

# Instructional Assistant Quick Reference

The main objective for an instructional assistant is to assist the teacher in integrating special education students into the general education classroom to achieve maximal academic and social potential. In order to achieve this goal, the IA must perform many duties which engage, encourage, and empower students both in and out of the classroom. Use this quick reference page as a reminder of the essential functions and strategies needed to achieve this goal.

## Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers and IA's is essential to the success of our students. When teacher's and IA's collaborate to provide quality instruction for students with disabilities, their working relationship should be characterized by cooperation, congeniality, and professionalism.

## Supervision

As an instructional assistant, you will perform best when you have effective supervision. Although school professionals who supervise IA's may have different styles, there are some common supervisory needs. Be sure to know **who** your supervisor is. Be sure to know from whom you should be receiving guidance and feedback throughout the various settings of the school environment. Be sure to understand what kind of feedback and guidance you will be receiving. If you do not know the answers to these questions, **ASK!** Do not wait until something goes wrong to ask questions.

## Policies and Procedures

Have a clear understanding of MCPS and your school's policies and procedures regarding, but not limited to, student discipline, confidentiality, emergencies, and suspicion of child abuse.

## Communication

When communicating with students, be clear and concise and keep your message simple. When correcting student behavior, indicate the desired behavior, NOT the undesired behavior.

Remember to utilize all forms of communication, verbal, written, and non-verbal. Some very useful non-verbal cues include body language, eye contact, facial expressions, proximity, and touch. Remember, at times what you **do not** say can be more powerful than what you do say. In addition, refrain from discussing issues regarding a student in front of the student.

## Avoid Isolation

Often times IA's are assigned to work with one particular student. Remember that the student to whom you are assigned should not be separated from other students except in situations determined by the student's IEP. The responsibility of the IA is to facilitate the inclusion of the student into the classroom, as well as in the common areas of the school. Encourage peers to interact with the student you assist, as you are a vital social link. You are also a "connector" between the student and teacher. In this way, the student benefits from the curricular knowledge of the teacher.

## Help Students With Challenging Behavior

All behaviors have a purpose. When managing challenging behavior it is essential to separate out your feelings and avoid taking it personally. The purposes of behavior **may** include:

- seeking attention
- gaining acceptance/approval
- expressing a need or frustration
- reducing anxiety or over stimulation
- avoiding difficult tasks
- gaining power
- seeking revenge
- self regulation

The first step to helping students use appropriate behavior is to determine what the purposes may be. It is the responsibility of the IA to work with the student's team to determine the purpose of the behavior and implement an appropriate plan to best support the student. Teaching replacement behaviors is done with the guidance of the special education teacher, and will help the student to have their needs met in a more socially acceptable manner.

## Resources

National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals

[www.nrcpara.org](http://www.nrcpara.org)

Project EVOLVE

<http://www.uvm.edu/cdci/evolve/>

ParaEducator Learning Network

<http://www.paraeducator.net/>

Project PARA

<http://para.unl.edu/index.lasso>

National Clearinghouse for Paraeducator Resources

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html>

Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC)

[www.ttac.vt.edu](http://www.ttac.vt.edu)