CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

A.L. Pickett (1999), Director of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, defines a paraprofessional as a school employee who works under the supervision of a certified or licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instruction and other services to children, youth and their families. Because the prefix "para" means "along side of," it is correct to assume that a paraprofessional works along side an educator (teacher, related service provider, etc.). Pickett and a number of her colleagues have widely noted that paraprofessionals are not appropriately supervised. Issues regarding the importance of effective supervision of paraprofessionals are frequently mentioned in the professional literature (D'Aquanni, 1997; Guess, Smith & Entsminger, 1971; McKenzie & Houk, 1986), and these issues require more thorough examination.

Context for the Study

I establish the context for the study by describing a familiar scenario. It is August and teachers have arrived at school for the preservice workweek to organize their classrooms and begin to develop lesson plans. Many teachers will collaborate with one another and share teaching techniques. Rita, a 22-year-old first-year special education teacher, is excited and apprehensive about the position she has accepted teaching 10 students with significant disabilities in a self-contained classroom setting. She also has the responsibility of supervising and managing the cases of five more students in inclusive settings throughout the school. In order to serve these students effectively, Rita has been assigned four paraprofessionals; this poses a potential problem, because her undergraduate teacher preparation program focused on

the education of students, not the supervision of adults. Her building level administrator has not provided her with any guidance regarding how to best supervise these paraprofessionals.

The range of experience of Rita's paraprofessionals combined with her own lack of supervision experience may create an extra burden for Rita who must figure out how to best utilize them. One of these paraprofessionals, who is assigned to her classroom, has worked in the school for over 15 years. Although new to this school, another, who is assigned to an individual student who has specific health and medical needs, has served as a paraprofessional in the school system for 10 years. The two remaining paraprofessionals assist students in regular classroom settings. Of the two, one has recently graduated from high school and this is her first experience working in the classroom. The other has one year of work experience in this school. Rita will need to plan for these paraprofessionals. She will have to decide what tasks she should delegate to them, how she will clarify roles for them and herself, how she will monitor their performance, and how she will provide training and mentoring. She also has to consider the responses of these paraprofessionals to her efforts to support them.

This scenario asks how a teacher without supervisory preparation or training will be able to assign and oversee the tasks of four adults, of whom all but one have more experience than this teacher. This purpose of this study is to examine paraprofessional supervision in two middle schools in a suburban school district in southwestern Virginia in order to contribute to the knowledge base surrounding current practices in supervising support personnel in school settings.

Background of the Problem

Issues in the supervision of paraprofessionals have gained prominence as the roles for both paraprofessionals and teachers have evolved with an increasing number of paraprofessional

now working in classrooms. (Pickett, 1997). In the past, paraprofessionals spent most of their

time completing clerical tasks, but now they serve in more instructional positions with teachers

acting as their managers. The number of paraprofessionals in the workforce continues to grow;

however, there is not a research base supporting their supervision in school settings that reflects

this growth. As a result, paraprofessionals frequently learn how to carry out their job

responsibilities through trial and error and on-the-job learning experiences (D'Aquanni, 1997;

Mueller, 1997). In addition, teachers often feel that they are not prepared to supervise

paraprofessionals in school settings (French, 1998; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Scruggs &

Mastropieri, 1996). Teacher preparation programs, however, have not changed to accommodate

the increased need to prepare teachers for the supervisory role they must assume with the

growing numbers of paraprofessionals. (Pickett, 1993). As Pickett, Vasa, and Steckelberg (1993)

pointed out, "in far too many cases, teachers are not prepared to direct paraeducators, to evaluate

their performance, to provide feedback and training, or to assess the potential for greater use of

paraeducators in order to free teachers to provide increased instructional services" (p. 31). As

well as being the primary educators in the classroom, teachers have evolved into supervisors in

relation to working with paraprofessionals (Pickett, 1997). It is often the classroom teacher,

whether that is a general education or special education teacher, who bears the responsibility for

the day-to-day supervision of paraprofessionals.

In addition to the problematic lack of supervisory preparation, teachers and

paraprofessionals often have differing perceptions of what this supervisory role for teachers

entails (D'Aquanni, 1997; Milner, 1998; Mueller, 1997). In order to address this confusion,

Pickett (1999) developed a framework comprising the primary components of effective

supervision of paraprofessionals that includes planning work assignments, task delegating, role

clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring. Addressing the problems of supervisory training for teachers and the confusion over differing perceptions of the teacher's supervisory role is important, because federal and state legislation now mandates the appropriate supervision of paraprofessionals.

<u>The Need to Study Paraprofessional Supervision</u>

The need to study how paraprofessionals are supervised becomes more apparent when the changes in their numbers and deployment are reviewed. In the early 1960s, there were approximately 10,000 paraprofessionals working in schools, primarily in non-instructional capacities. In the mid 1990s, the estimated number of paraprofessionals was between 500,000 and 700,000 nationwide (Pickett, 1996). A report from the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998) states, "The intent of using paraprofessionals is to supplement the work of the teacher/service provider" (p. 1).

Paraprofessionals are often utilized in the school setting to provide services, both direct and indirect, to students with various disabilities. The provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which require schools to serve students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, has contributed to the rising use of paraprofessionals in schools today. The IDEA, reauthorized in 1997, specifically identifies the need for paraprofessional training and supervision (C.F.R. sec. 300.382(b), 300.136(f)). The federal and state mandates as well as the growing numbers of support personnel in schools, all argue the importance of understanding how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervisory process.

Purpose and Methodology of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms in order to determine if there is a need to teach teachers how to be

supervisors. Questions regarding the teacher's role as a supervisor were derived from Pickett's (1999) framework, which addresses five areas: planning, task delegating, role clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and systematic on-the-job training and mentoring.

Research Questions

Many studies note a need for effective paraprofessional supervision, but relevant research directly related to this need is limited. The overall question guiding this study asks how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms. Supporting questions developed from Pickett's (1999) framework, and discussed in Chapter Two, serve as the theoretical lens that frame this study. This framework assumes that the teacher is in fact performing the role of a supervisor. Supporting questions are as follows:

1. How do teachers plan work assignments for paraprofessionals?

2. How do teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals?

3. How do teachers share information about their roles with paraprofessionals?

4. How do teachers monitor the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals?

5. How do teachers provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals?

Case Study Methods

A descriptive case study is the best method of providing the rich and complex details of this issue. Yin (1994) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.13). I chose case study research in order to gather information of a greater depth than would be possible using another methodology such as survey data. Patton (1990) states, "qualitative methods permit the researcher to study selected

issues in depth and detail; the fact that data collection is not constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth and detail of qualitative data" (p. 165).

Because case study research relies on multiple sources of data, I conducted semi-structured interviews asking a set of open-ended questions. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. In addition to interviews, I conducted informal observations to gain a more thorough understanding of the school, its climate, and its day-to-day operations, because, as Patton (1990) states, observations "allow an evaluator to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive in approach" (p. 203). I also reviewed numerous documents related to paraprofessional supervision in the school district selected for this study. Documents included, but were not limited to, policy manuals, school handbooks, web site information, and memos. Finally, I maintained a researcher's journal. This allowed me to document a chain of evidence throughout the study. Memo writing in the journal helped me to reflect on my thoughts and ideas as I went through the research process. Another benefit of maintaining a researcher's journal was to document any changes necessary in the study. An example of a type of revision that might have been warranted would be altering interview questions if information gathered during observations makes those questions redundant or irrelevant. This case study uses an operational definition of supervision based on the skills identified in Pickett's (1999) framework for supervising paraprofessionals. The intent of this research is to add current data to the existing body of knowledge that supports teachers in their day-to-day supervision of paraprofessionals.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of this study that must be noted. It was conducted in two suburban middle schools in Southwestern Virginia. While this setting may limit the applicability of this study to other settings, it can also encourage others to conduct studies that add to my

findings. In addition, the experiences of the participants interviewed and observed in this study

may not reflect others working in other classroom or school settings. I will thoroughly explain

and document the context of the study in Chapter Three, including information about the school

district and each participating school so that readers may determine if this study will be easily

transferable to other settings. Any other limitations found as the study progressed are

documented in Chapter Five.

Definitions

Several specific terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Paraprofessional - a school employee who works under the supervision of a certified or licensed

professional to support and assist in providing instruction and other services to students and

families (Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). Other titles may include paraeducator, teaching assistant,

teacher aide or instructional assistant.

Supervising Teacher - a licensed general education or special education teacher who is

responsible for supervising and integrating paraprofessionals into various learning environments

(Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

Guiding Principles - statements of beliefs that provide a philosophical framework on which State

Education Agencies (SEAs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and other agencies can build to

ensure appropriate team roles, supervision, and professional development and respect for

paraeducators (Pickett, 1999).

Supervision - an operational definition of instructional supervision of paraprofessionals, as

derived from Pickett's (1999) framework and includes: a) planning work assignments; (b)

delegating tasks to paraprofessionals; (c) sharing information with paraprofessionals regarding

roles; (d) monitoring day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals; and (e) providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals.

Significance of the Study

Designed to provide systematic inquiry into the supervision of paraprofessionals in two middle schools, this study contributes substantive information about how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision process in middle school classrooms. Results of this study could have training implications for staff development personnel, teachers who provide instructional supervision to paraprofessionals, and even for the paraprofessionals themselves. In response to the growing numbers of paraprofessionals in school settings today and the limited amount of research in the area of their supervision, it is expected that this research will make a contribution to the knowledge base of current practices in supervising support personnel in public schools.

Overview of the Study

This study provides a detailed look into the supervisory practices of teachers with regard to paraprofessionals. Chapter One includes the introduction, purpose of the study, research questions, methodology, limitations of the study, significance of the study, and an overview of paraprofessionals and their supervision. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature related to the supervision of paraprofessionals in relation to Pickett's (1999) framework. Chapter Three identifies the procedures for collecting and analyzing the data. Findings are presented in Chapter Four, and implications for practice and future research are included in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the supervision of paraprofessionals. The topics covered are Pickett's (1999) framework for paraprofessional supervision, a description of paraprofessionals and the policies that govern their supervision, paraprofessional training, efficacy, and supervision, survey data conducted in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and a research synthesis of ten studies that explore paraprofessional supervision.

Problems in Supervising Educational Paraprofessionals

The issue of paraprofessional supervision is an important issue to study for several reasons. First, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states and localities to address the identified needs for in-service and pre-service preparation to ensure that all personnel who work with children with disabilities have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of these children (CFR sec. 300.382(b), 300.136(f)). This mandate applies to both professional and paraprofessional personnel who provide special education, general education, related services, or early intervention services. The IDEA also calls for supervision of paraprofessionals, which remains a gray area for school personnel, as many are unsure of who actually supervises the paraprofessional-- the special education teacher, the general education teacher, or the building level administrator.

Secondly, the substantial increase in the number of paraprofessionals in the workforce, as well as changes in their job descriptions over the past 20 years compounds this problem. The utilization of paraprofessionals began in the 1950s during an era of post-World War II teacher shortages (Jones & Bender, 1993) because many parents of disabled youth sought alternatives to

the more traditional institutional settings. The early 1970s also saw a dramatic increase in the number of paraprofessionals with the inception of special education programs in public schools, when they were hired to assist teachers with the delivery of special education services to children and youth with disabilities. Jones and Bender (1993) assert that in 1965 fewer than 10,000 paraprofessionals were employed in public schools. Today the number of paraprofessionals is estimated to be between 500,000 and 700,000 (The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 2000). In spite of growing numbers, Jones and Bender conclude, "there is a relative lack of evidence attesting to the efficacy of paraprofessionals in enhancing student outcomes" (p. 7). French (1998) states, "in the past, paraprofessionals often performed clerical tasks such as duplicating materials" (p. 357). In schools today, however, paraprofessionals are responsible for innumerable duties, many of which focus on or revolve around direct interaction with children and youth with disabilities. Paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities have grown to include tasks such as monitoring students' academic and behavioral progress as well as participating in instructional delivery.

Finally, these increased numbers and changing responsibilities of paraprofessionals have forced teachers into assuming supervisory roles. According to French (1998), teachers often feel unqualified to supervise paraprofessionals and are reluctant to provide supervision to paraprofessionals. Most teachers prefer working with paraprofessionals who require little supervision. In referring to her work investigating supervisory practices, French explains, "Some teachers…failed to distinguish between the ethical and legal responsibilities of the professional teacher and those tasks appropriately delegated to a paraeducator, describing the paraprofessional as a peer rather than a supervisee" (p. 365). A misperception of roles complicates the supervisory issue even more.

Reviewing the Literature

Paraprofessionals in educational settings have been the focus of much research

(D'Aquanni, 1997; French, 1998; Guess, Smith & Entsminger, 1971; Holder 1997; McKenzie &

Houk, 1986; and Pickett, 1997). However, only a handful of researchers have specifically

addressed the issue of paraprofessional supervision. In order to conduct a thorough review of

literature, I utilized several search methods. Computerized database searches including ERIC and

Dissertation Abstracts International, journal articles, books, and dissertations were all used to

locate information. Search terms on computerized databases included, but were not limited to,

supervision, paraprofessionals, paraeducators, and paraprofessional supervision and were often

paired with others such as special education and middle school. These searches extended from

1970 through the present year, the period that has seen the greatest change in deployment of

paraprofessionals and demand for their supervision. Conversations with different researchers in

the field, including Anna Lou Pickett and Nancy French, also led to the identification of

additional sources.

This chapter concludes with a synthesis of the research concerning paraprofessional

supervision, specifically related to Pickett's (1999) framework, which includes information

pertaining to the following: (a) how teachers plan work assignments for paraprofessionals; (b)

how teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals; (c) how information is shared with

paraprofessionals regarding their roles; (d) how the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals

is monitored; and (e) how on-the-job training and mentoring are utilized to assist

paraprofessionals. Although these five skill sets are general supervisory tasks, research indicates

that schools are not currently providing this level of supervision to paraprofessionals (Frank,

Keith & Steil, 1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999; Pickett & Gerlack, 1997). However, because

there is limited research in the area of paraprofessional supervision, these skill sets will serve as the framework for this study.

<div align="center">Examining the Conceptual Framework</div>

For the purpose of this study, the components of Pickett's (1999) framework will be used to analyze the supervision of paraprofessionals in middle schools. In this section of the review, each element of the framework will be presented in detail.

Planning Work Assignments

The first specific skill documented in Pickett's (1999) framework is planning, an important, and often overlooked, task of teacher/paraprofessional teams. In fact, teachers and paraprofessionals are often unsure of who is responsible for planning for the paraprofessional. Pickett (1997) points out "designing instructional environments and making decisions about the goals, objectives, activities, and evaluations of instructional episodes are tasks that are well outside the paraeducator's scope of responsibility" (p. 95). Although planning may be formal or informal, it is the responsibility of the teacher.

Task Delegation

The second skill is delegation, the assignment of certain tasks to others to allow the leader or supervisor to focus on more critical tasks at hand. Teachers often delegate duties to paraprofessionals to give themselves more time to focus on student needs, instruction, and other work that cannot be delegated. Pickett (1997) states delegation "must specify the outcomes, the time frame, and the level of authority, but should not demand that the paraeducator perform in exactly the same manner as the professional, nor should it demand perfection" (p. 105). Although responsible delegation can assist paraprofessionals in gaining new skills and initiative,

research indicates that teachers are not prepared or comfortable delegating tasks to them

(Cramer, 1997; French, 1998).

<u>Role Clarifying</u>

In addition to planning and delegation, both teachers and paraprofessionals must

understand their individual roles in order to perform effectively. Roles, therefore, need to be

discussed and clarified for paraprofessionals. A statewide survey of paraprofessionals in the

Commonwealth of Virginia found that paraprofessionals desired training specific to their jobs

when asked what preparation would have been most helpful prior to their first assignment. When

designing roles and responsibilities, teachers should consider "experience, training, comfort

level, time constraints, and knowledge levels of individual team members" (Pickett, 1997, p.

175).

<u>Daily Performance Monitoring</u>

Another facet of supervising paraprofessionals is monitoring performance. Pickett (1997)

states "evaluation of paraeducator job performance requires judgment and should be based on

fair performance standards, first-hand observations, written data, and appropriate documentation

of performance" (p. 129). Performance monitoring adds an extra burden to a teacher's already

full schedule of duties, but is essential to insure that the paraprofessional is performing his/her

duties responsibly. A very good method for evaluating performance is teacher observation.

<u>Systematic On-The-Job Training and Mentoring</u>

Finally, on-the-job training and mentoring are supervisory techniques teachers working

with paraprofessionals can use to encourage paraprofessionals to perform their delegated tasks to

the best of their abilities. Teachers can provide on-the-job training in numerous ways that include

meeting formally or informally, modeling, providing feedback, and coaching paraprofessionals through various situations. The IDEA mandates training for paraprofessionals, therefore, this should be common practice for teachers who are responsible for both supervising paraprofessionals and meeting the needs of their students.

<center>Paraprofessionals: Who Are They?</center>

Paraprofessionals play a critical role in public education, especially in regard to providing services to students with disabilities. Paraprofessionals work alongside of other professionals to better support students in classroom settings. As the number of paraprofessionals in public school settings continues to grow and paraprofessional assignments have become more instructional in nature, the amount of research currently being conducted on this topic has also expanded.

<center>Policies Governing Paraprofessionals and their Supervision</center>

One of the issues driving current research is policy governing paraprofessionals and their supervision. It is an important issue because accountability is critical in all areas of public education today, and until recently, there were few regulations for the employment of paraprofessionals. However, due to the increased reliance on paraprofessionals, there are now state and federal guidelines mandating their training and supervision. For example, State Education Agencies (SEAs) must now provide leadership in the development of standards to ensure that all personnel, including paraprofessionals, are adequately and appropriately supervised (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Title I both include regulations governing paraprofessional training and supervision.

