

Enhancing Inclusive Education through Effective Use and Training of Paraprofessionals: A Systematic Analysis

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15703068

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Abstract:

Paraprofessionals, also known as teacher assistants, are integral to the effective implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities, particularly those with severe support needs. Despite their central role, the literature reveals inconsistencies in how their responsibilities are defined, varying perceptions of their contributions, and a widespread lack of standardized, high-quality training and supervision. This study employs qualitative methods and inductive content analysis to systematically review current research on paraprofessional effectiveness, professional development, and teacher collaboration within inclusive classroom settings. The analysis reveals three interrelated themes: (1) the need for clearly defined and standardized roles, (2) the importance of context-responsive, ongoing professional development, and (3) the value of structured performance feedback and teacher-paraprofessional collaboration. Findings highlight that when paraprofessionals receive appropriate preparation and are included in collaborative instructional teams, the quality of support for students with disabilities improves significantly. Moreover, institutional support and feedback mechanisms strengthen the fidelity of instructional strategies and increase job satisfaction among support staff. The study concludes by recommending the enhancement of policy frameworks, the integration of real-time feedback in teacher and paraprofessional training programs, and the adoption of learner-centered professional development models to ensure inclusive education is both equitable and effective.

Keywords: paraprofessionals, inclusive education, special education, teacher collaboration

Introduction:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) underscores the principle that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment, which is most often interpreted as placement in general education classrooms. Achieving this inclusive vision depends heavily on the presence of support personnel, particularly paraprofessionals or teacher assistants, who are critical in facilitating access to the curriculum and individualized support (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007).

These personnel work alongside certified teachers to address the needs of students with varying abilities. However, the implementation of inclusive education continues to be hindered by significant variability in paraprofessional training, supervision, and role clarity (Mason et al., 2020; Massafra, Gershwin, & Gosselin, 2020).

Despite their indispensable role, paraprofessionals often enter classrooms without adequate formal preparation. In many settings, their responsibilities are poorly defined, leading to inconsistent support for students with disabilities. Sharma and Salend (2016) conducted a systematic review of international research and highlighted broad inconsistencies in how paraprofessionals are utilized in inclusive classrooms. This lack of standardization can result in inequitable educational experiences for students with disabilities, particularly those with moderate to severe needs. Sobeck et al. (2020) further found that paraprofessional supervision during pre-service teacher training is often inadequate, raising concerns about accountability and effectiveness in real classroom settings.

To improve outcomes for students with disabilities, it is critical to examine and enhance how paraprofessionals are prepared, deployed, and supported. Learner-centered professional development (Jimenez & Barron, 2019) has shown promise in increasing the effectiveness of paraprofessionals by equipping them with strategies grounded in inclusion and individualized instruction.

Collaborative approaches between general and special educators also strengthen inclusive practices, as evidenced by Smith and Leonard (2006), who emphasized the value of teacher-practitioner partnerships in improving support structures. These findings suggest that meaningful collaboration and continuous skill development are essential components of an effective inclusive education model.

Given the growing recognition of paraprofessionals' impact on student achievement, there is a pressing need to explore effective supervision and professional development models. Research methodologies rooted in qualitative inquiry—such as thematic coding (Saldaña, 2016) and inductive analysis (Patton, 2015)—offer valuable tools for understanding how paraprofessionals perceive their roles and what training models yield meaningful improvements

in practice. These qualitative approaches allow for the exploration of nuanced experiences and systemic challenges, which are often overlooked in purely quantitative studies.

This paper seeks to synthesize existing research on the roles, challenges, and professional development of paraprofessionals in inclusive education. By focusing on evidence-based strategies and common barriers identified across the literature, this study aims to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers, teacher educators, and school leaders. Through the lens of inclusion, collaboration, and learner-centered support, the goal is to clarify how paraprofessionals can be better prepared and supervised to effectively contribute to equitable education for all learners.

Literature Review:

Inclusive education has evolved significantly over the past decades, particularly with the mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) and increasing attention to equitable educational access. Yet, the practical implementation of inclusive settings remains complex, especially regarding the roles and preparation of paraprofessionals.

