

Preface

*Every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it.
Autograph your work with excellence.*

Unknown

Paraprofessionals are valuable, essential (and often overlooked) members of the special education team. Without the support of these hardworking people, a well-organized and successful inclusive education program is difficult if not impossible to implement. Yet there are few publications developed specifically as hands-on working manuals for the paraprofessional.

As a special educator, I was involved in the implementation and set-up of inclusive programs. The first book I wrote, in 1995, was a manual for educators titled *Inclusion: 450 Strategies for Success*. At the time, inclusive education was in its infancy, and the number of paraprofessionals working in special education was limited. As inclusive education evolved, the number of paraprofessionals has increased dramatically. I was fortunate to be involved with many exceptional paraprofessionals, working alongside and with them in inservice training. I compiled ideas and asked simple questions such as “What support do you need to make your job easier?” and “What tools will help you be successful?” The first edition of this book, *Inclusion: An Essential Guide for the Paraprofessional*, also published in 1996, evolved from these conversations. Now in its third edition, it bears little resemblance to the first edition. Since that time, many changes have occurred in special education, and this publication has evolved along with the system.

The purpose of this book is to be a concrete resource for paraprofessionals to use daily. It answers common questions, provides extensive strategies to help students in all areas of the curriculum, and incorporates a collection of forms and templates to support paraprofessionals and students. Although the primary audience is paraprofessionals, earlier editions of this book have been widely used as a training tool by educators and staff development professionals. It is also a helpful resource for parents to differentiate the roles of both educators and paraprofessionals in relation to their children’s educational program.

Whether you are experienced, newly hired, or simply exploring the field of special education as a possible career change, this book is for you. The special education field is complex and operates within a due process system established by governing laws. To work in this field, it is important to understand the system and the students with whom you will work. With a strong knowledge base, you will be prepared, confident, and comfortable working with this special population of students. Their needs determine the role and responsibilities for each paraprofessional; therefore, your job description may be

completely different from that of your colleagues. Often there is a misconception that special education is a “place,” but in reality it is a set of services provided to students, and the services fluctuate depending on the unique needs of each student.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Paraprofessional's Essential Guide to Inclusive Education, Third Edition, is a practical hands-on resource for use in the classroom or resource room setting. Although the focus is students with special needs, many of the strategies are appropriate for general education students who are struggling in school and may need additional support to experience success.

The hundreds of numbered strategies in this publication are divided by topic. The numbering system is intended to help you document your use of the strategies along with your results. It simplifies record keeping and supports the documentation of student progress. With hundreds of easy-to-implement ideas at your fingertips, this book will make your job easier. Throughout the text, I discuss forms that can help with communication, planning, documentation, supplemental student aids, and more. All of these forms can be found in the Resources.

What's New in This Edition

Some of the highlights of this completely revised third edition include a new chapter on reading (Chapter 10), new sections within existing chapters, additional activities for individual or inservice use, and approximately 80 new strategies and 12 new forms (which are available on CD-ROM for easy reproduction).

Chapter 10 is dedicated to helping struggling readers in the classroom. It offers specific strategies and materials to enhance student support in the areas of reading decoding, comprehension, and vocabulary development, and it provides new supplemental forms. Another major change is the revision of Chapter 7, “Accommodations and Modifications,” which now clearly distinguishes between these two areas in terms of environment as well as program planning. After reading Chapter 7, you will clearly understand and easily distinguish between these frequently confused areas. Educators and paraprofessionals have indicated the usefulness of the previous edition's activities and hypothetical situations, which are used to develop a skill, to increase understanding of situations that may occur, or as an inservice tool. Therefore, additional activities have been included in this edition. Of course, no book is complete without including the current updates to federal legislation. Therefore, revisions include an update to disability areas in the law and a section discussing possible classroom implications.

So whether you are about to pursue your first job, have recently been hired by a school system, or are an experienced paraprofessional, this book will provide the support needed to make your job a little easier.

Committing your career to inclusive schooling and supporting students with special needs in the classroom is both challenging and rewarding. With your support, students will develop not only academically but also socially and emotionally to reach their full potential. You will make a difference in the lives of many children!

Peggy Hammeken