Title I, the largest program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also was originally designed to assist low-performing students who were considered to be

economically disadvantaged. Reauthorized in 1994, Title I recognizes the important role of paraprofessionals. The federal government included paraeducators under general requirements for professional development with an option for career ladder programs" (U.S. Code, Title 20, Section 6320, 1994). In October 1999, the United States House of Representatives approved a bill stating that

> not later than three years after enactment, all paraprofessionals will need to have:
> completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; or obtained an
> associate's (or higher) degree; or met a rigorous standard of quality established at the
> state or local level, which includes assessment of math, reading, and writing (U.S. House
> of Representatives, 1999).

Federal government now mandates the educational qualifications for paraprofessionals. This means that the paraprofessionals nationally have to meet minimum standards to qualify for their positions.

<div align="center">State Regulations and Policy</div>

Many variations exist in state regulations and policy that guide paraprofessional employment. To date, "Washington State has developed 14 Core Competencies for Paraeducators, various training and delivery models, and a tracking system for local and personnel record keeping" (The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory Policy Paper, p. 13). Iowa is currently working toward paraprofessional licensure that would entail 45 hours of instruction and training. Like Washington State, Iowa has also established core competencies for paraprofessionals. Other states are exploring career ladders and have identified standards for paraprofessionals. Although some states have established more in-depth policies and procedures

for paraprofessional employment and supervision, a majority of states, including Virginia, have

yet to define these.

Although paraprofessionals can be used in any kind of classroom setting, there has been a

growing tendency to deploy them in the area of special education. Frith and Lindsey (1982)

conducted a survey of State Education Agencies (SEAs) in order to collect, synthesize, evaluate

and disseminate data on special education paraprofessional certification, training, and other

programming variables. They drew on topical issues gleaned from a review of professional

literature and informal communication with leaders in the paraprofessional movement to develop

a questionnaire to investigate SEA personnel certification, training and programming variables

nationwide. Sent to all 50 states, the questionnaire had 109 items addressing certification,

programming and training that elicited multiple choice, true/false, yes/no or short answer

responses. State directors of special education or their designated representatives usually

completed the questionnaires from the 44 states responding.

Frith and Lindsey (1982) analyzed the data descriptively, grouped the responses, and

converted them to percentages. Most states (86%) reported that they did not have certification

standards for special education paraprofessionals. Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated

that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) could employ whomever they desired as special

education paraprofessionals, but only 58% agreed with this policy. Sixty percent agreed that

certification requirements should be more vigorous. Ninety-four percent indicated that the "ideal

life" of a special education paraprofessional should be five years or less. Fifty-eight percent

indicated that paraprofessional training was the responsibility of the LEA. In addition, 72%

indicated that training programs did not require state board of education approval. Almost all

respondents (97%) indicated that hands-on-experience with children with disabilities be included

in the training of special education paraprofessionals. The survey also identified several concerns related to the employment of paraprofessionals. These include paraprofessionals not being properly utilized by teachers, inadequate formal training programs on the needs of children, the relationships between teachers and paraprofessionals, a false sense of self importance and getting along with administrators and children.

This study had several limitations. To begin, there was a lack of consistency in the capacity of respondents to answer the items on the questionnaire appropriately, which may indicate a wide disparity among states' interpretations of special education and the paraprofessional concept. In addition, since the study focused on the state level, day-to-day practitioners did not participate. Even with these limitations, this study sheds light on the fact that 20 years ago there were wide discrepancies among states regarding the employment of paraprofessionals.

Guiding Principles for Paraprofessional Employment, Roles, Preparation, and Supervision

To assist states with the growing confusion surrounding the use of paraprofessionals, Pickett established the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services (NRCP). This resource center, located in New York, helps school divisions gain a more thorough understanding of paraprofessionals and their unique needs, including supervision. In 1999, as an outcome of research conducted by the NRCP in conjunction with other statewide efforts, Pickett articulated eight standards or guiding principles for paraprofessional employment, roles, preparation, and supervision that a task force of professionals in the field had developed. The task force included administrators from local and state education agencies, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and representatives from both two and four-year colleges who were

Table 1

Guiding Principles for Paraprofessional Employment, Roles, Preparation, and Supervision

_____

Guiding Principle	Description

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Guiding Principle	Description
Guiding Principle #1	Skilled paraeducators are employed to improve the quality of education and services in other provider systems and to help ensure supportive, inclusive, safe, and healthy learning environments for children, youth, and staff.
Guiding Principle #2	Administrators and teachers/providers create environments that recognize paraeducators as valued team members and effectively integrate them into teams.
Guiding Principle #3	Members of all program planning and implementation teams participate within clearly defined roles in changing, dynamic environments to provide learner-centered and individualized experiences and services for all children and youth and their families.
Guiding Principle #4	Paraeducators are respected and supported in their team roles by policymakers, administrators, teachers/providers, and families.
Guiding Principle #5	Standards for paraeducator roles and paraprofessional development assure that they are assigned to positions for which they are qualified to have the skills required to assist teachers/providers to provide quality learning experiences and related services for all children and youth and their families.

Guiding Principle #6   Paraeducators receive pre- and inservice professional development provided by the district/agency and opportunities for continuing education or career advancement offered by institutions of higher education.

Guiding Principle #7   Teachers/providers responsible for supervising the work of paraeducators have the skills necessary to plan for, direct, provide on-the-job training for, monitor, and evaluate the skills of paraeducators.

Note. From "Strengthening and Supporting Teacher/Provider-Paraeducator Teams; Guidelines for Paraeducator Roles, Supervision, and Preparation," by A.L. Pickett, 1999, p. 7.

chosen specifically because they were practitioners at the time and, therefore, familiar with the roles of paraprofessionals and the teachers who supervise them.

After compiling a literature review of relevant articles and studies, the group developed a national survey that was mailed to 700 people on the mailing list of the NRCP, chosen because the participants were actively involved with paraprofessionals and/or their supervision. Analyzing the data from the roughly 400 surveys completed and returned, the task force found much agreement among respondents in describing the different tasks performed by both teachers and paraprofessionals. As a result, it developed guiding principles that describe the scope of the responsibilities of both paraprofessionals and the teachers who supervise them. These principles are illustrated in Table 1. This task force's work is significant not only because it represents the first time that the roles of teachers and paraprofessionals were closely scrutinized together, it is also important because its Guiding Principle #7 provides the basis for this study's examination of how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms (See Table 1).

Paraprofessional Training

Paraprofessionals are often utilized in schools to aid with direct student instruction, and serve as "learner supports" in the delivery of special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities. Although they are hired to work directly with the most challenging students in the school, they often come unprepared for the task through no fault of their own. It has become increasingly popular in schools to assign a paraprofessional to work one-on-one with a student or to work with groups of students with significant disabilities. This kind of assignment almost always occurs with no prior training and no ongoing supervision (Frank, Keith, & Steil, 1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999). There are often no prerequisite skills required for paraprofessionals and training opportunities are limited (Pickett, 1997). In addition, supervising

teachers are not prepared to adequately supervise paraprofessionals in school settings (French, 1998; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Giangreco et al. (1998) highlights the problem: "What constitutes an appropriate level of training to be an effective paraeducator is currently a topic of national debate, though there seems to be widespread consensus that some level of training and orientation is required to be effective paraeducators" (p. 16). Although this issue is now the focus of a national debate, it is not new.

In a 1988 study by Frank, Keith, and Steil, questionnaire data were used to identify the tasks that special education teachers rate as important for their paraprofessionals to be able to complete. They were also asked to rate their paraprofessionals' skills in completing tasks rated as important. In addition, this study examined the effects the program instructional model and age of students served had on the ratings. Approximately one third of all special education teachers in Iowa who were assigned paraprofessionals for that school year participated in the study. Results of the study indicated that overall, special education teachers were satisfied with the performance of their paraprofessionals. "The most common statements or comments [obtained from the survey] concerned inservice training for paraprofessionals. Twenty-five teachers and seven paraprofessionals indicated that more training was needed" (p. 257). Specifically, training in the area of managing student behavior was cited most frequently. Paraprofessionals must be provided with appropriate training and supervision if they are to provide academic instruction to students with disabilities and benefit the students they come in contact with each day. Closely related was the identified need for formal college training programs for paraprofessionals. It was noted that paraprofessionals should have differing competencies depending on the type of educational setting in which they are employed.

More recently, a study by D'Aquanni (1997) examined the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in several elementary schools in New York City. Eight paraprofessionals working in grades 2 through grade 5 in four elementary schools participated. Data collection included interviews and direct observation of the paraprofessionals, as well as interviews with the principals of the participating schools, the director of special education for each district, the parents of the students with special needs who were being supported by paraprofessionals, students within the program, and the general and special education teachers who work with these paraprofessionals. This study noted, "historical job descriptions, indeterminate supervision, ineffective team practices, and inadequate training all contribute to the confusion that surrounds what it is that paraprofessionals are responsible for and actually doing" (p. 1). In many situations, if paraprofessionals are not given job descriptions and responsibilities are not designated, they may "learn as they go" or learn by the example of other paraprofessionals or teachers in the building. Although D'Aquanni's study took place almost 10 years after the study done by Frank, Keith, and Steil (1988), common themes in both including role clarification indicate that appropriate supervision of paraprofessionals continues to remain an area of concern.

Paraprofessional Efficacy

One study found, although not recent, addresses the efficacy of paraprofessionals in regard to student outcomes. It also provides some significant insight into the importance of training and supervising paraprofessionals. In 1971, Guess, Smith, and Entsminger studied 80 persons with mental disabilities who resided in an institutional setting that served over 400 residents from 3-years through 25-years-of-age, most of whom were identified with severe mental retardation. Forty residents participated in the language development program. The experimental design compared children who attended language development classes over a 2-

year period with those who served as matched controls over the same time interval. Pre and post testing was administered using the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, the Vineland Social Maturity Scale, Mecham Verbal Language Development Scale, and the experimental edition of the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities.

Trained paraprofessionals taught language development skills to the 40 identified residents over the 2-year period. The training for these paraprofessionals consisted of discussions and assigned readings, and the project director met with them daily. During these meetings, the paraprofessionals were given opportunities to discuss any concerns they had and were allowed to problem solve. Results of the study show that the residents made positive gains. Significant differences were noted for those who worked closely with the trained paraprofessionals. Guess et al. (1971) note that "these findings substantiate the basic hypothesis of the study that systematic and intense language training can improve performance" (p. 451).

Results of this study also demonstrate that nonprofessional persons can be trained to develop and enhance the speech and language skills of children with mental retardation. Furthermore, it documents the positive impact of training and ongoing supervision for paraprofessionals provided by the speech clinician who supervised, consulted, and assisted the paraprofessionals in their work. It should be noted that speech and language assistants are carefully trained and have different expectations and standards from those paraprofessionals in general or special education settings. Regardless of the paraprofessionals' positions, a common theme is that there is a need for their appropriate supervision.

<center>Professional and Paraprofessional Responsibilities</center>

Although many practitioners in the field have noted and continue to note the need for appropriate training for paraprofessionals (Frith et al. 1982; Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al.

1999; Mueller, 1997; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996), there are differing ideas regarding responsibilities for both teachers and paraprofessionals.

In 1982, Escudero and Sears conducted a study in an effort to "provide information that would reduce the ambiguity between the responsibilities and skills needed by teachers and teacher aides for the severely/profoundly handicapped" (p. 190). Seventy-two teachers and 65 paraprofessionals participated in this study that investigated the perceptions of both groups in an effort to assist with role clarification. A questionnaire was disseminated that included Likert-type rating scales and each of the 70 questions fit into one of 13 categories: (a) administration; (b) interdisciplinary professional relationships; (c) utilization of local, state and national resources; (d) training others; (e) parent relationships; (f) student assessment; (g) curriculum development; (h) curriculum areas; (i) teaching procedures; (j) behavioral approach to teaching; (k) child development; and (l) adaptive aids and associated medical/health considerations. Each group was asked to select whether a particular responsibility was exclusively or primarily the role of the teacher. The return rate for the questionnaires was 92%.

Results indicated that the roles of teachers, especially those instructing students with disabilities, included many tasks other than simply direct student instruction. Escudero and Sears (1982) reported "the teacher for [students with severe and profound disabilities] appeared to be perceived as more of an instructional manager or coordinator of instructional activities than as a person who just provides direct instruction" (p. 193). Results also indicated that paraprofessionals are often responsible for direct student instruction. Escudero and Sears point out that training should "prepare teacher aides for the responsibilities they will be sharing with teachers" (p. 194). In other words, both teachers and paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities need training to prepare them for their specific roles in the classroom.

Frank, Keith and Steil (1988) took Escudero's and Sear's (1982) study one step further by identifying those tasks that special education teachers in Iowa rated as important for their paraprofessionals to be able to complete. The study by Frank et al. described earlier in this chapter, used a questionnaire to address the following questions:

1. What tasks do special education teachers rate as important for their paraprofessionals to be able to complete?

2. Do special education teachers rate their paraprofessionals as skillful in those tasks judged to be important?

3. What is the relationship between the ratings of special education teachers and their paraprofessionals concerning the importance of tasks to be completed and the paraprofessionals' skill in completing tasks (p. 253)?

As mentioned earlier, one third of all special education teachers in the state of Iowa who had paraprofessionals for that school year participated in the study. Both teachers and paraprofessionals were given similar questionnaires. The data identified those tasks that special education teachers rate as important for their paraprofessionals to be able to complete. In addition, teachers were asked to rate their paraprofessionals' skill in completing tasks rated as important and the effects of program instructional model and age of students served had on ratings also were examined.

The results indicated that teachers were generally satisfied with the performance of their paraprofessionals. The most common statements or comments in the data concerned inservice training for paraprofessionals. "Twenty-five teachers and seven paraprofessionals indicated that more training was needed, with behavior management being cited most frequently" (Frank et al., 1988, p. 257). Closely related to these recommendations were comments about the need for

formal college training for paraprofessionals. The findings also indicated that paraprofessionals should have different competencies, depending on their particular job description and assignment. Unlike Escudero's study, this one highlights specific paraprofessional issues that need to be addressed.

<div align="center">Surveying Paraprofessional Training Needs</div>

Studies like those conducted by Guess, Escudero, and Frank have not been conducted to date in Virginia. However, in 1999, the Commonwealth of Virginia pinpointed paraprofessional training and supervision as areas needing further research and technical assistance and dedicated a portion of Virginia's State Improvement Plan to paraprofessional training and supervision. This plan, mandated by the federal government, is primarily a personnel-training grant that requires 75% of funds received by the state to be targeted for personnel training because the goal of the program is to improve results for children with disabilities. Therefore, one target area is to enhance the knowledge, skills, abilities, and performance of all personnel who work with children and youth with disabilities. Because paraprofessionals play a major role in providing services to children and youth with disabilities, a task force of representatives from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), school administrators, central office personnel, college and university representatives, teachers, and paraprofessionals from various locations around the state was formed under the supervision of the VDOE to develop manuals for their training and supervision. The task force recommended the development of a survey that would drive the key components of the manual contents as well as future training. The survey information presented was based on a needs assessment completed by paraprofessionals throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia as well as their supervisors, who were either teachers or administrators.

Two surveys, devised from material gathered from books written and studies conducted by Anna Lou Pickett, were mailed out to every school system throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia in May, 1999. The first survey was designed specifically for paraprofessionals and the second for the paraprofessional's supervisor. In total, 4,448 paraprofessionals and 2,693 supervisors returned their surveys. Survey respondents were anonymous. To accommodate the open-ended questions used in this survey, a random sample of 300 surveys revealed common themes that were added to the data. All percentages reflected in the survey data presented below are based on the number of respondents who answered the given question.

Results from Analyses of the Paraprofessional Survey

Based on the survey data received, the majority of the paraprofessionals in the Commonwealth of Virginia (61.5%) work directly with students with disabilities. This information is consistent with the 1996 - 1997 Superintendent's Annual Report for Virginia. Slightly over half of the paraprofessionals have been employed up to five years. Trends in the survey data indicate that as their years of service increase, paraprofessionals are more likely to leave the profession. Most paraprofessionals stated they had worked in that capacity for fewer than five years.

Preparation of paraprofessionals. The survey found that most (77.8%) paraprofessionals prepared for their roles through self-taught activities or on-the-job training rather than a formal training program. Interestingly, most reported that they were adequately prepared to perform the duties assigned to them. However, it is important to note that the construction of the survey did not allow respondents to indicate that they received no training. That is, "None" was not an option on the survey.

Educational and licensure information for paraprofessionals. Many paraprofessionals (37.2%) reported having a high school diploma as their highest educational level. Throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, 400 paraprofessionals (9%) were licensed to teach. Of those 400 paraprofessionals, 39.9% had obtained their teaching license within the previous 10 years.

Training implications. Paraprofessionals stated that training specifically addressing their job or their students' characteristics would have been most helpful prior to their first assignment. They identified behavior management and instructional skills as the areas of on-going preparation that would be most helpful to them. The identification of behavior management echoes the findings in Frank et al.'s 1988 study. That this need has not changed or disappeared in 11 years sends a clear signal about paraprofessional training. The survey determined workdays the most ideal time to offer training to paraprofessionals, the overwhelming majority of whom (92.9%) were somewhat to very interested in obtaining training.

Employment information and benefits for paraprofessionals. The percentage of survey respondents employed full-time was 77.8%. In addition, 87.9% of paraprofessionals working either full or part time received benefits such as sick leave, personal leave, health and/or dental insurance. A majority (60.3%) worked with students at the elementary level. Approximately 50% stated that they had some type of planning time with a professional, and 31% stated that they work with more than five professionals per day. In fact, 89.7% responded that they were appropriately supervised, probably because they did not have an adequate understanding of what effective supervision entails. Slightly over half (51.4%) stated that they worked with groups of students, individual students, as well as a classroom of students. When asked about the amount of time their supervisor was present with them, 50.7% answered five to six hours per day. Paraprofessionals noted that supervisors evaluate performance, plan instruction, monitor the

implementation of instruction and monitor schedules in order to assist paraprofessionals with their duties. The overwhelming majority (81.8%) of paraprofessionals in the Commonwealth identified their salary range as $15,000 or below. Many (41.9%) are interested in becoming a teacher or other professional such as a nurse or therapist. However, 32.4% responded that there are no advancement opportunities available to them.