As Williamson et al. (2020) noted, despite a positive trend in placing students in the least restrictive environments (LRE), challenges persist in ensuring that support personnel are adequately prepared to facilitate inclusion effectively. Paraprofessionals, often tasked with delivering direct instruction and behavioral support, are critical players in these settings. However, a growing body of research reveals that their training, role clarity, and supervision are often insufficient (Walker et al., 2020; Zagona, Kurth, & MacFarland, 2017).

A key area of concern is the perceived lack of readiness among both paraprofessionals and teachers to support students with extensive needs. Ruppert, Neeper, and Dalsen (2016) reported that many special education teachers feel unprepared to teach students with severe disabilities, a concern echoed in faculty perceptions of expertise as explored by Ruppert, Roberts, and Olson (2015, 2017). These studies underscore a systemic issue: the limited development of deep instructional expertise necessary for supporting students with extensive support needs. Similarly, Qadhi et al. (2020) highlighted that novice teachers often feel their professional competencies fall short of the demands of inclusive classrooms, particularly when working with paraprofessionals who may also lack structured training.

Several researchers have emphasized the importance of professional development and performance feedback in addressing these gaps. Sawyer et al. (2017) and Sayeski et al. (2019) demonstrated that behavioral skills training and targeted feedback significantly improve pre-service teachers' instructional competencies.

Sobeck, Robertson, and Smith (2020) found that didactic instruction combined with performance feedback improved paraprofessionals' implementation of behavior support strategies, reinforcing the value of continuous, practice-based learning. Similarly, Sinclair et al. (2020) reviewed the efficacy of real-time feedback and found it to be a powerful tool for improving instructional practices in inclusive settings. These findings align with Jimenez and Barron's (2019) model of learner-centered professional development, which emphasizes ongoing, responsive training tailored to actual classroom demands.

Effective inclusion also depends on collaboration among educational personnel. Smith and Leonard (2006) and Zagona, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017) both stressed that collaboration between teachers and paraprofessionals enhances instructional alignment and learner support. Nevertheless, the lack of preparation for such collaborative roles remains a concern. As Ruppert, Roberts, and Olson (2018) proposed, developing expertise in teaching students with significant disabilities requires not only individual competence but also structured mentorship and systems that support professional growth over time. Spooner, McKissick, and Knight (2017) confirmed that evidence-based practices are underutilized in classrooms serving students with severe disabilities, largely due to a lack of training and support mechanisms.

The methodological approaches used to investigate these issues also matter. Qualitative studies employing inductive techniques (Thomas, 2006) and coding strategies (Saldaña, 2016) provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of teachers and paraprofessionals, while mixed-methods approaches offer a broader view of systemic trends. Furthermore, scholars like Patton (2015) and Willis (2015) underscore the importance of rigorous qualitative design and data interpretation in educational research. Finally, Tabachnick and Fidell (2019) advocate for sophisticated statistical analysis in evaluating educational interventions, emphasizing the role of evidence in shaping teacher education policy and practice.

The literature reveals both the promise and limitations of current practices in paraprofessional preparation for inclusive education. While inclusive placement rates have increased (Williamson et al., 2020), consistent training, supervision, and collaborative structures are lacking. Research supports that practice-based training, real-time feedback, and collaborative models can significantly improve outcomes, yet implementation remains inconsistent.

Moving forward, addressing these gaps through systemic reform and evidence-based practices will be essential to realizing the full potential of inclusion for all learners.

Methodology:

This study employed a general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data, as outlined by Thomas (2006). This approach was chosen for its flexibility in allowing research findings to emerge directly from the raw data, without being constrained by pre-existing theoretical frameworks. The goal was to identify recurring themes and patterns concerning paraprofessional roles in inclusive education, their training and supervision, and the broader policy context supporting students with severe disabilities.

A total of 30 sources were selected through a systematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and government documents. Key databases searched included Google Scholar, Web of Science, and ERIC. Inclusion criteria required that selected studies focus on topics such as paraprofessional implementation in inclusive classrooms, special education teacher preparation, evidence-based training models, and educational policy related to support personnel. Priority was given to literature published within the last 15 years to ensure relevance to contemporary educational contexts.

Data were analyzed using a rigorous coding process based on Saldaña's (2016) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Manual, open coding was used in the first cycle to generate descriptive and in vivo codes. These codes were then organized into broader categories through thematic clustering in the second cycle. The resulting themes reflected common challenges, strategies, and recommendations regarding paraprofessional practice in inclusive settings.

