interacting with the entire class. Reading, although still frustrating for Rashan, became tolerable. What else could Mrs. Charles and Tamika have done to develop a partnership with Rashan? From your own experience, in what ways can you enlist the support of learners?

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## Discussion Questions

1. After correcting an error, why is retesting necessary?
2. How can you adapt the error-correction procedures for learners who have no verbal language or for learners who are learning English as a second language?
3. How do you know when you are prompting excessively? How do you gauge the right amount of prompting?

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