Results from Analyses of the Supervision Survey

As previously mentioned, 2,693 surveys were returned from teachers who were responsible for supervising paraprofessionals in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Their responses will be outlined and examined in the following section of this review.

Preparation of supervising teachers. Supervisors stated that 64.6% of the paraprofessionals were assigned to special education duties. Almost half (45.5%) of the supervisors reported having zero to five years of experience working with a paraprofessional, and most (66.4%) had learned their supervisory duties on the job without any formal training.

The majority of supervisors (84.7%) reported that they felt adequately prepared to supervise a paraprofessional. Supervisors noted that student characteristics, definitions of roles, and information specific to job responsibilities were the top three preparation activities that would be most helpful to the paraprofessional assigned to them. This was similar to the perspectives of the paraprofessionals.

Training implications. Supervisors indicated that on-going preparation in the areas of behavior management and instructional skills should occur for paraprofessionals, whose responses indicated the same need. Like the paraprofessionals, supervisors identified workdays were the best time to offer training and 84.1% agree that stipends might encourage paraprofessionals to participate in training. However, paraprofessionals cited no fee assessment

for training or course credit as the top two incentives for encouraging training whereas they identified stipends as the third incentive. This gap in teacher and paraprofessional responses may be the consequence of supervising teachers not being adequately trained in how to assess and respond to paraprofessional needs. Supervisors rated receiving professional credit as the most compelling incentive for them to participate in training related to their supervisory duties.

Supervision of paraprofessionals. Less than half (43.1%) of the supervisors had planning time with their paraprofessionals and 42.6% responded that their assigned paraprofessional works with only one teacher per day. This response differs from that of the paraprofessionals. In fact, the difference is so striking, it is difficult to assess it. This could be attributed to the fact that paraprofessionals are unsure of who is supervising them. Almost all (90.2%) of supervisors reported that they spent one to four hours a day supervising paraprofessionals and identified primary supervisory duties as monitoring instruction implementation (75.7%), discussing student responses (65.8%), and planning instruction (64.6%). Most (89.5%) stated that the primary work responsibility assigned to paraprofessionals was assisting students with classroom assignments.

This survey data gathered in the Commonwealth of Virginia adds to other research documenting the need for appropriate training and supervision of paraprofessionals in school settings. Although Pickett's (1999) framework was not available when this survey was developed, when developing the survey, categories were gleaned from her earlier studies and books she wrote which serve to further validate her framework and promote its uses and guidelines for further studies on paraprofessional supervision.

<p style="text-align:center">Studying Paraprofessional Supervision</p>

In this section, ten studies are analyzed in detail. The first two provide overview of general issues of paraprofessional supervision. The next eight will be analyzed in depth because they offer particular insight into Pickett's (1999) framework.

In 1998, the Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) reiterated the need for high standards and training and supervision of paraprofessionals.

There is a critical need for all programs that use paraprofessionals to adhere to [some form of standards] for use of paraprofessionals to ensure the provision of high quality services, use of well-qualified professionals and paraprofessionals, effective supervision, and coordinated service delivery by the qualified teacher/ service provider and paraprofessional team (p. 1).

The LDA also states "the intent of using paraprofessionals is to supplement not supplant the work of the teacher/service provider" (p. 1). McKenzie and Houk (1986) sought to examine how 23 resource teachers who work with paraprofessionals perceived a need to modify the role played by the paraprofessional. The following research questions guided the study: "To what extent are paraprofessionals assigned tasks which are highly characteristic of special education instruction? What changes in the use of the paraprofessional, if any, do resource teachers desire? Do resource teachers who use paraprofessionals perceive themselves as having sufficient input into the aide selection and development process" (p. 42).

Each of the elementary resource teachers randomly selected to participate in this study was certified to teach students with learning and behavioral disorders. Each received a questionnaire that briefly described some of the job responsibilities that a special education paraprofessional may perform. The differences in the actual and desired roles of

paraprofessionals and the changes desired by resource teachers in the hiring of paraprofessionals and their assignment process were evaluated by t-tests at the .05 level of significance.

Teachers did indicate a desire to be a part of the process of selecting and assigning of paraprofessionals. In addition, several recommendations were made, one being that "greater emphasis must be devoted to teacher-training programs to produce methods of using the paraprofessionals in special education settings" (p. 44). These conclusions support Pickett's (1999) framework that guides this study.

Twelve years after the Mckenzie and Houk study was published, French (1998) also conducted a study that closely examined special education teacher supervisory practices in an attempt "to clarify teacher perceptions of paraeducators' roles, preparation, and performance and to compare those perceptions to self-reports of paraeducators" (p. 358). The study also explored the duties these paraprofessionals performed, their preparation for the job, the quality of their work and the thinking of the teachers who held supervisory responsibility.

Eighteen teacher/paraprofessional teams working in a single major urban school district were recruited for this study. Of the 18 matched pairs, 12 worked in elementary schools, three worked in high schools, and three in middle schools. Both paraprofessionals and teachers completed a brief parallel questionnaire, and the paraprofessionals also completed a self-evaluation form and charted their daily activities by 10-minute intervals for two 1-week periods. The teachers were asked to evaluate paraprofessional performance and participate in personal interviews.

When questioned about any training they may have received to prepare them, to supervise paraprofessionals, 14 of the 18 teachers responded that they had acquired supervision skills on their own. The study found that teachers often did not feel qualified to supervise

paraprofessionals and were, therefore, reluctant to do so. The teachers were generally satisfied with their paraprofessionals, who often served in instructional roles. Although they valued these roles, the teachers clearly expressed their desire for paraprofessionals to come to the work place with greater training. Most indicated they preferred working with paraprofessionals who require little supervision. "Some teachers in this study failed to distinguish between the ethical and legal responsibilities of the professional teacher and those tasks appropriately delegated to a paraeducator, describing the paraprofessional as a peer rather than a supervisee" (p. 365). French (1998) found that teachers often had the responsibility of evaluating the paraprofessional or co-evaluating the paraprofessional with the principal.

This study concluded that teachers are often reluctant to supervise paraprofessionals, particularly because they do not feel prepared to take on such a task. French (1998) identified topics that may be able to assist teachers with their supervisory tasks: "(a) knowledge of the legal limits of paraeducator authority, (b) liability issues regarding the delivery of IEP services, (c) skills in task delegation, (d) conflict management and negotiation, and (e) creative problem solving" (p. 366). French's conclusion that "the working relationships of teachers and paraeducators as well as the supervisory skills and practices of teachers" (p. 367) need further research supports my project.

Using interviews for their study, Marks, Shrader, and Levine (1999) sought to explain the perspectives and experiences of 20 paraprofessionals who were working in inclusive educational placements in which the students all had disabilities and demonstrated significant behavioral challenges. Initial interviews, conducted by telephone and audiotaped, gathered background information, student information, and general experiences working as a paraprofessional. Five of the paraprofessionals interviewed were identified for follow-up, in-depth interviews that allowed

the paraprofessionals to describe in more detail a typical day at school and elaborate on the various roles they assumed. Transcripts from the in-depth interviews were reviewed and coded.

Themes emerging from the initial data analysis for the full sample group were identified, a presentation was made to a group of paraprofessionals who had not participated in the study to determine if these themes also captured their experiences. The paraprofessionals' corroboration of all these themes serves to verify them. Results indicated, "paraprofessionals assumed a range of job responsibilities, such as providing instruction in academic and social skills; making curricular modifications; managing student behaviors; and developing working relationships with others" (p. 318). The paraprofessionals often assumed duties more suited for the classroom teachers to perform. However, teachers sometimes do not feel comfortable taking on some of the tasks typically assumed by the paraprofessional. For this reason, more supervisory training for teachers is warranted.

Studies have shown that training for paraprofessionals and then sending them into classrooms to support students is inadequate. They need ongoing supervision. French (1998) summarizes, "Reinoehl and Halle taught 6 para-professionals to use certain instructional techniques for teaching social skills to clients. They concluded that training alone was insufficient and that close monitoring was necessary for paraprofessionals to perform appropriately" (p. 358). French adds to this by stating, "special education teachers are relatively unprepared to assume this supervisory role" (p. 357), and, therefore, also need training.

Paraprofessionals play a crucial role in schools today with many supporting the instructional process for students with disabilities in classroom settings. It is important that they receive careful training and supervision. The literature has made it very clear that both are necessary for paraprofessionals to maximize benefits to the students they work with daily.

Unfortunately, many states and localities do not currently have structured training systems in effect, even though the IDEA now mandates appropriate training and supervision. Many LEAs are struggling to determine how to do this effectively and efficiently. Although the amount of literature focused on paraprofessionals and their supervision is growing, there is still limited research identifying factors that contribute to effective training and supervisory programs.

<div align="center">Studies Supporting Pickett's (1999) Framework</div>

To date, a considerable amount of literature offers qualitative analysis addressing the training and duties of paraprofessionals (Cramer, 1997; Hoover, 1999; Mueller, 1997; and Werts, 1998) but their supervision has not been given significant attention. There are a few recent studies that have been conducted to help clarify what teacher supervision of paraprofessionals should entail. The remainder of this chapter reviews them in light of Pickett's (1999) framework that includes planning, delegating tasks, sharing information regarding roles, providing on-the-job training, and monitoring performance of paraprofessionals. Studies chosen for this research synthesis date from 1990 to the present. This time period was chosen because the use of paraprofessionals in school settings increased dramatically at this time. Outcomes or themes that emerged from these studies all relate, to some degree, to Pickett's (1999) framework although no comprehensive research synthesis has been conducted to date that explores it thoroughly. Eight studies identified as meeting the above-mentioned criteria are critically analyzed to provide a more detailed examination of Pickett's (1999) framework. The research base needs to be broadened as the numbers of paraprofessionals continues to grow and teachers' roles continue to evolve to include classroom management. Table 2 demonstrates how each study in the remainder of this synthesis relates to Pickett's (1999) framework.

<div align="center">Characteristics of the Overall Data Set</div>

Table 2

Study Descriptions as they Relate to Pickett's (1999) Framework

Study	Planning	Delegating	Role Clarifying	Performance Monitoring	On-the-Job Training
D'Aquanni, M.M. (1997)	X		X		X
French, N.K. (1997)		X	X	X	X
Giangreco, M.F., Elelman, S.W., Luiseli, T.E., & MacFarland, S.Z.C. (1997)	X		X	X	X
Jensen, J.M.; Parsons, M.B. & Reid, D.H. (1998)				X	X
McClain, C.H. (1993)	X	X	X		
Milner, C.A. (1998)			X		X
Prigge, D.J. (1996)	X		X		
Rose, R. (2000)	X		X		

Altogether, eight studies published between 1990 and the present provided original relevant data about paraprofessional supervision in school settings and further validate Pickett's (1999) framework. Seven of these studies utilized qualitative research methods, and one study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Six of the eight studies included observations and interviews. Only one conducted a document analysis and another utilized survey data. Four of the eight studies focused primarily on the supervision of paraprofessionals. The remainder documented critical information related to paraprofessionals with themes that emerged in the data or recommendations for best practices. Three of the eight studies were conducted in separate placements, while the remainder were conducted in inclusive settings. The similarities and differences of the two settings will be discussed.

Impact of Proximity between Paraprofessionals and Students

Giangreco et al. (1997) studied the effects of proximity of instructional assistants to the students they were assigned to support because paraprofessionals often work in very close proximity to these students in inclusive settings. A five-person research team studied in 16 different classes in 11 public schools in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont where students with multiple disabilities were educated in general education settings. Grade levels included preschool, grades 1, 2, 3, 5, and 11. Students with disabilities and the adults who supported them in their classes made up the 134 educational team members who participated. The qualitative research relied primarily on extensive classroom observations. In addition, the research team gathered field notes and conducted semi-structured interviews, and used categorical coding to analyze the observational and interview data. Members of the research team reviewed the analyses to ensure accuracy.

The eight themes that emerged from this study are identified and explained as follows:

- The paraprofessionals often assumed ownership of the student. Paraprofessionals created opportunities for general education teachers to avoid assuming responsibility for the student with disabilities in the general education setting. It was typically the paraprofessional who made curricular modifications and provided the direct instruction to the student with disabilities.

- Paraprofessionals often positioned students with disabilities away from groups of students. Paraprofessionals were observed leaving class early with students, thus preventing social contact.

- Paraprofessionals provided extensive prompting to students in almost every situation. Little fading of prompts was noted in the study, thus causing students to rely on adults more than may be necessary.

- Many times, instructional assistants limited peer interactions. It was observed that, at times, instructional assistants interrupted initiations made by peers and dominated group activities. It was also observed that when an instructional assistant was not in close proximity to the student with disabilities, peers were more likely to "fill the space the instructional assistant had vacated" (p. 13).

- Instructional assistants in this study were asked to perform tasks that were not planned by trained professional staff. Even when instructional assistants felt uncomfortable carrying out a request by a teacher, they often did so.

- Instructional assistants often made choices for the disabled students whom they supported.

- In some cases, the gender of the student was considered secondary to the gender of the instructional assistant. For example, if a male student required assistance toileting, a female

instructional assistant may choose to take the student into a women's restroom rather than a men's restroom.

- Instructional assistants often distracted students without disabilities, especially when the instructional assistant began a different activity with the student with disabilities in the midst of a whole group activity.

The instructional assistants were in close proximity to the students with disabilities in this study on an ongoing basis. Unnecessary and excessive adult proximity was not always necessary and was found to be detrimental to students. Paraprofessionals who are in close proximity to students with disabilities for prolonged periods of time often hinder peer relations as well as interaction with teachers. In addition, students with disabilities were apt to become overly dependent on the paraprofessional in the classroom. In order to overcome these dependency issues, it was noted, "instructional assistants should be provided with competency-based training that included ongoing, classroom-based supervision" (Giangreco, et al. 1997, p. 16).

The study found that without proper training, paraprofessionals could hinder rather than help student progress. Conclusions in Giangreco's study relate closely to Pickett's (1999) framework in that they highlight the need to clarify the roles of teacher and paraprofessional teams in classroom settings. This study also documents the need for teachers to provide paraprofessionals with ongoing, classroom-based supervision. It also explains that "instructional assistants should have opportunity for input into instructional planning based on their knowledge of the student, but the ultimate accountability for planning, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting instruction should rest with the professional staff" (p. 16).

This study is useful because it highlights the need for schools to rethink their policies on hiring instructional assistants for individual students. It suggests that it may be more appropriate to hire paraprofessional(s) to work with all the students in the classroom rather than a particular student. It also points out that the classroom teacher should act as the instructional leader in the classroom, a role that involves providing instructional assistants with competency-based training including ongoing, classroom-based supervision so that paraprofessionals do not hinder the progress of students with disabilities. Although this study is limited to working with students with severe disabilities, it does document the need to clarify the roles of the staff so that students may be provided maximum benefit in their educational settings.

<div align="center">Supervision of Paraprofessionals in General Education or Inclusive Settings</div>

In another study of an inclusive setting, Milner (1998) sought to answer the question: "What happens when a paraprofessional is assigned to provide individual, direct service to a student with disabilities in an inclusive classroom?" This qualitative study's methodology includes extended observations and interviews that were conducted with three special education teachers, three paraprofessionals, 11 general education teachers of inclusive classrooms, three middle school students with disabilities, and six high school students with disabilities. The three paraprofessionals were selected because their principals had identified them as being successful. This study is useful because it provided descriptive data for paraprofessionals' supervision.

Conclusions or themes generated from this study that relate to Pickett's (1999) framework include the following: (a) general education teachers are not sure what paraprofessionals should be doing in their classrooms; (b) teachers and paraprofessionals do not have ongoing, regularly scheduled communication; and (c) none of the general education

teachers understood that their role was to supervise paraprofessionals and the lack of role

definition created confusion in differentiating roles for the teachers and paraprofessionals.

Although this study predates Pickett's (1999) framework, it is useful because it documents the

need for teachers and paraprofessionals to have clearly defined roles.

Rose (2000) conducted a single school case study that also focused on the inclusion of

students with disabilities to shed light on the approaches used to provide access to learning for

students with special needs. The setting of this study was a junior school with an enrollment of

approximately 475 students, 36% of whom were eligible for special education services. The

teachers, seven women and three men, who had taught for at least three years, participated and

the mean length of teacher experience was 10.2 years. Six students with various disabilities also

participated, and interviews and observations were the primary means of gathering data.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the teachers and the students were

observed for approximately five hours each. The "importance of team work and effective

communication was seen as an essential feature of the school, with teachers commenting upon

the need to involve their [paraprofessionals] in lesson planning" (p. 193). Rose noted that when

paraprofessionals were working with small groups of students, "it was noticeable that in such

situations, the [paraprofessionals] were well prepared; had a clear sense of purpose as a result of

involvement in planning; and had received direction from the class teacher" (p. 194). The

implication is that teachers and paraprofessionals actually worked as a team, because the teachers

were also adept supervisors.

In addition to effective planning, role clarification was a theme of this study. Rose finds

that "defined roles and management responsibilities are clearly an essential factor in ensuring

that classroom support is both unobtrusive and focused upon addressing the most urgent needs at

a given time" (p. 194). In addition, teachers and paraprofessionals were flexible and interchanged roles as needed. This study is significant because it notes there is a need for collaboration between teachers and paraprofessionals so that planning for role clarification may take place.

D'Aquanni (1997) also conducted a qualitative study examining the role of paraprofessionals in inclusive programs. Like Milner and Rose, D'Aquanni used interviews and observations to gather in order to examine the roles and responsibilities of eight paraprofessionals working in grades two through five in four elementary schools in New York. A qualitative multi-case design was chosen to strengthen the results of this study. The school districts were diverse (large vs. small; urban vs. rural) and school district sizes ranged from 1,100 students to 22,000 students. In one school, 18% of the student body received free lunch, whereas in another, 87% did. All four districts participating in the study operated inclusive programs.