Findings and Discussion:

Role Ambiguity and Policy Gaps

One of the most consistent themes across the literature is the pervasive ambiguity surrounding paraprofessionals' roles in inclusive education. Despite the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), which encourages inclusion and specifies support roles, many local educational policies and practices remain vague. Mason et al. (2020) found that paraprofessionals often report confusion regarding their responsibilities—particularly when distinguishing between instructional duties and behavioral support tasks. This lack of clarity can hinder effective collaboration and lead to role misalignment between paraprofessionals and certified teaching staff.

Massafra, Gershwin, and Gosselin (2020) highlighted the disconnect between federal expectations and local implementation, suggesting that school districts frequently lack structured guidance to align paraprofessional duties with evidence-based practices. Furthermore, Sharma and Salend (2016), in their international review, emphasized that the absence of standardized role definitions creates variability in service delivery, often resulting in paraprofessionals operating in instructional roles without adequate preparation or supervision.

Giangreco and Doyle (2007) warned that this role ambiguity can blur the lines of responsibility in inclusive classrooms, occasionally undermining the professional authority of teachers and creating dependency cycles between students with disabilities and paraprofessionals. These dynamics may unintentionally restrict student independence, contrary to the spirit of inclusive education. Clear role definitions, informed by policy and grounded in research-based frameworks, are necessary for coherent implementation and improved educational outcomes.

Another critical finding concerns the lack of formal training and structured supervision for paraprofessionals. Numerous studies confirm that paraprofessionals are rarely provided with the professional development opportunities required to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. Sobek et al. (2020) conducted a national survey and found significant inconsistencies in how teacher preparation programs train future educators to supervise paraprofessionals effectively. The absence of supervision training leads to fragmented support structures and leaves paraprofessionals without the guidance needed to refine their practices.

Jimenez and Barron (2019) proposed a learner-centered professional development model that includes paraprofessionals as active participants in training and coaching. Their findings showed improved outcomes in inclusion when all members of the instructional team, including paraprofessionals, received coordinated training. Similarly, Walker et al. (2020) emphasized the need for systematic instruction models specifically tailored to paraprofessionals, advocating for structured supervision frameworks that include performance feedback and practice-based coaching.

Real-time performance feedback has emerged as a promising strategy. Sinclair et al. (2020) reviewed evidence on performance feedback and concluded that it significantly enhances instructional practices when delivered

consistently. Sobeck, Robertson, and Smith (2020) demonstrated that paraprofessionals who received both didactic instruction and feedback were more successful in implementing behavior support strategies. These findings align with Sawyer et al. (2017), who reported similar gains in performance among pre-service teachers using behavioral skills training—suggesting that the approach could be equally effective for paraprofessionals.

A parallel issue is the limited emphasis on paraprofessional collaboration within teacher education programs. Zagana, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017) found that while most teachers are trained in content delivery and classroom management, few receive instruction on managing collaborative teaching environments that include paraprofessionals. Smith and Leonard (2006) similarly emphasized the importance of fostering interprofessional collaboration, noting that the success of inclusion often depends on the strength of the relationship between the teacher and the paraprofessional.

Sayeski et al. (2019) highlighted the role of structured feedback and modeling in developing collaborative capacity among teacher candidates. Their study supported embedding supervised practice sessions into teacher training programs, where candidates engage with paraprofessionals in simulated inclusive settings. This practical preparation is especially crucial given the findings of Ruppert, Roberts, and Olson (2015; 2017), who indicated that special education faculty often perceive a lack of expertise in their students regarding inclusive instructional design and adult collaboration.

At the systems level, inconsistencies in paraprofessional placement and support reflect broader gaps in inclusion policy implementation. Williamson et al. (2020) documented fluctuating trends in Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement rates over the last 25 years, with variations attributed partly to uneven support personnel allocation and insufficient paraprofessional training. Spooner, McKissick, and Knight (2017) emphasized the importance of using evidence-based practices (EBPs) for students with severe disabilities, including structured support roles, yet noted that such practices are rarely implemented with fidelity in under-resourced schools.

The findings also call attention to policy misalignment between national guidelines and localized implementation. Patton (2015) argues that qualitative inquiry must contextualize educational policies in real-world settings, acknowledging how variations in leadership, resources, and training can influence implementation fidelity. Saldaña (2016) and Thomas (2006) support the use of inductive thematic analysis to make sense of these local nuances, offering insight into where gaps in training, supervision, and policy communication exist.