Data analysis indicated, "historical job descriptions have not coincided with the evolving role of paraprofessionals" (p. 380). In addition, the staff was unclear as to who maintained the responsibility for supervising paraprofessionals. As a result of this, D'Aquanni found that planning between teachers and paraprofessionals was miniscule. One paraprofessional in the study commented, "I don't even know if it's part of my role to sit down and talk with the teachers or plan" (p. 390). Other themes that emerged in the data were inadequate training, ineffective team practices, and indeterminate supervision. D'Aquanni found, "on-the-job training was viewed by many of the paraprofessionals in this study as a successful way of providing instruction" (p. 394). Unfortunately, it was also discovered that due to the lack of planning time, paraprofessionals were not able to ask questions of teachers or to expand on the skills introduced to them through these training activities. This study highlights the inadequacies of on-the-job training of paraprofessionals when there is little supervision and no follow up discussions.

Supervision of Paraprofessionals in Separate Placements

Of the studies that examine paraprofessional supervision in segregated settings such as special education classrooms and adult education programs, McClain's (1993) supports the emphasis Pickett's (1999) framework places on role clarification as a necessary component of paraprofessional supervision. In this ethnographic study, McClain (1993) examines observable verbal interactions between teachers and paraprofessionals in elementary special education classes and identifies categories of interaction between team members. This study's importance lies in its focus on teamwork, which McClain describes as, "individuals carrying out well-defined roles that compliment and sometimes overlap" (p. 17), and its in-depth observations and interviews of three teacher/paraprofessional teams who had worked together for a minimum of two years.

During the observations of the teams, all of which took place in special education classrooms where the teacher and paraprofessional generally interacted, McClain was also able to collect documents associated with the relationship between the teacher and paraprofessional. These included lesson plans, behavior rating charts, and problem-solving worksheets. Notes from both the interviews and observations were analyzed to develop domains and themes, and member checking allowed the researcher to confirm or deny her conclusions.

Themes that emerged include "giving student information, seeking information, giving general information, and affirmation/agreement" (p. 114). Giving directions or delegating, also an important component of Pickett's framework, was noted as a common occurrence for all participants in the study, with the exception of one paraprofessional. Teachers were observed giving directions, generally verbal, to paraprofessionals prior to the arrival of students and during the course of the school day.

Several themes found consistently in the interview data included teacher expectations and planning, communication techniques, and conflicts and disagreements. Paraprofessionals were able to explain the teachers' expectations and McClain noted, "written information was prepared by all teachers to apprise paraeducators about the teacher's expectations for student performance" (p. 119). Ongoing communication was cited as an important factor in a team relationship with one paraprofessionals stating, "[I] don't hesitate to ask for more direction when [I feel] unprepared to supervise an assigned activity" (p. 120). Once themes were established for both the interview and observation data, domains were developed which included the following: (a) discussion of classroom events and concerns; (b) communication of job duties; (c) freedom to ask questions; (d) demonstration of respect/trust; and (e) discussion of conflicts.

Similar themes were identified by French (1997), who conducted a case study of a newly graduated speech language pathologist (SLP) responsible for supervising assistants in a small urban school district. That this study revealed issues similar to those of McClain and Pickett is important, because "speech language paraprofessionals represent one category of approximately 400,000 paraprofessionals employed in education settings in the United States" (p. 104). French developed two propositions to conduct her investigation: (1) "speech language pathologists who work in schools need systematic preparation to guide their work with speech language assistants" (p. 104), and (2) "intuitive or common sense approaches are adequate for supervision and 'home grown' models of supervision result in acceptable practices" (p. 104). In her study, French used a single case interview that asked a small number of open-ended questions gathered during seven interviews spanning over a one-year period. The students in the district selected to participate were primarily from lower socioeconomic households, and about one third of them spoke a language other than English. Due to a high turnover rate for paraprofessionals during this one-

year span, the speech language pathologist was responsible for supervising five different assistants, each with varying degrees of experience and prior training. After the third paraprofessional left her position, the SLP took a course called "Paraprofessional Supervision Academy" that provided her with information regarding "roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals, liability and legal issues, as well as the skills of directing, delegating, and giving feedback" (p. 106). French (1997) noted, "these tools helped [the SLP] create unique job descriptions for tasks she would assign her assistant and included forms for the documentation of on-the-job coaching and skill-mentoring" (p. 106). Also, when the data were analyzed using a pattern-matching technique, the results showed the SLP varied the level of responsibility for each assistant depending on her perceptions of that person's skills. These findings provide compelling evidence supporting proposition one that argued for the need of formal supervision, but not proposition two that maintained intuitive or common sense approaches to paraprofessional supervision are effective.

One year later, Jensen, Parsons, and Reid (1998) conducted a study that evaluated a means of training special education teachers in supervisory strategies for improving specific teaching-related performance of their paraprofessionals. This qualitative study was conducted in another type of segregated placement, an adult education program; the majority of students were labeled with severe to profound mental retardation. Of the eight paraprofessionals, four men and four women who participated, seven had a high school diploma, and the eighth had attended college for a brief time. The seven participating teachers were provided with supervisory training that included both classroom-based training and training in on-the-job mentoring. They were also required to observe and provide feedback to their paraprofessionals on a monthly basis.

Results of this multi-probe design across groups of assistants indicated improvements in data collection performances among seven of eight assistants. Improvement in other teaching skill applications also occurred. One significant result of this study was the implication that "when teachers are trained to systematically observe and provide contingent feedback regarding the teaching-related performance of [paraprofessionals], the targeted teaching skills of their [paraprofessionals] improve" (p. 461).

<div align="center">Implications Derived from the Research Synthesis</div>

This research synthesis has analyzed 10 studies, carried out in both inclusive and separate settings, that highlight aspects of Pickett's (1999) framework that deals with the supervisory responsibilities of planning, delegating, role clarifying, performance monitoring, and on-the-job training and mentoring of paraprofessionals (Appendix A). Interestingly, planning and role clarifying seem to be mentioned more often in studies of inclusive placements (D'Aquanni, 1997; Giangreco et al., 1997; Prigge, 1996; & Rose, 2000), while delegating and performance monitoring seem to be more noteworthy in separate placements (French, 1997; Jensen et al., 1998; & McClain, 1993). On-the-job training and mentoring were mentioned in five of the eight studies and did not seem to differ in regard to placement. Each of these studies underscores the validity of Pickett's (1999) framework as a research tool for examining the issues of paraprofessional supervision.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The selected research literature reviewed in this chapter provides a description of paraprofessionals, including their history, training, and efficacy. In the 1990's research on paraprofessionals has expanded into their supervision. Efforts have been made to identify factors that contribute to effective paraprofessional supervision, but the major body of research provides

primarily goal statements, opinions, and suggestions for best practices. Although each of the

studies critically reviewed in this chapter state the importance of one or more of the five domains

in Pickett's framework, no study to date has explored exactly how these five domains are

implemented and carried out in school settings. For this reason, this study examines how

teachers and paraprofessionals describe the supervision process. A descriptive case study was

employed in order to examine how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in middle school

classrooms in Virginia. I sought to answer the following questions derived from Pickett's (1999)

framework:

1. How do teachers plan work assignments for paraprofessionals?

2. How do teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals?

3. How do teachers share information with paraprofessionals about their roles?

4. How do teachers monitor the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals?

5. How do teachers provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to

   paraprofessionals?

   These questions all focus on the teacher's role as an effective supervisor of

paraprofessionals. This literature review has demonstrated that there is a need for appropriate

supervision of paraprofessionals (Giangreco et al., 1997; Jensen, Parsons & Reid, 1998; Rose,

2000; and Milner, 1998). Pickett (1999) has provided a useful framework for what effective

supervision of paraprofessionals should look like in classroom settings. However, to this date, no

studies use this framework to explore supervising issues in-depth, although many look at some of

the same characteristics that form the framework. The results of this study are expected have an

impact on staff development personnel, teachers who provide instructional supervision to

paraprofessionals, and even for the paraprofessionals themselves. In response to the growing

numbers of paraprofessionals in school settings today and the limited amount of research

regarding their supervision, it is expected that this research will contribute to the body of

knowledge that addresses supervising practices of support personnel.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the case study methodology used in this inquiry and explains the choice of qualitative methods to examine the problem of supervision of paraprofessionals and to assess related issues. This chapter describes the type of design used in this study and the procedures used to collect data. It also summarizes the data analysis procedure and documents the trustworthiness of the data.

Overview of the Methods

The problem of paraprofessional supervision arises because teachers often feel they are not prepared to supervise them in school settings (French, 1998; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Therefore, a descriptive case study was employed in order to examine the guiding questions of how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms in Virginia. Supporting questions to be addressed in the case study were developed from Pickett's (1999) framework that encompasses effective paraprofessional supervision. They are as follows:

1. How do teachers plan work assignments for paraprofessionals?

2. How do teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals?

3. How do teachers share information with paraprofessionals about their roles?

4. How do teachers monitor the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals?

5. How do teachers provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals?

The following conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1 provides the focus of this case study.

School A

(Descriptive)

School B

I. Planning

V. On-The-Job
Training and Mentoring

II. Task
Delegating

Supervising
Paraprofessionals
in Middle School
Classrooms:
A Case Study

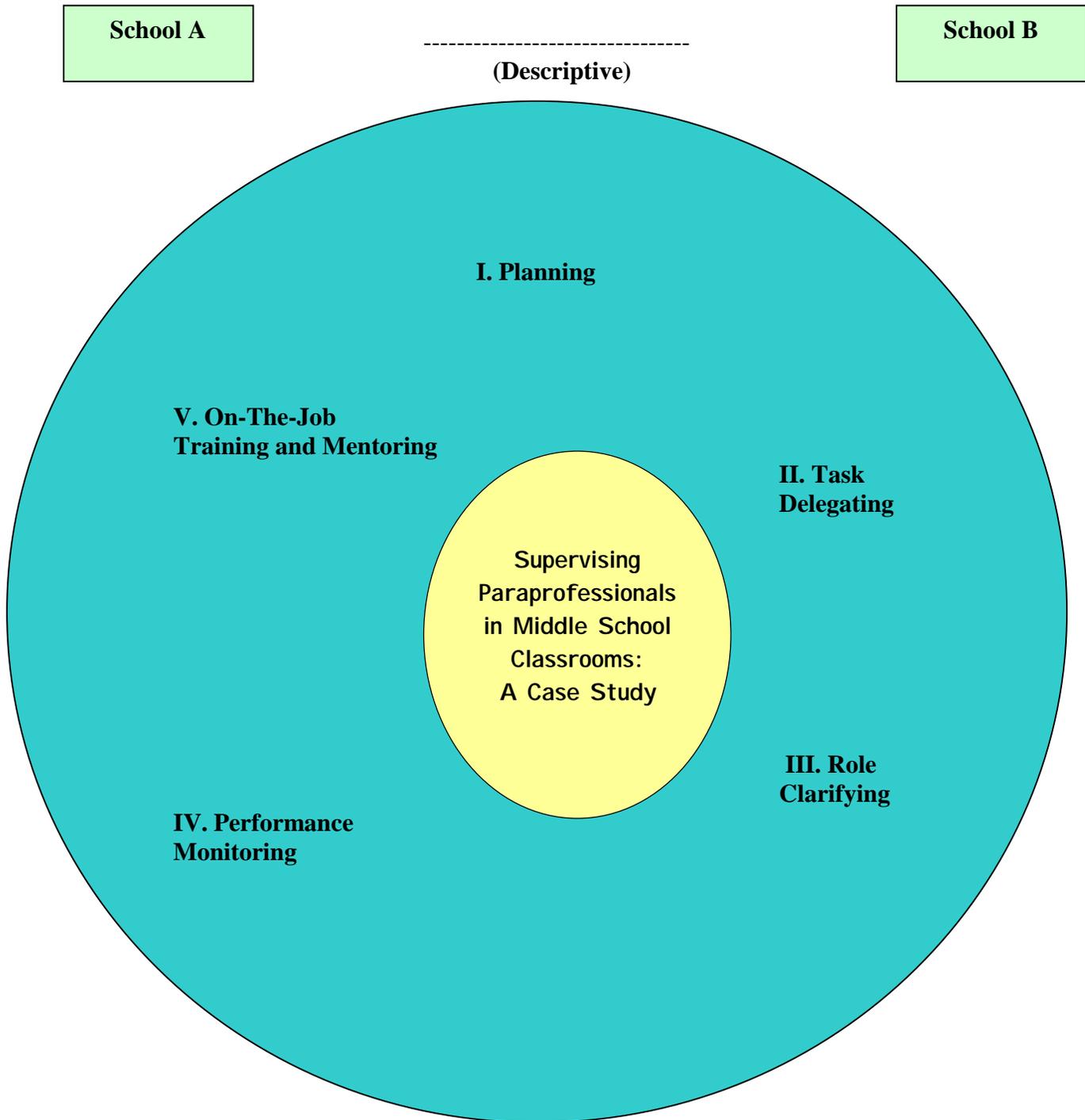III. Role
Clarifying

IV. Performance
Monitoring

Figure 1. A case study based on Pickett's (1999) framework surrounding effective

paraprofessional supervision

Results of this study could have training implications for staff development personnel, for teachers who provide instructional supervision to paraprofessionals, as well as for paraprofessionals themselves. In response to the growing numbers of paraprofessionals in school settings today and the limited amount of research regarding their supervision, it is expected that this research will make a contribution to the knowledge base regarding current practices in supervising support personnel.

<div align="center">Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design</div>

Creswell (1998) provides the rationale for a qualitative design when he defines qualitative research as a process that occurs when "the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to become an active learner who is able to tell a story from the participants' points of view. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also explain qualitative research as being "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). In a qualitative design, "data are collected that relate to a focus of inquiry" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 126). I selected qualitative research methods for this study because they allowed me to provide rich detail into this particular problem.

Type of Design

Case study research was utilized in this inquiry. Creswell (1998) explains, "a case study is an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). In this study, I explored how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision process in two public schools. Once access was gained for the study, data were collected primarily through interviews

with participants. Observations in schools and classrooms and a review of documents related to the work of paraprofessionals and teachers provided support and allowed for the triangulation of data. I also kept a researcher's journal because it provided me with a reflection of my own biases acquired through my experiences supervising paraprofessionals.

The Researchers Role

My role throughout this study was to shed light on how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision process in two middle schools. Because I realized that my personal experiences regarding paraprofessional supervision might make me overly subjective, I guarded against my personal biases by thoroughly documenting each step of the research process in a researcher's journal so I could double-check my perceptions and ideas throughout the phases of data collection and analysis. As a former special education teacher, I had the opportunity to work closely with paraprofessionals for four years. In my role as a special education supervisor, I assisted with various training efforts for both paraprofessionals and supervising teachers. As a practitioner, I have spent much time reviewing books and articles regarding the instructional supervision of paraprofessionals prior to my role as a researcher. I also had the opportunity to present a paper at the 19th National Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraprofessionals in Education and Rehabilitative Services in Portland, Oregon. This conference provided me with the opportunity to meet and share ideas with various researchers in the field, including Anna Lou Pickett, Nancy French, Kent Gerlach, and Patricia Mueller. Finally, I have served on a task force with the Virginia Department of Education that focused on both paraprofessional training and supervision.

Setting Selection

When I discussed my initial plans for this study with Anna Lou Pickett, Director of the

National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, she stated that middle school students are often

"the forgotten age group" and that numbers of paraprofessionals are currently growing at the

fastest rate at the this level (A.L. Pickett, personal communication, April 18, 2001). For this

reason, I chose to conduct this study in two middle schools in a single suburban school district in

Southwestern Virginia. Although there are three middle schools in the district, only two were

chosen for participation in this study because I am employed at the third middle school. This

decision was made to reduce the possibility that my involvement as the assistant principal of the

school might distort the data. Of the two remaining middle schools, one has the smallest student

population (approximately 400 students) and the other has the largest student population

(approximately 820 students) in the district. Had saturation not been reached after gathering data

in these two schools, I had planned to expand the study into other similar middle schools in

surrounding areas until themes within the data could be identified.

Gaining Access and Entry

To obtain permission to conduct this study, I began by telephoning the superintendent to

introduce the focus of the study and data collection procedures to be used. I followed this contact

with a written request to conduct the study, including the permission of Virginia Tech's

Institutional Review Board to conduct such a study (Appendix B). Following the

superintendent's approval, I telephoned the principals at each middle school selected. Principals

were asked to provide me with the names of teachers and paraprofessionals to solicit for

participation. The purpose of the study and procedures to be used were discussed with all the

participants, whose involvement was voluntary. All participants were informed that they could

withdraw from the study at any time.

District Information

      The school system selected serves approximately 14,000 students in 17 elementary schools, three middle schools, two junior high schools, five high schools, and a career center and employs approximately 1,100 professionals and 250 paraprofessionals. The State Board of Education accredits all schools, with elementary and high schools accredited or affiliated with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The superintendent, appointed by the school board, is the chief executive officer of the school system. This system recently experienced major changes when the school board appointed a new superintendent to serve as its chief executive officer in January 2000. This superintendent values instruction above all else and often uses the phrase "Learning for all. . .whatever it takes." The superintendent, along with key stakeholders in the district, has developed a 6-year plan focusing on instruction, human resources, health and safety, community relations, facilities and operations, technology, and budget and finance. This district values parental involvement and has strong Parent Teacher Association (PTA) programs in each school. In addition, parent advisory committees and other programs are in effect in all schools.

      There are programs available for gifted and talented students, and vocational offerings as well as special education programs. In this district, the majority of special education students participate in the general education environment for at least some portion of their instructional day. Paraprofessional assistance is often utilized to support students with disabilities in both mainstream and self-contained settings. In 1997-1998, class size averages ranged from 21.5 students at the elementary level to 23.5 students at the secondary level, which includes both middle and high schools. Approximately 98% of the students in this school division complete high school and more than 80% pursue some form of post-secondary education.

All schools within this district participate in the state wide testing program, Virginia

Standards of Learning Assessments (SOLs) and the Standards of Accreditation (SOAs). Students

are tested in grades 3, 5, and 8, and in specific high school courses. The SOL tests measure

achievement in the areas of English, math, history/social science, science, and technology. As

dictated by the SOAs, students must pass both the class and the end-of-course test in order to

receive a verified credit for the course. Beginning with the class of 2004, students with and

without disabilities must earn a prescribed number of verified credits in order to receive a

standard or advanced diploma.

<u>Middle School Information</u>

The middle schools in this study reflect typical suburban middle schools throughout the

Commonwealth of Virginia and each is described in detail to help readers determine the

applicability of this study to their needs. The two middle schools chosen for this study serve

sixth through eighth grades and are located on campuses adjacent to high schools. The four core

academic subjects, English/language arts, math, science, and social studies, are taught at all

levels, as are health and physical education classes and various electives. Paraprofessionals are

utilized at both schools to support students with and without disabilities in both special education

and general education settings. It is important to look at the organization of both schools to

examine the problem of supervision of paraprofessionals and related issues. Both schools have

slightly different environments and practices.

<u>School A.</u> The mission statement of School A is as follows: "It is the mission of [School

A] to ensure that all students are provided with an educational environment that supports their

physical, emotional, and academic growth and assists them in making a successful transition to

the high school." School A opened in September 1996 and now serves approximately 400

students, with 24 teachers and 4 paraprofessionals. The small school size fosters a warm,

community atmosphere. Two elementary schools feed students into this middle school, which is

connected to the high school. Due to the close proximity of the two schools, the middle and high

schools have one principal but share an assistant principal, athletic director, and many teachers.

There are seven periods per day at School A.

School A uses a middle school team approach, which is described by Rottier (2001) as

"the dominant organizational pattern in middle level schools" (p. 1). Teaming brings together

several teachers to work with a select number of students. This allows teachers to get to know

their students at a deeper level, collaborate with one another on a daily basis, and provide

consistency with issues such as discipline, grading, etc. There is only one team per grade level at

School A due its small size. The sixth grade team shares a common daily planning time. The

seventh and eighth grade teams do not have common planning time.

School B. The mission statement of School B "commits to working with families and the

community to provide for students a challenging program of instruction and a safe, nurturing

environment that will promote self-respect, academic excellence and social responsibility."

About twice the size of School A, School B serves approximately 820 students with a faculty of

70 teachers and 11 paraprofessionals and has one principal and two assistant principals. Four

feeder elementary schools send students to School B, beginning in the sixth grade.

School B has a seven-period school day with a 20-minute homeroom period. Teaming is

also valued and there are four sixth grade and two seventh and eighth grade teams. Unlike

School A, School B provides each team with a common planning period to address issues

surrounding particular students and instruction. The teams vary in size from three to five teachers, depending on the grade level.

<u>Participant Selection</u>

Originally, a minimum of twenty-one different individuals involved in the supervision of paraprofessionals was selected for participation in this study. Participants included teachers, paraprofessionals, special education coordinators, administrators, and a supervisor at the district's central office. As the interview process commenced, I encountered difficulty with only one person who I solicited for participation in this study, a paraprofessional at School A. Although she agreed to allow me to observe her in her day-to-day routine and interactions with teachers, she was not comfortable with a taped interview. I was unable to find another paraprofessional to interview at School A because of the small school size.

To begin the process, a supervisor at the central office level was be interviewed, because that person had first-hand knowledge about supervision and was involved with the development of related policies and procedures at the district level. This person was interviewed first to gather general information about the school district regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals. In each school participating in the study, the principal, the special education coordinator, as well as two general education and two special education teachers were interviewed, because paraprofessionals are involved daily with each of these professionals who play a role in their supervision. In addition, two paraprofessionals who work in general education settings and two who work in special education settings were interviewed at each school. Table 3 outlines the interview participants.

The principals at each school were asked to identify teachers and paraprofessionals to solicit for participation in this case study. Each teacher selected had the responsibility of

Table 3

Interview Participants

Interview participants in district selected solicited for participation in this study

District Supervisor

School A   School B

Principal   Principal

Special Education Coordinator   Special Education Coordinator

4 Teachers   4 Teachers

    2 General Education   2 General Education

    2 Special Education   2 Special Education

4 Paraprofessionals   4 Paraprofessionals

    2 General Education   2 General Education

    2 Special Education   2 Special Education

supervising paraprofessionals. Participant involvement was voluntary and all participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Assurance of Confidentiality

All participants were assured of confidentiality and signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study. This consent form was submitted to the university's institutional review board for approval (see Appendix B). In addition, throughout the document analysis, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Case study research relies on multiple sources of data to assure a complete picture of the issue being examined. I utilized interviews, observations, and document review and maintained a researcher's journal in order to shed light on the problems and issues of paraprofessional supervision because Yin (1994) states, "case study inquiry [should] rely on multiple sources of data and investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 13). Multiple sources of data not only increase a study's dependability, they also provide for analysis that involves systematic descriptive coding in order to identify themes or categories within the data.

Interviews Procedures and Protocols

Interviews were the primary means of data collection in this study. Stake (1995) explains that "qualitative case study seldom proceeds as a survey with the same questions asked of each respondent; rather, each interviewee is expected to have had unique experiences, special stories to tell" (p. 65). Procedures and protocols included utilizing open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews with individuals in each school as well as a central office staff supervisor, all of whom signed a consent form agreeing to participate prior to data collection. Appendix C outlines the interview questions and prompts used to interview paraprofessionals. The wording

was altered slightly when interviewing teachers, administrators, and a central office staff person. The participants were informed that interviews would take approximately one hour to complete, that their responses would remain confidential, and that follow up interviews might be needed to clarify certain points or to elicit further responses. Interviews were held and audiotaped in a private location within each building. Stake (1995) explains the importance of audiotaping by stating, "Transcripts may not convey exactly what respondents intend and may arrive long after context and innuendo have slipped away" (p. 66). Condensed notes were taken during each interview with expanded notes written as soon as possible following all interviews (Creswell, 1998). All interviews were transcribed and participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Observation Procedures: Assessing the Cultural Context

To assess the cultural context, the study began with informal observations. Stake (1995) states, "observation work with researcher toward greater understanding of the case" (p. 60). These initial observations gave me the opportunity to observe the behavior of paraprofessionals and those interacting with them in their natural context (classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, etc.). They also allowed me to gain a more thorough understanding of the school, its climate, and day-to-day operations, as well as insight into the relationships between teachers and paraprofessionals. In addition, I was able to learn more about general relationships among staff and also explore common procedures within each school.

I conducted extensive observations over a 3-month period, until a credible description of each school's context and working relationships could be portrayed. I was able to observe all participants, with the exception of the central office staff member, during their typical school day. This was extremely beneficial because I could compare interview responses with the

information I actually witnessed within the school setting. Condensed field notes were compiled

during each day of observations and were expanded as soon as possible following all

observations. A sample observation documentation form is included in Appendix D.

Document Data Collection or Recording

For this study, documents regarding policies and procedures in the district specific to

supervising paraprofessionals were obtained and reviewed. These documents included the school

system's policy manual, handbooks at the central office and building levels, and memos from the

central office and within each school. Additional documents included philosophy

statements for the district and each school, lesson plans, job descriptions, staff development

plans, school improvement plans, and other pertinent information. The document analysis

protocol is included in Appendix E and all documents reviewed are identified in Appendix F.

Documents were also coded for themes or categories derived from the guiding questions of the

study.

Reflecting on the "Process"

To increase the credibility of this study, I maintained a chain of evidence by keeping a

researcher's journal so that any external observer would be able to fully understand the inquiry's

process. As the researcher, my reflections on the supervision of paraprofessionals were also

documented in this journal. Doing this allowed me to formulate thoughts and ideas throughout

the process and to document any unforeseen changes to the study. Most importantly, this process

assisted me in identifying and reducing any personal biases.

Pilot Study

Prior to interviewing participants in this study, a pilot administration was conducted in a

middle school not involved in this study to ensure that my interview questions were clear, easily

understandable, related to Pickett's (1999) framework, and that my observational strategies were appropriate for the purposes of this study. During the pilot administration, I was able to spend one day shadowing the principal and several teacher/paraprofessional teams. This enabled me to practice using my observation documentation tools and to make any necessary changes prior to my actual study beginning. I was also able to conduct two pilot interviews and solicited feedback from these participants so that I would feel more comfortable with the overall interview process.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

This descriptive case study looks at how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervisory process within two middle schools in a single school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Data analysis involved systematic, descriptive coding to identify themes or categories that emerged from the data collected. I read through all the interview transcripts, observation notes, documentary analysis data, and journal notes at least three times to immerse myself in the data. Key phrases and thoughts were written in margins to assist me with developing themes, categories, and relationships in the data. These procedures allowed me to become more familiar with the data. All transcripts were coded to facilitate the identification of themes and management of the data.

To begin the coding process, all interview data was placed onto five-inch by eight-inch index cards. These cards were then sorted according to Pickett's (1999) framework. Any index card that did not fit under one of Pickett's five categories was initially placed into a miscellaneous pile. Following this coding process, I identified chunks or meaning in the data, a process Lincoln and Guba refer to as "unitizing the data" (as cited in Maykutt & Morehouse, 1994, p.128). Recurring ideas, questions, and thoughts were recorded in my researcher's journal. These words and phrases began to form the first provisional categories of the data. Ideas that

overlapped were combined with one another. When it was determined that the meaning on one

index card was similar to the meaning on another, salient categories, or themes, were established.

Data cards that did not seem to fit into any particular category were again placed into a

miscellaneous category and reviewed periodically to see if they fit into any established theme.

When six to eight cards fit under a particular category, a rule for inclusion was written as a

propositional statement, which Maykut and Morehouse (1994) define as "one that conveys the

meaning that is contained in the data cards gathered together under a category name" (p. 139).

Data analysis continued until all index cards fit into a category or were considered

miscellaneous information. When no new or relevant information could be uncovered, the data

collection and analysis processes ceased. Once all themes were established, a matrix was

designed and is included in Appendices G1 through G5 to show the frequency of responses to the

identified themes for each case and data source.

Addressing Quality

In general, for a qualitative study to be considered valid, the quality of the data must be

trustworthy and the information transferable. This can only occur when the study employs a

number of research strategies to enhance the credibility and dependability of the data. Strategies

to control and enhance credibility, transferability, and dependability follow.

Mertens and McLaughlin (1995) explain "the credibility test" with the following

example: " in qualitative research, the credibility test asks if there is a correspondence between

the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the researcher portrays

their viewpoints" (p. 53). This study established credibility through prolonged engagement and

persistent observation, as well as triangulation of the data, which Creswell (1998) explains as a

"process [that] involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme

or perspective" (p. 202). In this study, triangulation of the data was made possible by utilizing several data collection methods including interviews, observations, document review, and by carefully maintaining a researcher's journal in order to provide an adequate audit trail.

"Member checking," which Lincoln and Guba point to as "the most critical technique for establishing credibility," (p. 314) was utilized in this study to solicit participants' views of my findings and interpretations. For this purpose, participants were given rough drafts of my data to review analytically. A summary of the case was also shared with the participants to verify the conclusions. Comments received from the member checking process were favorable that I had indeed accurately portrayed participant thoughts and comments.

An informed reader was also utilized for peer review and debriefing and for verification of themes identified in the study. Explained by Creswell (1998), this person is "someone who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (p. 202). I utilized an informed reader after salient categories, or themes, were established and all note cards were sorted. I met with an informed reader, a professor in educational research at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. This informed reader reviewed my data and verified the themes that I had generated.

Transferability and dependability are also important strategies for validating the trustworthiness of this research. Mertens and McLaughlin (1995) explain that in qualitative research, "the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context" (p. 55). I have made every attempt to provide the reader with ample descriptions of the time, place, context, and culture throughout this study.

Finally, any changes that occurred in the study have been thoroughly documented to ensure

dependability. Maintaining a researcher's journal aided me throughout this piece of the process.

<u>Data Management</u>

It is important to have a plan for data management at the onset of a research study. Patton

(1990) observes,

> The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way
>
> of preparing students for the sheer massive volumes of information with which they
>
> will find themselves confronted when data collection has ended. Sitting down to
>
> make sense out of pages of interviews and whole files or field notes can be
>
> over-whelming (p. 297).

With this observation in mind, I utilized several strategies to manage my data. Interviews

were tape-recorded and transcribed and notes were taken during observations in each school and

then expanded as soon as possible. All transcriptions were stored in Word files on my computer

and on back up disks. Memoing was used throughout the process by placing any notes, thoughts,

or ideas into margins. Key information was placed on index cards so I could rearrange the data in

order to identify themes or categories within the data. Files for data were also organized and

maintained in a standard file cabinet to identify issues, sites, and persons. Each file was color

coded by themes for easy access.

I found the data management component of this study to be one of the most challenging.

The amount of data from observations, interviews, and document analysis was overwhelming.

Data management also proved to be one of the most time consuming aspects of the entire

process.

<u>Presenting the Results</u>

Data were analyzed using a multi-case research design that allowed me to describe the two schools participating in the study. A multi-case design broadens and strengthens the case study methodology, because it explores a problem or issue across several cases or schools. Although this study was conducted in two schools, chosen because of their varied sizes and culture, responses from participants paralleled each other very closely. These stories and vignettes are included in Chapter Four to illustrate the thoughts and comments of the study participants.

In this chapter, the guiding questions and the procedures of this study were presented, the setting and participants in the study were identified, specific methodologies were explained, and methods of data collection and analysis were described. The complete analysis and summary of the findings are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study examines teacher supervision of paraprofessionals in middle school

classrooms in order to identify, document, and assess problems and issues this supervisory role

raises for both teachers and paraprofessionals and to recommend ways of alleviating these. This

inquiry uses a descriptive case study methodology addressing research questions derived from

Pickett's (1999) framework and utilizes (a) interviews with participating teachers,

paraprofessionals, and administrators; (b) observations at the two schools of classroom activities

and interactions; (c) a review of pertinent documents and materials; and (d) a researcher's journal

to record my impressions, thoughts, and other information that might have bearing on this study.

Pickett's (1999) framework assumes that the teachers act as supervisors to paraprofessionals,

which is not always the case. However, this framework was used because it highlights five

important supervisory responsibilities: (a) planning work assignments; (b) task delegating; (c)

role clarifying; (d) daily performance monitoring; and (e) and systematic on-the-job training and

mentoring.

The Conceptual Framework

Pickett's (1999) framework presented in Chapter Two is the conceptual framework I have

used to develop the narrative that illustrates my findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) note that,

"the typical mode of displaying qualitative research has been through words in a narrative text"

(Merriam, p. 233). Wolcott (1990) admits that there is no standard format for reporting data; this

chapter, therefore, uses a narrative test to review the data in light of Pickett's (1999) framework.

To set up the context in which these data can be best understood, each case (School A and School B) will first be described. Following this, each domain under Pickett's (1999) framework will be discussed in three ways. First, a general description of the themes that resonated from the data will be presented because according to Merriman (1990), "a general description is needed to tell the reader whether the vignettes and quotes are typical of the data as a whole" (p. 235). Following the general description, more particular description illustrating the themes will be presented. This will consist of quotations from people interviewed, quotations from field notes, and narrative vignettes or everyday life "in which the sights and sounds of what was being said and done are described in the natural sequence of their occurrence in real time" (Erickson, 1986, pp. 150-151). Finally, interpretative commentary will be presented, because it "provides a framework for understanding of general descriptions just discussed" (Merriam, 1990, p. 235). This chapter will then conclude with a discussion of the findings.

<center>Descriptions of the Schools in the Case Study</center>

Observations in both schools participating in this study occurred over a three-month period. Extensive observations were critical in order to allow me to gain a thorough understanding of the school, its climate, and day-to-day operations, as well as insight into the relationships between teachers and paraprofessionals. The following section will shed light into these two schools and the participant characteristics. The two cases are described below as School A and School B.

<u>School A</u>

I began my observations for this study at School A, which was built and opened its doors as a middle school in 1996. Because of the growth in population and redistricting, it began to undergo renovations in winter, 2001. As I entered the school for the first time, I noted the

parking lot was not yet paved and still showing signs of construction but the building was neat, clean, and welcoming. At the main office, a school secretary greeted me with a warm welcome. After a 3-month period of my observations, I could truly say she is a "jack of all trades." I observed her lending lunch money to students, assisting teachers and parents, cleaning tennis shoes for a student who stepped in dog feces, monitoring groups of students waiting to see the principal, and maintaining overall order in the office, all with a smile on her face. Her disposition reflected that of the entire building.

The principal also greeted me warmly and proved eager to share facts about the school and accommodate my many questions. She paused from her daily routing to lead me on a tour of the building. I shadowed her numerous times during my visits in locations such as her office, the hallways, and the cafeteria. She maintained an open door policy and it was evident that teachers were comfortable approaching her throughout the day. The principal provided me with an office in which to interview study participants.

The principal at School A is the only administrator assigned to the building due to the small school size of approximately 400 students. She began her leadership position at the start of the 2001-2002 school year. To ease her transition into the position, she was allowed to serve as the assistant principal for a semester the previous year to become familiar with the school, its staff, students, and community. She had previously served as an assistant principal for 2 ½ years at another middle school in the district. As the only administrator, she completes all teacher and staff observations and evaluations, monitors the cafeteria during daily lunches, handles the school budget, deals with all student and staff issues, and attends any meeting requiring an administrator both on and off campus. Her energy level is extremely high and her upbeat attitude contagious.

When observations began, I shadowed not only the principal, but also teachers and paraprofessionals. I attended meetings with students and staff members, as well as an inservice training on standardized testing protocol. I even ate lunches in the cafeteria with students and in the teacher's lounge. I was able to observe all potential interview participants at School A for some portion of their school day. This enabled me to see first hand the interactions between teachers and paraprofessionals. When I began to solicit interview participants, only one paraprofessional opted not to participate in the study. She was comfortable allowing me to observe her in the classroom setting, but did not feel at ease with the interview process, specifically the taping. Because of the small school size, I was only able to interview the three remaining paraprofessionals in the building.

School B

School B, which sits on a campus adjacent to a high school, is much larger that School A and, therefore, offered a larger population of people willing to participate in my study. When I arrived at the tidy brick building, I reported directly to the principal, who immediately invited me to sit in on a weekly administrative meeting. Unlike School A, this school has two assistant principals who joined the principal in a discussion of pertinent school information and brainstormed ways to handle each individual situation. We briefly discussed my study and I was provided with a tentative daily schedule that allowed me to meet possible interview participants, share with them the purpose of my study, and solicit their participation. I was assigned a conference room connected to the second-floor library, a central location in the building.