The findings reveal a significant disconnect between policy mandates and day-to-day practice regarding paraprofessionals in inclusive education. Role ambiguity, inadequate training and supervision, and insufficient collaboration preparation all contribute to inconsistent and sometimes ineffective support for students with disabilities. Strengthening paraprofessional preparation, clarifying their roles, and fostering collaborative practices through improved teacher education and policy alignment are essential steps toward more equitable and effective inclusive education systems.

Training and Professional Development

Effective professional development (PD) is essential in enhancing paraprofessionals' capacity to support students with disabilities, particularly those with severe support needs. Numerous studies stress the importance of training programs that are contextually grounded, learner-centered, and skills-based. As the responsibilities of paraprofessionals in inclusive settings continue to expand beyond basic caregiving into instructional and behavioral support roles, their training must evolve accordingly to ensure both competence and confidence in practice.

Jimenez and Barron (2019) emphasized the need for learner-centered professional development models tailored to paraprofessionals' real-world experiences. Their model, which promotes meaningful engagement, reflective practice, and collaborative learning, was shown to significantly increase paraprofessionals' understanding and application of inclusive strategies, particularly for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. These findings align with Giangreco and Doyle (2007), who argued that the traditional "on-the-job" learning model fails to sufficiently prepare paraprofessionals for the complexities of inclusive classrooms. Instead, they advocated for structured PD rooted in educational theory and classroom realities.

Sobeck et al. (2020) reinforced this position through a national survey on paraprofessional supervision in pre-service teacher preparation programs. They found that paraprofessionals are often left without direct supervision or formal feedback loops, limiting their growth and role clarity. This absence of structured support contributes to inconsistencies in instructional delivery and weakens overall team collaboration. Addressing this concern, Sobeck, Robertson, and Smith (2020) demonstrated that combining didactic instruction with performance feedback significantly improved paraprofessionals' ability to implement behavior support strategies in inclusive classrooms. Their results underscore the value of integrating both theory and real-time application in PD initiatives.

Building paraprofessionals' confidence and instructional efficacy has also been a focus of Rupp and colleagues across several studies (Rupp et al., 2016; 2017; 2018). These studies consistently revealed that ongoing training, particularly in the form of mentorship and scaffolded learning experiences, fosters a deeper sense of expertise among paraprofessionals working with students with extensive support needs. Rupp et al. (2018) even proposed a developmental "roadmap" for growing expertise in this area, which includes a cycle of targeted instruction, reflective supervision, and continuous professional feedback.

Behavioral skills training (BST) has emerged as another effective strategy for paraprofessional development. Sawyer et al. (2017) employed BST to improve the performance skills of pre-service teachers and paraprofessionals, finding significant improvements in instructional delivery and responsiveness. Similarly, Spooner, McKissick, and Knight (2017) emphasized that training rooted in evidence-based practices not only enhances skill acquisition but also improves outcomes for students with severe disabilities. These findings are supported by Sinclair et al. (2020), whose review of real-time performance feedback literature confirmed its effectiveness in improving instructional fidelity and reducing implementation drift.

Moreover, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004) underscores the legal requirement for schools to ensure that paraprofessionals receive adequate training to assist in the provision of special education services. Despite this federal mandate, local implementation remains inconsistent. Massafra, Gershwin, and Gosselin (2020) argued that many school districts fall short in translating this policy into actionable, school-based PD structures. This policy-practice gap often leaves paraprofessionals underprepared and overwhelmed, a concern echoed by Mason et al. (2020), who noted that paraprofessionals frequently report feeling inadequately supported in their instructional roles.

Research by Sharma and Salend (2016) and Smith and Leonard (2006) further highlighted the consequences of inadequate training: unclear role expectations, ineffective team collaboration, and reduced inclusion outcomes. Smith and Leonard particularly noted that when paraprofessionals are excluded from formal training and collaboration structures, it undermines their legitimacy and efficacy within the instructional team.

To remedy this, scholars like Sayeski et al. (2019) and Walker et al. (2020) advocate for integrating paraprofessional development into broader teacher preparation programs. This inclusion promotes a unified approach to inclusive education, wherein all staff share a common pedagogical language and set of expectations. Such an approach also aligns with Qadhi et al. (2020), who found that teacher preparation programs that emphasize collaboration and performance feedback foster stronger professional competencies among novice educators—an effect that can be extended to paraprofessionals when they are included in the training process.