Because of the size of School B, the principal has a different managerial style from her counterpart at School A. The principal is very aware of the challenges of such a large school and adheres to a "student first" philosophy. For example, she was addressing the problem of

horseplay with a school-wide initiative that included posters in the classroom. These eye-catching posters pointed out that horseplay is not allowed at School B. While the size of School B makes it difficult for the principal to create an atmosphere of intimacy, such as school A, lengthy discussions gave ample evidence that she spends long hours at her school and implements many best practice educational approaches for the students. In fact, during the 2002 – 2003 school year, her school will be participating in a pilot day treatment program that is expected to provide in depth counseling services to selected students in addition to their academic studies.

During my time at School B, I was able to observe all interview participants for some portion of their school day. This enhanced my understanding of teacher and paraprofessional roles, expectations, duties, and interactions.

Participant Characteristics

A total of 20 participants were included in this study. At School A, the principal, 3 paraprofessionals, 2 general education teachers, 2 special education teachers, and the special education coordinator participated in interviews and observations as part of this study. At School B, the principal, 4 paraprofessionals, 2 general education teachers, 2 special education teachers, and the special education coordinator agreed to participate in my study. In addition, a central office administrator who has the responsibility of supervising all paraprofessionals in the district participated in the study. Although participant backgrounds were varied, responses to interview questions were consistent (Table 4).

Table 4

Participant Characteristics

Participant/Title	Gender	General Information
Central Office/Supervisor	Male	2 ½ years in this position; previous experience as a school principal
School A		
Administrator/Principal	Female	4 years of administrative experience; responsible for evaluation of paraprofessionals within building
Special Education Coordinator	Male	Oversees the special education programs in the school; works with a paraprofessional 2 periods per day
General Education Teacher #1	Female	Almost 30 years of experience; works 2 periods per day with a paraprofessional
General Education Teacher #2	Male	33 years of experience; works 2 periods per day with a paraprofessional; first year working with a paraprofessional
Special Education Teacher #1	Female	13 years of experience; works 2 periods per day with a paraprofessional
Special Education Teacher #2	Female	27 years of experience; works 2 periods per day with a paraprofessional
Paraprofessional #1	Female	2 years of experiences; previous experience was parenthood

Paraprofessional #2	Female	2 ½ years of experience; previous experiences volunteering in schools
Paraprofessional #3	Female	5 years in current position with 13 total years as a paraprofessional; originally was a teacher but left position to start a family

School B

Administrator/Assistant Principal	Male	6 years administrative experience; responsible for evaluation of paraprofessionals within building
Special Education Coordinator	Female	Oversees the day-to-day supervision of paraprofessionals in the building but does not work directly with paraprofessionals this year
General Education Teacher #1	Male	16 years of experience; works 2 periods per day with a paraprofessional
General Education Teacher #2	Female	8 years of experiences; 1st year in this school; works 1 period per day with a paraprofessional
Special Education Teacher #1	Female	10 years of experience; assigned paraprofessional support throughout the school day
Special Education Teacher #2	Female	1st year teaching; works 1 period per day with a paraprofessional

Paraprofessional #1	Female	1st year paraprofessional; previously in the medical profession
Paraprofessional #2	Female	3 years experience as a paraprofessional (2 years working one-on-one with a student; 1 year assigned to a classroom teacher)
Paraprofessional #3	Female	5 years experience as a paraprofessional; lacks one course of receiving a 4-year college degree in art
Paraprofessional #4	Female	3 months experience as a paraprofessional

Overview of the Findings

The middle school teachers in this study struggled with regard to their roles and responsibilities in supervising paraprofessionals. Although each school varied in size and culture, the experiences of participants with regard to paraprofessional supervision were similar. For this reason, quotes and vignettes will be included within each section below from each school and will not be presented separately from one another. Themes derived from multiple sources of data describe how each supervisory element in Pickett's (1999) framework was addressed in middle schools:

Planning Work Assignments

Data indicate that planning, formal or informal, does exist, but not as it should, between teacher and paraprofessional teams in middle school classrooms. Several teachers confirmed a widespread misunderstanding of the concept of planning noting that they and their teacher colleagues confused planning with delegation. The participants in this study also identified time constraints as hindrances to effective planning.

Task Delegating

Data indicate that teachers were often uncomfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals. At times, teachers excused themselves from assigning duties to paraprofessionals by saying that they felt paraprofessionals "just know" what to do in the classroom. The primary method of task delegation was informal and mostly resulted from spontaneous conversation rather than from deliberate assignment.

Role Clarifying

Data indicate that roles were not clear to teachers and paraprofessionals. Although written methods of role clarification included inservice handouts, handbooks, and individualized

lists created by supervising teachers, role clarification was most often derived from informal discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals.

Daily Performance Monitoring

Data indicate that teachers often considered praise as an acceptable method of monitoring the performance of a paraprofessional. Consequently, many paraprofessionals perceived that they were not monitored at all by teachers or were monitored only annually by building level administrators. Monitoring, like delegation and role clarification, took place most often during informal conversations.

Systematic On-The-Job Training and Mentoring

Finally, data indicate that training for paraprofessionals was minimal, and usually took the form of hands-on or on-the-job training opportunities. Some inservices were available in this district to assist paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. One common theme in the data was that teachers were also in need of training regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Reporting the Findings

The following section of this chapter addresses the research questions by presenting a description of paraprofessional supervision in middle schools related to Pickett's (1999) framework. Each element of the framework is addressed in a narrative comprising themes generated from multiple data sources. Appendices G1 through G5 highlight these themes. Data are reported through general and particular description, as well as interpretive commentary. Supporting quotations from the transcripts are found throughout the narrative and give particular description of participant experiences. Data sources are referenced in the report using codes that identify the type of source (I – interview transcript; O – observation; D – document) followed by letters and a number that identify the participant (GE - general education teacher; SE – special

education teacher; P – paraprofessional; SEC – special education coordinator; A – administrator; and C – central office staff). Next, the letter A or B represents the school association, School A or School B, and, finally, the page number of the transcript is listed.

<div align="center">Planning Work Assignments</div>

The first specific skill documented in Pickett's (1999) framework is planning work assignments, an important, and often overlooked, task of teacher/paraprofessional teams. Pickett (1997) points out that "designing instructional environments and making decisions about the goals, objectives, activities, and evaluations of instructional episodes are tasks that are well outside the paraeducator's scope of responsibility" (p. 95). Planning, which may be formal or informal, is the responsibility of the teacher.

Seven major themes emerged from the data on planning between teachers and paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms. These are as follows: (a) there is a general lack of planning between teachers and paraprofessionals; (b) there are significant time constraints that prohibit effective planning between teachers and paraprofessionals; (c) teachers have difficulty giving up control in their classrooms; (d) teachers and paraprofessionals have certain assumptions about planning; (e) formal and informal opportunities exist to allow teacher/ paraprofessional teams to plan together; (f) planning often occurs by simply sharing information with paraprofessionals; and (g) there is confusion between planning and delegating tasks to paraprofessionals. These themes, including the data sources in which the information was identified during the study, are highlighted in Appendix G1.

General Lack of Planning

Although planning is considered to be an important component of effective paraprofessional supervision (D'Aquanni, 1997; Pickett, 1999; Prigge, 1996), data obtained in

this study from both teachers and paraprofessionals indicated that planning work assignments is often minimal in these middle school classrooms. Special education teachers seemed to recognize the importance of planning more than did general education teachers. One general education teacher reported, "I don't plan for her. She has no idea what I'm doing from one day to the next. I tell her where to meet me" (I/GE2A/1). A paraprofessional echoed the teacher's comments: "No teacher at the beginning of the year said, 'Now this is what I would like for you to do and this is what I expect of you'" (I/P1A/2). Another paraprofessional responded similarly with: "We don't have any lesson plans. They are not written down. I guess we could go to look at them but they haven't been shared with me" (I/P3A/3).

As evidenced by these responses, planning between teachers and paraprofessionals was often nonexistent, with the exception of simply sharing lesson plans with paraprofessionals, which many teachers considered to be an adequate planning tool.

Time Constraints Often Prohibit Effective Planning

Time constraints played a major role in the amount of planning time teachers and paraprofessionals had together. The majority of participants indicated that they had no common planning time built into their daily schedules. When asked if teacher/paraprofessional teams had common planning time, responses included:

"We don't. No, we don't. We have the same lunch so sometimes I will go in and speak with her. She also has hall duty so I will see her in the morning" (I/SE2B/5).

"Well, her schedule is such that we don't have any common planning" (I/GE2B/1).

"There is no opportunity where we just sit down and communicate together" (I/P2B/4).

Time constraints appear to be a major obstacle to effective planning for the role the paraprofessional will play in a particular classroom from week to week and even day to day.

At the beginning of the school year, all paraprofessionals in the district report to their positions one day ahead of the students, therefore, there is some time for some prior planning before the school year begins. One teacher noted:

> We did have a planning time. [My paraprofessional] came in during one of the workdays before school and we kind of talked about what role she would play. It was my first time with a paraprofessional. It was just one of those things where I kind of had to feel and see what would work. (I/SE2B/3)

As comments by participants demonstrated throughout the interviews, this planning did not continue on a consistent basis once the school year began.

Time constraints were visible during observations as well. In School A, I noted that the teachers and paraprofessionals had very little time together to be able to plan because paraprofessionals within the building typically floated from class to class. Similarly, in School B, rigorous schedules significantly limited the amount of time the paraprofessional could spend with the supervising teacher planning. Again, most paraprofessionals floated to various classrooms, both general and special education. One teacher/paraprofessional team in School B that worked together in a separate classroom placement did have a common planning time built into their school day. In addition, this supervising teacher provided copies of lesson plans to the paraprofessionals assigned to her class on a weekly basis (D/B/9).

Giving Up Control

Because of their supervisory role in the classroom, teachers often felt ownership over their class and were not comfortable sharing plans with paraprofessionals. One administrator even noted teacher control as an issue regarding planning by saying:

Some do [provide copies of plans] and some don't. We have had some [teachers] that will give [paraprofessionals] a set so they can go along with. We have others who don't want to relinquish any control at all to anyone else beside himself or herself, so they brief them on what is going to be discussed and then away they go. (I/AB/1)

When asked what type of planning goes on for paraprofessionals, one paraprofessional replied:

Really, they don't approach me with what they are going to be doing. I basically just go into the classroom and whatever needs to be done, I do it. Sometimes, they will tell me what they need me to collect or what I should watch for, but nothing is really written down. I have never seen lesson plans. I'm not sure if I would have access. I wouldn't just all of a sudden look into their plans. It's private stuff, so I have not. (I/P4B/2)

This response suggests that the paraprofessional senses that the teacher has a proprietary interest in the class and is, therefore, not required to share her plans.

When another paraprofessional was asked if she was provided with written copies of lesson plans, she responded: "I've never been offered access or copies [of lesson plans]. I don't work with anybody who wants me to be that involved" (I/P3B/5). A teacher's response to the same question was this:

I verbally share plans with [the paraprofessional]. I'll tell her what we're going to do, but I don't give her a copy of my lesson plans. They are usually based on what happened the day before, so I can't. I'm not able to plan specific plans into the day. (I/SE2B/2)

Again, the paraprofessional commented on the ownership issue noting that the teacher, who did not encourage serious involvement, maintained lesson plans. The teacher, however, saw the problem in terms of time. In some cases, the teacher might not have realized that the

paraprofessional wanted, needed, or could even have benefited from having access to lesson plans.

When asked if the teacher provided the paraprofessional with access to plans, one teacher stated:

> She can look at [them] all she wants. She has not expressed an interest in doing that. She comes in and I put the schedule of what we're doing on the board for the whole week so she doesn't really have to look at my plans. (I/GE1B/2)

This teacher did not encourage the paraprofessional to familiarize herself with the lesson plans, an omission that the paraprofessional could have interpreted as the teacher not wanting her to become involved in the class in any meaningful way.

When asked if paraprofessionals have access to lesson plans more in general education or special education classes, one paraprofessional responded: "It depends entirely on the personality of the teacher. I haven't done that many regular education classes, but in one special education class, I have never seen a plan. I never know what's going to happen" (I/P3B/5).

The interviews identified ownership as a barrier to planning. One explanation for not sharing plans could be that these teachers might not have fully understood the paraprofessional's role in the classroom; therefore, they failed to share critical information with them or to include them in planning processes. Furthermore, teachers who do not understand the role of the paraprofessional might feel threatened by having a second adult in the room. Interestingly, comments about ownership and teacher control were present during interviews at both School A and School B.

Assumptions Made About Planning

Unfortunately, it did appear as if one half of the teacher/paraprofessional team often did not understand the other half's role in the classroom. Consequently, both teachers and paraprofessionals tended to make certain assumptions about the planning process. When asked to describe how teachers plan assignments for paraprofessionals, participants responded with many assumptions. A principal stated: "To be honest, I don't know what they do. I would assume that the teachers that work with an instructional assistant make the time [to plan]. Some of them have worked long enough that they pretty much have a routine" (I/AA/1). When asked a more specific question about whether paraprofessionals are given information on student individualized education plans (IEPs) or student modifications, the same administrator stated: "I don't know if they're given [information]. Usually, they (paraprofessionals) are the ones that make the modification books so I would assume that they look through it" (I/AA/1). This principal's responses indicate that the leader in the building may have lacked a thorough understanding of the importance of the planning process between teacher and paraprofessional teams. There is cause for concern and certainly a need for guidelines on paraprofessional supervision when even the principal, who is considered the instructional leader of the school, makes such assumptions about the roles of paraprofessionals. Her assumptions, that the IEPs of special education students were being appropriately implemented by paraprofessionals were ill-founded, putting the childrens' rights to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in jeopardy.

In addition to the various assumptions school staff had about planning for paraprofessionals, several participants noted that because paraprofessionals just "know" how to do their job, planning is unnecessary. One special education teacher in School A stated: "If we are working on a medium length writing assignment, the paraprofessional who works with me knows automatically that she's working with [a certain] student" (I/SE1A/1). A similar response

was given by a paraprofessional in School B: "I just go in and help whoever needs it. [The teacher] just goes in and teaches and I just kind of observe where I need to be for those kids" (I/P4B/3).

When asked how teachers plan assignments for paraprofessionals, another paraprofessional said: "I just know what I'm supposed to do. When a kid needs help, I just do it" (I/P2A/2).

Varied assumptions appeared to have evolved that impacted planning between teacher and paraprofessional teams. These assumptions could impact students in a negative manner. If a paraprofessional does not know what is expected of him or her in a classroom, then "just knowing" may be the wrong thing to do. Interestingly, years of experience did not impact the participants' responses about planning. Paraprofessionals with as little as one year of experience to those with more than ten years all said they "just knew" what to do in a classroom, even without being included in planning processes by teachers. However, allowing a paraprofessional to work on a "just knowing" basis does not utilize the full potential of the paraprofessional.

Formal and Informal Planning Opportunities Exist in Schools

Planning may consist of formal or informal methods. Interview data revealed that because many teacher/paraprofessional teams did not have formal planning opportunities during the school day, they often communicated briefly in informal settings. One paraprofessional elaborated:

> My science teacher is really good. At lunch, he will say, "Oh, today, we're going to see videos" or "Tomorrow, we're are starting our labs." My civics teacher will meet me in the hallway and say, "I'm going to split the class and I want you to take one group. (I/P1B/3)

For some teacher/paraprofessional teams in each school, communication appeared to be spontaneous and informal because of scarce planning time.

Teachers who had strong organizational skills, accommodated the lack of common planning time by giving information to paraprofessionals through written means. A paraprofessional explained: "I get a copy of [the teacher's] plans and she's very specific. She has also started writing in a notebook extra things that can be done if we run out of time or we are already caught up on that day" (I/P1B/2). The supervising teacher made sure that this paraprofessional knew what to do if certain things did not happen in class. One teacher in School B made time to meet with the paraprofessional: "We meet every afternoon. When we come back, we talk about what's working and what's not working" (I/SE1B/5). This helps the team make accommodations in the classroom.

When asked if the teacher sat down with the paraprofessional and explained lesson plans, one teacher stated: "I do sit down with the paraprofessional at the start of the school year and each time I change them (lesson plans), I sit down with them (paraprofessionals) again because it is an ongoing thing" (I/SE1B/3). This teacher did make an effort to keep the paraprofessional abreast of plans and change.

Planning time between teachers and paraprofessionals was not necessarily lengthy. One general education teacher stated: "I asked if there was any time [to plan] and the only time that we have together to plan is just about 10 minutes in the morning" (I/GE1B/2).

Planning opportunities existed and were both formal and informal. Usually, they took the form of discussions in middle school classrooms. Responses of the participants indicated that planning does not necessarily have to be an in-depth and time-consuming process.

Sharing Information Disguised as Planning

As some responses in the previous section indicate, some teachers may interpret sharing information as planning. Eight participants believed that planning consists of providing access to teacher lesson plans on a regular basis. Two participants shared lesson plans on an "as needed" basis. Six respondents confirmed that paraprofessionals were given information regarding student modifications and two paraprofessionals stated that they were given access to confidential records. In addition, teachers remarked that having assignments posted openly for the paraprofessional to see when entering the classroom was an accepted method of planning. One paraprofessional explained this sharing process:

> The science teacher gives me her lesson plans for the week and homework assignments so I know in advance exactly what to do. The English teacher's assignments are always on the board every day for the students as well as myself (I/P2B/2).

A special education teacher stated:

> I have lesson plans for each group and one individual child. I have notebooks for each reading group and I have my lesson plan sheets so that anyone can come in at any time and see what each group is doing. I have a notebook that tells you exactly what to do today, exactly the teacher's page to go to, and in what order. (I/SE1B/2).