As inclusive education continues to expand, the role of the paraprofessional must be reimagined and supported through evidence-based, practical, and ongoing professional development. Drawing from the theoretical insights of Patton (2015) and the analytical frameworks of Thomas (2006) and Saldaña (2016), future training models should employ a cycle of qualitative reflection, real-time evaluation, and iterative improvement to ensure effectiveness. Without such systematic investment, the promise of inclusion risks being undermined by underprepared support staff.

A multi-tiered approach to paraprofessional training—incorporating learner-centered design, behavioral skills training, real-time feedback, and policy-aligned implementation—is critical. These efforts will not only empower paraprofessionals but also enhance the academic and social outcomes of the students they serve.

Teacher-Paraprofessional Collaboration and Feedback

Effective collaboration between teachers and paraprofessionals is fundamental to inclusive education. This partnership is not simply a support mechanism—it is a cornerstone of inclusive pedagogy that allows for the successful implementation of individualized supports, instructional fidelity, and positive learner outcomes. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) emphasizes that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment, which often necessitates a collaborative team of professionals, including paraprofessionals. Within this framework, establishing strong, reciprocal, and clearly defined working relationships between general educators, special educators, and paraprofessionals becomes essential.

Research has consistently shown that inclusive practices are more effective when all members of the instructional team communicate and collaborate regularly. Smith and Leonard (2006) highlighted that practitioner-led collaboration leads to shared ownership of instructional responsibilities and mutual respect between team members. Similarly, Zagana, Kurth, and MacFarland (2017) found that teachers who felt adequately prepared for inclusive practices were more likely to value and actively engage in collaborative processes with paraprofessionals. When educators view collaboration not as an added burden but as an integral component of teaching, it fosters a professional culture that supports both students and staff.

Williamson et al. (2020) identified a positive correlation between increased inclusive placement rates and structured collaboration within schools. Their longitudinal analysis of least restrictive environment (LRE) data over 25 years revealed that schools demonstrating higher LRE placements often had systems that promoted professional teamwork and shared accountability among general and special educators. In such settings, paraprofessionals were not seen merely as aides, but as co-educators with distinct roles, contributing to instructional planning, behavior management, and academic support.

To ensure productive teacher-paraprofessional collaboration, clear role delineation is necessary. Giangreco and Doyle (2007) argued that confusion around paraprofessionals' responsibilities often leads to ineffective instructional support and fragmented communication. This is echoed by Massafra, Gershwin, and Gosselin (2020), who examined current policies regarding paraprofessional preparation and found that inconsistencies in training programs led to variable expectations about paraprofessional roles in inclusive classrooms. When paraprofessionals are given ambiguous or underdefined duties, they may either overstep professional boundaries or underperform due to uncertainty and lack of confidence.

Mason et al. (2020) conducted a national survey that captured paraprofessionals' own perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. The study revealed that paraprofessionals often felt left out of instructional planning and feedback loops, resulting in diminished job satisfaction and inconsistent support for students. This highlights the importance of ensuring that paraprofessionals are not merely present in the classroom but are active participants in the educational process. Inclusive collaboration requires systemic commitment to ongoing dialogue, planning, and feedback between all team members.

One of the most effective ways to reinforce teacher-paraprofessional collaboration is through structured and continuous feedback. Sobeck, Robertson, and Smith (2020) demonstrated that when paraprofessionals received didactic instruction coupled with performance feedback, their implementation of behavior support strategies significantly improved. Sayeski et al. (2019) also emphasized the role of guided practice and frequent feedback in shaping teacher candidates' and paraprofessionals' instructional skills, particularly their ability to provide effective opportunities to respond in inclusive classrooms.

Real-time feedback has emerged as a particularly promising practice. Sinclair et al. (2020) reviewed the efficacy of real-time performance feedback in improving classroom instruction and found consistent positive outcomes, especially when feedback was provided by teachers or instructional coaches in a supportive and timely manner. These findings underscore that performance feedback should not be punitive or hierarchical but should foster a culture of growth and professional learning.