The data supported the conclusion that time constraints might have necessitated the need for teachers to share information informally with paraprofessionals, because there was not enough time to sit down and plan together as a team. However, the data from both interviews and observations suggest that planning was confused with sharing. Because time constraints impacted planning opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals, making information available to the paraprofessional became the way many teachers coped with the lack of time in the school day to formally plan.

Confusion Between Planning and Delegating

Teachers in this study also seemed to confuse planning with delegation. When asked how teachers planned for paraprofessionals, various responses included:

"Most of the time, assignments are listed on the board" (I/SE2B/2).

"We each had a file folder with [assignments listed inside]" (I/P3B/7).

"I just tell her to move around the room to make sure the students are staying on task" (I/GE1B/2).

"Some teachers have specific plans for paraprofessionals and others have lists of things for them to do" (I/SECB/2).

As evidenced by the comments above, teachers often gave paraprofessionals directions or delegated tasks to them via lists or assignment folders.

Planning between teachers and paraprofessionals is important, but it was not happening consistently in these schools. This problem may stem from the fact that paraprofessional and teacher roles have changed over the years. In the past, paraprofessionals often worked in separate classrooms with special education teachers. However, the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require schools to serve students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE), which for most students is the general education classroom. These provisions have led to the changing role of the paraprofessional. Increasingly, paraprofessionals are utilized in the school setting to assist students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms. Inclusive placements of special education students have forced general education teachers into assuming supervisory roles they often find uncomfortable. French (1999) noted that teachers, both general and special education, often feel

unqualified to supervise paraprofessionals. This sense of inadequacy may impact the teacher's

understanding of the value of planning for paraprofessionals.

Secondly, time constraints impact planning opportunities for teacher and paraprofessional

teams. Common planning time is usually not an integrated part of the school day. In addition, as

paraprofessionals are assisting students more in general education placements, they often work

with more than one or two teachers, whereas in the past, they normally worked with only one

special education teacher in separate placements. This current situation significantly limits

planning opportunities. Time constraints may also be the reason teachers share information with

paraprofessionals in a cursory way and delegate tasks to them instead of actually sitting down

with them and planning together. This information closely correlates with D'Aquanni's (1997)

study that indicated there was an absence or lack of planning time between teachers and

paraprofessionals. McClain (1993) also has stressed the importance of ongoing communication

in team relationships.

Thirdly, control is another theme that emerged in the data. Control issues may really be

the teacher's lack of understanding of how to utilize paraprofessionals in their classrooms. These

issues, therefore, argue for the need for planning.

Because there was a lack of planning between teacher and paraprofessionals teams,

paraprofessionals have developed coping skills in order to perform their daily duties. One

paraprofessional stated, "You just observe and you just see what is needed or you watch and see

if a particular child needs something" (I/MB/2). Paraprofessionals also began to initiate planning

opportunities, both formal and informal, with the teachers with whom they worked. One teacher

noted, "She asks me what to do and has a lot of initiative of her own" (I/JG/1). This case,

however, was not representative of the usual interaction between teachers and paraprofessionals in these middle schools.

Along with the changing roles that have impacted the day-to-day duties of both paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers comes a heightened need for planning work assignments between these two groups. In this study, teacher control was a barrier to the planning process. However, interviews, observations, and a review of documents reveal that planning is still minimal in middle school classrooms.

<div align="center">Task Delegating</div>

The second element in Pickett's (1999) framework is delegation, the assignment of certain tasks to others to allow the leader or supervisor to focus on more critical tasks at hand. Teachers often delegate duties to paraprofessionals to give themselves more time to focus on student needs, instruction, and other work that cannot be delegated.

Three major themes emerged in the data regarding delegation: (a) tasks are not delegated, but rather the paraprofessional intuitively "knows" what is needed; (b) tasks are delegated through various written methods; and (c) tasks are delegated verbally to the paraprofessional. Appendix G2 illustrates these themes related to delegating tasks to paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms. Delegation occurred in similar ways in both School A and School B. As evidenced by the interview data, responses among participants at both schools closely parallel each another.

Tasks Are Not Delegated

Several studies note the fact that teachers are often uncomfortable supervising paraprofessionals and, therefore, are reluctant to delegate tasks. However, Pickett (1999) stated that an important aspect of effective paraprofessional supervision is task delegation. As noted

earlier, failure to delegate was at times "justified" by an assumption that paraprofessionals "just knew" what to do and, therefore, it was not necessary to delegate tasks to them. One paraprofessional noted:

> Having been left to figure out what I'm supposed to do for four years, I've just gone in and tried to figure out what I'm supposed to do [on my own]. I say to the teachers [with whom I work] at the beginning of the year, 'Please tell me what I'm doing wrong. Please tell me what I'm doing right. Please let me know if I am messing up the process.' Some people will and some people won't. It varies from classroom to classroom. (I/P3B/8)

This paraprofessional seemed to be uncomfortable with the "just know" approach and would like to have had tasks delegated to her.

When a general education teacher was asked how she delegated tasks to the paraprofessional assigned to her classroom, she said:

> She usually asks what she can do at the beginning [of class]. She just knows who she is checking on. She knows to walk around. I don't have a specific job for her. She circulates through the room to keep all of [the students] on task. (I/GE1A/2)

Another general education teacher stated: "I can't say that I've ever delegated any authority to her. She just jumps in" (I/GE2A/2). There seemed to be no feeling among teachers that paraprofessionals needed to be assigned tasks. This suggests that there was a gap between actual needs and perceived needs of paraprofessionals for guidance.

Less delegation seemed to be needed once relationships and routines were firmly established between teachers and paraprofessionals. A special education coordinator stated:

> A lot of it is trial and error until you get to know each other. I've been working with one [paraprofessional] now for four years, and virtually that's automatic. She knows exactly

what I want to do and how I want it done and she knows the limits on how much help to give and how to guide practice. We have a routine, a big time routine. (I/SECA/2)

A general education teacher responded similarly: "Normally, she does the same things every day" (I/GE2B/2).

Although Pickett (1999) identifies task delegation as an important factor in effective supervision of paraprofessionals, it is evident from the interview data and observations that teachers were often not comfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals or they simply did not delegate tasks to them at all. One explanation might be that because most teachers did not have supervising responsibilities explained to them, they did not know how much they could expect from their paraprofessionals to do and were afraid of asking too much.

Tasks Are Delegated Through Various Written Methods.

Teachers often chose to write down tasks for paraprofessionals to complete. A paraprofessional stated: "Some teachers will leave me a little note and ask me to do things" (I/P2A/2). A special education teacher also referred to leaving lists, but noted a pitfall to this method: "Sometimes I give her a list, but that would mean that I would know all those things in advance and I don't always have those things in advance" (I/SE1A/2). A principal concurred: "Some have a list. I don't know if it's a weekly or daily list. These are things we need to get accomplished" (I/AA/2).

When one special education coordinator was asked to share suggestions to aid in the supervision of paraprofessionals, the response was: "I'm very anal. I like to [give the paraprofessional] a list of things that need to be done. I'm just that kind of person. I've always been that way" (I/C/4).

Written methods of task delegation were important to participants for two reasons. Delegation through notes or lists of tasks relieved the teachers of the burden of finding time to meet with paraprofessionals. Written delegation also removed from teachers any stress resulting from having to directly request something of paraprofessionals, who were often described as a friend rather than a supervisee. This later situation argues for supervisory skills training for teachers so that they will know how to delegate without offending the paraprofessional.

Tasks Are Delegated Verbally To The Paraprofessional

Most delegation was spontaneous and primarily verbal, posed either as a request or directive when the need arose in the classroom. One paraprofessional described verbal delegation this way: "It's spontaneous. Nothing is really too pre-planned" (I/P4B/4). One special education teacher explained how she gives verbal directives:

If I haven't spoken to her before class about something I want her to do specifically, then in class, I will put out a blanket statement like, "I'm going to do this while Ms. X passes out papers." That lets her know what she's doing without interrupting the class and having her ask what to do. (I/SE2B/3)

Another paraprofessional described delegation as teachers simply asking her to do tasks: "They say, 'Would you mind doing this?'" (I/P1A/3). Although these teachers/supervisors found ways to verbally assign tasks, others seemed to be uncomfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals. One paraprofessional explained:

When I first started [working] with my science teacher, he would say, 'You know I hate to ask you this, but can you grade these papers?' When I first started, that's what I thought I would be doing. I thought I would be grading papers and copying papers. I did

not know that I would have so much responsibility, which is good. They (the teachers)

feel bad when they ask me to do things. (I/P1B/3)

A paraprofessional with previous teaching experience explains further:

Sometimes they just tell you (what they need you to do) or they come over to your desk

and say, "Would you do such and such?" But it's nothing you can count on. In a way it's

nice though, because it's different. Everyday you come in wondering what the day

holds…I like to be busy and sometimes, I have found myself beginning to be a little bit

idle. (I/P3A/4)

Changes in day-to-day expectations and not enough to do caused some paraprofessionals

to question the competence of teachers or to lose respect for them. When asked what this

paraprofessional thought the cause of this idleness was, she responded that it was due to the

classroom teacher's lack of understanding regarding the proper utilization of paraprofessionals.

She even went so far as to state: "[Teachers] ask, 'Is this too much?' I've had some say, 'If this is

too much or if you think this is more than what you ought to be doing, you know in your

position, please tell me.'" (I/P3A/4).

When a central office supervisor was asked how teachers delegate tasks to

paraprofessionals, the response was:

You know there are a lot of ways you could do it. You could do it on the run, walking

down the hall together, you can do it in a conference that is scheduled every day, a

meeting that is scheduled at the end of each day. What I like to see is teachers building

relationships with [paraprofessionals] and vice versa and mutual respect and sharing

ideas based on a relationship that they have together which is based on mutual respect

and appreciation. (I/C/2)

Although professional relationships based on respect and appreciation have value, their development cannot happen in rushed meetings in the hall or when the paraprofessional sees the teacher as a timid or even incompetent supervisor.

Delegation through casual or spontaneous conversations or as particular needs arise in the classroom may not highlight the supervisory skills of teachers in a positive way. This spontaneous delegation was evident in all classroom observations in both schools, probably because it is non-threatening and occurs naturally. However, as one paraprofessional noted, it is not very professional and can make the paraprofessional feel under utilized and unappreciated. Again, verbal delegation points to the need to teach teachers to be supervisors.

Task delegation, as evidenced in the literature review in Chapter Two, has not been identified often in the research. For this reason, I have made several assumptions about the responses provided in the interviews and the classroom observations. These include: (a) as relationships grow, less delegation may be needed; (b) the lack of comfort of teachers to delegate tasks to paraprofessionals may be related to the obvious lack of role clarification between teachers and paraprofessionals; and (c) delegation is simply spontaneous; and (d) many teachers need to learn how to delegate.

Based on conversations with participants and observations in both schools, it appears that as relationships grow between teachers and paraprofessionals, less delegation may need to take place. When teacher/paraprofessional teams work together for several years, both tend to gain a better understanding of what needs to take place each day in the classroom. Thus, as relationships grow, the need to delegate may lessen. One drawback to this close relationship may be that teachers tend to feel that they are more of a friend to the paraprofessional than a supervisor and, therefore, unwilling to act the supervisor when the need arises. This problem was

noted by French (1998) who reported that, "some teachers failed to distinguish between the ethical and legal responsibilities of the professional teacher and those tasks appropriately delegated to a paraeducator, describing the paraprofessional as a peer rather than a supervisee" (p. 365).

The level of discomfort surrounding the delegation of tasks to paraprofessionals might also be related to the lack of role clarification between teachers and paraprofessionals. As Milner (1998) noted, general education teachers are not sure what paraprofessionals should be doing in their classrooms. When this is the case, they may feel uncomfortable delegating tasks to them. Until these roles are clarified, task delegation will remain a gray area for teachers.

Finally, delegation appears to often occur spontaneously, also as a need arises in the classroom. These results parallel those of McClain (1993) who also found teachers most often gave directions verbally to paraprofessionals in their classrooms. These results seem to point to the importance of supervisory training for teachers so that they can learn how to assign tasks as well as learn what tasks they can legitimately assign.

Role Clarifying

In addition to planning and delegation, both teachers and paraprofessionals must understand their individual roles in order to perform effectively within the classroom. Roles, therefore, need to be discussed and clarified.

Four major themes emerged in the data regarding role clarification for teachers and paraprofessionals: (a) teachers and paraprofessionals lack a clear understanding of their roles; (b) roles are clarified in writing; (c) roles are clarified through training opportunities; and (d) roles are clarified through open discussions. Appendix G3 illustrates the themes that emerged in the

study related to the roles of paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers in middle school classrooms.

Issues in the supervision of paraprofessionals have gained prominence as the roles for both paraprofessionals and teachers have evolved with an increasing number of paraprofessional now working in classrooms (Pickett, 1997). In the past, paraprofessionals spent most of their time completing clerical tasks, but now they serve in more instructional positions with teachers acting as their managers. As evidenced in the results that follow, there still appears to be confusion surrounding roles for both teachers and paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms.

Teachers and Paraprofessionals Lack a Clear Understanding of Their Roles

It was surprising to hear from several participants in each school, both teachers and paraprofessionals, that they had never been exposed to any information that could assist them in establishing roles. Some training was offered in this district to teachers and paraprofessionals to assist with role clarification. However, responses indicate that either some participants did not attend this training or, of those who did, impressions were not long lasting. When paraprofessionals and teachers were asked if they were presented with any information pertaining to roles, overwhelmingly they stated they were not. When asked if she received any type of written information from the school regarding roles, one paraprofessional stated: "I did not. No" (I/P4B/5). To probe further, I asked if she received specific information about her role when she interviewed or was hired for her position. She again stated, "No."

A principal, when asked if she was aware of any information at the district level that provided paraprofessionals with information about their job descriptions or roles in the classroom, responded: "Not that I'm aware of" (I/AA/2).

When asked if any information was shared with paraprofessionals about roles, a general education teacher responded, "No." I then asked if there was information in the district's policy manual or the teacher handbook at the school about roles. His response was: "I know there's something in the book about paraprofessionals but since it never concerned me [before this year], I never read it" (I/GE2A/2).

A paraprofessional described to me her interview for her current position. She stated:

I was hired late so I missed the [training] in August. I was a little nervous. I talked to the administrator at the central office and he told me what I would be paid. He then asked if he still had my attention. He asked me about my education and then told me that [my job] would be a special education position, but as far as what my duties were going to be then, no. I was just kind of confused about that. (I/P1B/4)

Paraprofessionals are not the only ones confused over the lack of role clarification. A teacher stated:

Legally, it would be nice to just know ahead of time what their roles are expected to be. It's one of those things where if you sat down with a person, you would agree on roles ahead of time, before you even walk into the classroom. (I/GE2B/6)

Another special education teacher responded similarly by stating:

It's been unclear as to what we are to ask them (paraprofessionals) to do. I know some teachers ask them to do a lot of copying and paperwork. We should make those roles more clear. The paraprofessional in my room came during the middle of the year so I'm sure roles are even less defined for her. (I/SE2B/5)

When roles between teachers and paraprofessional are unclear, this may lead to conflict. One general education teacher explained that the paraprofessional assigned to a physical

education class was too motherly. He described her as the type of person who would

immediately run over to a student if he/she fell to see if everything was all right:

> One day she just happened to jump down to [see if a student was hurt]. I grabbed her by
>
> the arm and said, 'Get away from him.' From that point on, she's been a bit standoffish.
>
> There is a difference between being hurt and being injured and most kids aren't injured. I
>
> told her, 'If I was hurt and knew you were coming over and going to rub me on my
>
> shoulder or rub me on my head, I'd just sit there all day.' (I/GE2A/3)

> Because they did not discuss roles prior to the school year beginning or as the year

progressed, this conflict escalated to the point where his behavior upset the paraprofessional and

probably undermined students' respect for her.

> When formal clarification about their roles was absent for teacher and paraprofessional

teams, some paraprofessionals determined what their roles would entail on their own. One

seasoned paraprofessional stated:

> The [job] becomes old hat, so you sort of pick up on things. I [share with teachers] what
>
> my role is. I wonder if that's not right because of my experience. Sometimes I have to
>
> watch to make sure I am not going over my bounds. I have always had wonderful
>
> reviews. (I/P3A/4)

> Apparently, experience has also defined the boundaries of the job for this person. In other

cases, teachers and paraprofessionals experimented to determine what worked best in the

classroom. One paraprofessional reported "trial and error"(I/P3B/8) as the method of discovering

what is expected of her on a day-to-day basis. A first-year paraprofessional explained that when

she was given no information about what was expected of her, "I asked if there was anything and

they said, 'No.' At first I felt like I was just kind of thrown into the room and on my own so I felt

a little lost for a couple of weeks. I [figured out what was expected of me] by just observing in the classroom. I guess you could say I am a little like Jimmy Buffet- always looking for my lost shaker of salt." (I/P4B/5).

This section of the study closely paralleled Pickett's (1999) research identifying role clarification as a necessary component of effective paraprofessional supervision. D'Aquanni (1997), French (1997), Giangreco et. al (1997), McClain (1993), Milner (1998), Prigge (1996), and Rose (2000) also note the need for role clarity. Even though this need exists, teachers in School A and School B made little effort to provide guidance to their paraprofessional about what they wanted them to do.

Written Clarification of Roles

Data indicate that very little information was given to paraprofessionals regarding their roles in the classroom. In the district selected for participation, two types of written role clarification were identified. First, paraprofessionals were given a handbook (D/C/1) designed specifically to outline their roles and responsibilities. The manual provides a definition of a paraprofessional, lists standards for paraprofessionals based on guidelines from the Council for Exceptional Children, provides examples of various roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals, and explains issues such as confidentiality, ethics, the special education process, teamwork, and inclusion. It also lists web sites of interest for paraprofessionals and staff development opportunities in the district. Each paraprofessional participating in this study, regardless of school, was knowledgeable about the handbook and referenced it at some point during their individual interviews. Secondly, paraprofessionals were provided with handouts at inservices at the school and district levels (D/A/8; D/C/4; D/C/5) designed to help them delineate their roles and responsibilities.