In addition to performance monitoring, co-reflection and shared goal-setting between teachers and paraprofessionals contribute to a sustainable collaboration model. Smith and Leonard (2006) suggest that inclusive teams benefit from regular co-planning sessions where instructional strategies are discussed and adapted based on students' evolving needs. Such reflective practices allow paraprofessionals to develop agency and professional identity, while also providing teachers with valuable insights from those working closely with individual students throughout the day.

Training and preparation programs also play a critical role in building the foundation for effective collaboration. According to Sharma and Salend (2016), international research supports the inclusion of collaboration skills in both teacher and paraprofessional training curricula. They argue that technical skills alone are insufficient without accompanying interpersonal competencies, such as communication, adaptability, and shared decision-making.

To analyze such collaborative interactions in real-world contexts, Thomas (2006) and Patton (2015) advocate for qualitative evaluation methods that capture the complexity of these professional relationships. Tools like coding frameworks developed by Saldaña (2016) can be used to examine how feedback is exchanged, how roles are negotiated, and how mutual trust is established or broken down over time.

Furthermore, the broader institutional and policy landscape must support collaborative models of inclusion. Sobeck et al. (2020) found that many pre-service teacher programs do not adequately address how to supervise or collaborate with paraprofessionals, leaving new teachers unprepared to engage in meaningful partnerships. This gap points to a systemic oversight in teacher education, which needs to be addressed to improve both instructional practice and professional dynamics in inclusive classrooms.

Importantly, collaboration should be embedded into the daily structure of schooling rather than treated as an ad-hoc or optional activity. Regular team meetings, professional learning communities, and joint development plans can institutionalize collaboration and ensure that feedback is part of the everyday culture. As Qadhi et al. (2020) emphasized, teacher preparation programs that embed collaborative practice into their core design better equip novice teachers with the professional competencies needed to thrive in inclusive environments.

Moreover, inclusive education must be seen as a collective responsibility. According to Jimenez and Barron (2019), learner-centered professional development models that engage both teachers and paraprofessionals contribute to improved inclusion for students with moderate intellectual disabilities. These models emphasize shared learning experiences, role-playing, and scenario-based training that mirror the real challenges of collaborative teaching.

Teacher-paraprofessional collaboration and structured feedback are indispensable to inclusive education. When schools prioritize communication, define professional roles, and institutionalize feedback mechanisms, paraprofessionals can meaningfully contribute to student success. The evidence strongly supports that inclusive practices thrive in schools where all educational personnel are respected, trained, and engaged in collaborative problem-solving. Investing in such partnerships not only benefits students with disabilities but also fosters a more inclusive, responsive, and effective educational environment for all learners.

Conclusion:

Paraprofessionals play an indispensable role in supporting inclusive education, serving as key contributors to the academic, behavioral, and social success of students with disabilities. However, despite their critical function, their full potential remains underutilized due to systemic barriers such as ambiguous role definitions, insufficient professional training, and fragmented collaboration with teachers.

This systematic analysis highlights three essential areas requiring targeted improvement: the clarification and standardization of paraprofessional roles, the development of sustained and context-responsive professional learning, and the implementation of structured collaboration and feedback systems within inclusive educational settings.

To advance the goals of inclusion, schools and educational policy-makers must take deliberate steps to establish clearly defined job descriptions for paraprofessionals that align with best practices and legal mandates such as those outlined in IDEA (2004). These definitions should guide hiring, training, and supervision to ensure consistent implementation across schools and districts. Alongside this, professional development should shift from one-time, generalized workshops to ongoing, differentiated learning opportunities that reflect the realities of classroom practice. Programs should include real-time performance feedback, peer mentoring, and co-reflection with certified teachers to foster both competence and confidence.

Crucially, collaborative relationships between teachers and paraprofessionals must be embedded into school culture. This includes regular co-planning meetings, shared instructional responsibilities, and mutual feedback systems that promote trust, accountability, and shared professional growth. Structured collaboration not only enhances instructional quality but also supports job satisfaction and retention among paraprofessionals.

Future research should investigate the long-term impacts of paraprofessional training programs on student outcomes and classroom inclusion. Additionally, studies should explore how effective models of collaboration and feedback can be scaled across diverse educational contexts. By addressing these systemic gaps and investing in comprehensive support systems, schools can ensure that paraprofessionals are not just aides but empowered co-educators who help make inclusive education truly equitable and effective for all learners.

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