Teachers and paraprofessionals also developed informal written methods to clarify roles. One paraprofessional developed an individualized list explaining her role: "I made up a little list of the many things that I had done [including] clerical duties, running off copies, and tutoring" (I/P3A/4). She then gave the teachers to whom she was assigned a copy of this list so that they would know what her experience included.

Written clarification of roles may help to eliminate misunderstandings between teachers and paraprofessionals. The most common written method of role clarification found in this study consisted of a handbook written specifically for paraprofessionals in the district. Although this handbook can be useful for paraprofessionals, teachers did not receive a copy of the handbook, therefore, likely limiting its usefulness.

Roles are Clarified Through Training Opportunities

Teachers and paraprofessionals in this study acknowledged district wide training and building level inservices as two means of clarifying roles. Grant money targeted toward the training and supervision of paraprofessionals that was obtained in the district four years ago allowed the district to offer summer training for paraprofessionals. One paraprofessional commented on the summer training:

> I received a lot of help at the seminar that I attended back before I even started last year. It gave me a clue as to what an instructional assistant is all about. That was the only training I had had except for years of volunteering that I did. (I/P1A/3)

Another paraprofessional stated: "I had been to the (summer) training about what our jobs are supposed to be. Some of the things we are not supposed to do, we do anyway" (I/P2A/3).

Documents reviewed from the summer training sessions for this study included information identifying characteristics of the special education student, legal issues,

confidentiality, substance abuse issues in students, peer mediation and conflict resolution, general roles of teachers and paraprofessionals, and information regarding behavior management.

Both schools also provided inservices to help clarify roles of paraprofessionals and teachers. In addition to inservices targeted specifically for paraprofessionals, School B went one step farther by including paraprofessionals in inservice opportunities for collaborative teaching situations. One general education teacher stated: "We had an inservice on the dos and don'ts on what to do with a paraprofessional. The responsibilities of a paraprofessional are not the same as a certified teacher's responsibilities" (I/GE1B/5). Another general education teacher who attended the same meeting commented further: "They emphasized what an assistant [should do]. They can't be responsible for the teaching" (I/GE2B/4). Although these inservices were not formal supervision training sessions, the teachers at least came away with some knowledge of the paraprofessionals' roles.

Paraprofessionals at both schools participating in the study were also called together prior to the beginning of the school year to have an initial meeting with the principal. Supervising teachers were not invited to this meeting at either school. One principal explained: "I met with instructional assistants to go over my expectations and set up some ground rules. I did not set up a time for teachers to work with instructional assistants but I would think they would do that" (I/AA/2). Training opportunities at both school and district levels were identified as means to help to clarify roles between teachers and paraprofessionals.

Roles are Clarified Through Open Discussions

One common method of identifying roles for these participants was through open discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals. A special education teacher explained:

We kind of talked [before the year began]. I definitely talked to her [during the school year]. I shared with her how other paraprofessionals had worked in the class and that there would be some days where she would just help with clerical things such as passing out papers. There will be other days where she would actually have her own reading group. When she does have her own reading group, I always prepare her beforehand to let her know what we are going to be doing. (I/SE2B/3)

She used discussion and sharing to clarify what she expected of her paraprofessional.

A general education teacher utilized a similar approach with the paraprofessional assigned to her classroom:

At the beginning of the year, we talked about what the children needed. Some paraprofessionals who have worked with me ask if there is anything else I want them to know. I explained to her that when she is not [working with individual students], she should go around and just answer questions of the other students (I/GE2B/2).

Although this teacher focused her discussion of the paraprofessional's role on the needs of the children, another special education teacher focused on hers and her paraprofessional's expectations: "My paraprofessional and I sat down and talked about what my expectations were for her and what her expectations were for the job. Then we meshed the two together" (I/SE1A/3). This kind of sharing and meshing of expectations best exemplified how open discussions were used for clarifying roles.

Principals also had informal discussions with paraprofessionals to help clarify their roles. One principal reported: "I [spoke with them] to make sure they weren't taken advantage of. [We also discussed] their role and movement around the class [as well as] helping kids with their

assignments. Teachers pretty much provide all of the direction" (I/AB/2). Again, it seemed that the real supervisory role falls to the teachers.

Discussions were identified as a primary method of communicating roles to paraprofessionals. Discussions are practical and can be on going as roles evolve or warrant changes during the school year.

Many paraprofessionals in this district had received training in their roles. However, formal training did not take place for supervising teachers; only special education coordinators, who may or may not be responsible for the supervision of paraprofessionals, received any training. The intent of the district in training special education coordinators was that they might take the information back to their individual schools and share it with all teachers having supervisory responsibilities for paraprofessionals.

Milner (1998) noted that general education teachers are often not sure what paraprofessionals should be doing in their classrooms. Because of this, teachers should be afforded training regarding the roles of both the paraprofessionals and supervising teachers. Because many professionals in this district have participated in some form of training related to their roles, they find themselves often being asked to perform duties in day-to-day situations that are not in accord with their training.

In addition, these data indicate that the inability of supervising teachers to clarify roles for paraprofessionals caused some paraprofessionals to determine their own roles in the classroom. When this occurs, the paraprofessionals may or may not perform tasks correctly, because their performance is simply a judgment call based on their individual perspectives. This situation could impact students in a negative manner, depending on how paraprofessionals determine their role. To further compound this predicament, because the teachers are not sure of

the paraprofessionals' role, they most likely allow the paraprofessional autonomy to perform

tasks as they, the paraprofessionals, see fit. This laissez faire approach also could lead to

paraprofessionals performing tasks that are more suitable for the classroom teacher to do.

<u>Daily Performance Monitoring</u>

The fourth facet of supervising paraprofessionals is monitoring performance. Pickett

(1997) states "evaluation of paraeducator job performance requires judgment and should be

based on fair performance standards, first-hand observations, written data, and appropriate

documentation of performance" (p. 129). Observations are a very good method for evaluating

performance of paraprofessionals. In these middle schools, paraprofessionals were assigned to

work alongside of supervising teachers with the expectation that performance monitoring could

take place through observation, that occurs naturally and on a daily basis.

Five major themes emerged in the data regarding the daily performance monitoring of

paraprofessionals. These include the following: (a) courtesies can be mistaken for monitoring;

(b) monitoring takes the form of informal discussions; (c) paraprofessionals are either not

monitored or are unsure if any monitoring occurs; (d) paraprofessionals solicit feedback from

teachers; and (e) monitoring occurs through informal observation. Appendix G4 illustrates the

themes that emerged regarding daily performance monitoring.

It was evident from both interview and observation data that performance monitoring is

not taking place as it should in these middle schools. The varied responses of participants when

asked who evaluates and who supervises paraprofessionals confirm this finding. These responses

are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5

Participant Responses Regarding the Supervision and Evaluation of Paraprofessionals

_____

Evidence of Varied Participant Responses

_____

Who Evaluates Paraprofessionals:	Number of Responses:
Special education coordinator	4
Coordinator in conjunction with principal	2
Principal with input from teachers	6
Principal	4
General education teacher	1
Unsure	3

Respondents:	"Who supervises paraprofessionals?"
Paraprofessionals	The special education coordinator, principal, classroom teacher, special education department
Special education teachers	The classroom teacher, special education coordinator, the assistant principal, unsure
General education teachers	Unsure, general education teacher, special education coordinator
Special education coordinators	The classroom teacher, the principal
Principals	The classroom teacher, the special education coordinator
Central office staff member	The classroom teacher

_____

<u>Courtesies can be Mistaken for Monitoring</u>

Throughout the interviews when asked how a teacher monitors a paraprofessional's performance or provides feedback regarding performance, responses indicated that praise was given. One paraprofessional described this as follows:

"They (the teachers) thank me. They are very appreciative of anything that is done. I'm trying to think if I've had any negative [feedback] but I don't think I have. They are just very appreciative" (I/P1A/4).

Likewise, another paraprofessional stated: "Teachers do not give me feedback everyday but obviously there are times when I guess I go beyond what I am supposed to do and they will say thank you" (I/P2A/3).

Although praise is rewarding to the recipient, it is too subjective when teachers do not give concrete examples of what that person is doing correctly. Praise often took the place of performance monitoring when teachers were uncomfortable addressing issues of unsatisfactory performance with paraprofessionals. This might have been due to a lack of assertiveness on the teacher's part or a general lack of understanding that the teacher is indeed supervising the paraprofessional and that performance monitoring is one form of supervision.

<u>Monitoring Takes the Form of Informal Discussions</u>

Performance monitoring was most often limited to brief informal discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals and teachers in both schools answered questions correspondingly regarding monitoring performance. One general education teacher stated: "If I have a problem or concern, I tell her. If she has a problem or concern, she tells me. If she is not doing something, I will tell her" (I/GE2A/2). This response suggests the teacher has blurred the line between monitoring and role clarification. A special education teacher's response

that: "[Performance monitoring] is just a verbal thing. Luckily, the paraprofessionals [in my classroom] are very good so it has always been a pretty positive thing" (I/SE2A/2) shows an inadequate understanding of the practice of performance monitoring, as well as a reluctance to criticize performance, should it become necessary.

Another special education teacher explained the process of performance monitoring as: "We just talk. The paraprofessional in my room stays after school so we can have time to talk" (I/SE1B/5). The vagueness of this description indicates that this teacher may be unclear as to how to monitor performance and provide constructive feedback.

One teacher used the lack of time as an excuse when he was asked if he followed up with a paraprofessional after a misunderstanding: "Yes, at the end of class. She is on such a time constraint; she is out of there. I mean, she has to be out of [my room] to get to her next class" (I/GE1B/7). It is interesting that he also blamed the paraprofessional for his failure to comment on her performance in any meaningful way.

If paraprofessionals feel they are not being monitored or are unsure if their performance is satisfactory, they may even begin to solicit that type of information from the teachers with whom they work. One teacher stated:

> The two [paraprofessionals] that work with me will normally come to me and say, "How do you think it is going?" or "This is what I am doing for [a particular student], do you think I should do anything else?" I can give them feedback that way. (I/GE2B/4).

It is interesting that this teacher only offered feedback when it was solicited.

When I asked one paraprofessional how she would know if she was doing something incorrectly, she responded by saying: "They (teachers) would just say, 'That is not the right way to do it.' They may even say, 'This is how you do it.' Obviously, they are not going to yell at you

or anything. At least, I haven't' had that happen" (I/P2A/4). However, a lack of consistent performance monitoring might cause a teacher to respond rudely or even violently, as did the teacher who snapped at his paraprofessional and grabbed her arm to prevent what he saw as "motherly interference."

When asked if teachers provide any feedback to her on her performance, one paraprofessional responded: "I think she did. I think she just talked to me. You would have to ask her. She (the teacher) did provide information for my annual evaluation" (I/P1A/2).

The comments of both teachers and paraprofessionals make it clear that formal processes are not in place for the day-to-day performance monitoring of paraprofessionals. A central office staff person noted the importance of ongoing performance monitoring: "I don't know how paraprofessionals would function if they were not getting daily feedback and daily supervision" (I/C/3). Even though monitoring was valued and deemed essential to the performance of the paraprofessional, there were no guidelines in place to help teachers. Consequently, as the responses of both teachers and paraprofessionals indicated, performance monitoring in the form of informal discussions was haphazard and not very helpful to paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals are Not Monitored

Formal performance monitoring of paraprofessionals often does not exist in middle school classroom. Again, this may be attributed to the fact that neither the teacher nor the paraprofessional realize this is part of a supervisor's job.

In general, the interviews revealed that most paraprofessional did not know what kind of monitoring, if any, was being carried out or who did this monitoring. When asked, one paraprofessional responded: "I guess I really haven't been told [how teachers monitor me] here" (I/P4B/5). Another observed:

If anybody is keeping records, I am unaware of that. I believe that periodically, and I am

not sure how often, at least some of the teachers that I work with fill out evaluations that

are given, I assume, to the special education coordinator. (I/P3B/9)

Another when asked both who monitors and how her performance is monitored, responded:

"I have no idea. I would think it would be the teachers that you work with. I don't personally feel

I get that much feedback" (I/P3A/7).

In both schools, paraprofessionals and teachers alike indicated that monitoring does not

occur, as it should, in day-to-day classroom situations. This situation can cause serious problems,

because when there is no monitoring of their performance, paraprofessionals may, through no

fault of their own, impact the students in their classes negatively.

Paraprofessionals Solicit Feedback from Teachers

When there is no monitoring of performance, paraprofessional must resort to asking for

feedback. When asked how she knew if she was doing something correctly, one paraprofessional

said, "I have to ask [the teachers]" (I/P4B/5). Another paraprofessional responded similarly by

saying: "In one particular class, I didn't feel like I was doing enough so I approached the teacher.

She said I was doing what was necessary. Other than that, I don't feel like there is any

[communication] about that" (I/P2B/4). This response highlights two problems: The teacher did

not take time to discuss the paraprofessional's concerns, which is the responsibility of a

supervisor to do; and there is a lack of communication about performance.

When a teacher was asked how the paraprofessional in her classroom knew if she was

doing a task correctly, she replied: "She (the paraprofessional) asks me" (I/GE1B/7). Another

teacher gave a similar response: "A lot of times, she (the paraprofessional) will ask me questions

if she feels like something is not going well" (I/GE2B/4). These teachers did not seem to realize

that they should be taking the time to evaluate the performance of their paraprofessionals and offering them encouragement in the form of praise and constructive criticism.

This study found that paraprofessionals often are forced to solicit feedback on their performance from the teachers with whom they work. A resounding theme that continues to surface in this study is that teachers and paraprofessionals do not know or understand their individual roles. For this reason, teachers may not even realize they bear the responsibility of monitoring a paraprofessional's daily performance.

Monitoring Occurs Through Informal Observation.

Observational data was a primary means of monitoring a paraprofessional's performance. A principal explained, perhaps rather naively, judging from some of the previous observations of the paraprofessionals:

> Other than observation, I don't think there is anything else going on (regarding monitoring a paraprofessional's performance). Do they sit down and complete formal observations? No. They do work with paraprofessionals though. I don't know how they could not pay attention to what they are doing. (I/AA/2)

There were, however, a few teachers who reported that they do monitor performances. A special education coordinator described how he does this:

> I monitor performance of paraprofessionals just like that of my students-- through observation. I look to see how they react, how students react to them, what their attitude is like, and how they feel about their successes. We have great days and some days that are total wash outs, which is human. We generally are just going from observations. I/SECA/3)

One special education teacher commented on informal paraprofessional observations: "I directly observe the paraprofessional the whole time we are in class. I know everything that is going on" (I/SE2B/3). Interestingly, the paraprofessional working with this special education teacher knows her supervisor is observing her:

> I can tell that she is always watching me. Even if she doesn't say anything, she looks up and her ears are always open. She might be concentrating on one [student] group but she is listening and will correct me if I am doing something wrong. She also tells me when I do the right thing. (I/P1B/5)

These remarks show that informal observations were a primary means of monitoring a paraprofessional's performance. Teachers who are adept at multitasking should find this method simple and expedient, because it does not take time away from other necessary classroom duties. However, this method might prove difficult for those less adept at multitasking.

Paraprofessional Supervision and Evaluation

Foresman (1979) defines supervision as "management or direction" (p. 914). A strong theme that runs throughout the parts of the interviews focusing on effective supervision is the need for effective communication between teachers and paraprofessionals. A central office supervisor recognized the importance of communication to the supervisory role:

> Communication is very important. Everything always goes back to relationship building. Some paraprofessionals need more close scrutiny and supervision. Others need less. I'm big on the term "chemistry." I look for that in the sense that we look toward building relationships and thus understanding paraprofessionals. Teachers need to understand paraprofessionals and vice versa. I/C/4)

Likewise, a special education coordinator responded: " I believe there needs to be ongoing communication between the teacher and the paraprofessional particularity if things are not going well. It always seems to be difficult to approach people with concerns" (I/SECB/5).

Ongoing communication can make the supervisor's job easier, because it is a way to air concerns before they become large problems. Foresman (1979) defines the term evaluate as "to finding out the value or the amount of; estimating the worth or importance of" (p. 316). Although both supervision and evaluation rely on observation, evaluation involves a written report, whereas supervision calls for formal or informal conferring between teachers and paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals in the district selected for participation in this study are formally evaluated annually. The paraprofessional evaluation consists of four sections: (a) performance; (b) work standards; (c) human relations; and (d) professionalism. Many comments surfaced in the interviews that can assist with or help clarify the evaluation process. To begin, a special education teacher mentioned:

> It would be good for teachers to know what the evaluation form [looks like], what the evaluation procedures are, and what the expectations are for the paraprofessionals who work in our school system. I know what those are because my principal shared them with me. I think that there are probably a lot of people that don't know what these forms look like though. (I/SE1A/4)

Although some teachers did not completely understand the evaluation process, they did feel they played a role in it. One teacher stated: "I do not know about the formal evaluation but I feel like I have been asked a lot [by the administration] about how it is going with my paraprofessional" (I/GE2B/1).

Annual evaluations should not come as a surprise to paraprofessionals if ongoing communication occurs throughout the school year. A paraprofessional helped to explain this by commenting:

When someone is new, just sitting down with that individual and explaining exactly what his or her tasks are from the beginning should help. Then, periodically seeing how things are working. A performance appraisal should not be a surprise. There should be a lot of feedback between evaluations. (I/P2B/5)

Research has noted ongoing classroom-based supervision to be a critical piece of paraprofessional supervision (French, 1998; Giangreco, 1997). This supervision is best suited for the classroom teacher, yet teachers are often unprepared and uncomfortable when asked to supervise paraprofessionals (French, 1998; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Data discussed in Chapter Two indicate that many teachers acquire supervision skills on their own (French, 1998). Since paraprofessionals most often work alongside of teachers, observation data is probably the easiest way of monitoring the day-to-day performance of a paraprofessional.

Communication is critical when supervising paraprofessionals. Observation data alone is insufficient to supervise a paraprofessional. Once observations occur, the paraprofessional should receive constructive feedback on what they are doing well and where they need to make adjustments and improvements. This is not occurring on a consistent basis in the schools participating in this study, possibly because of the many time constraints in a school day.

<u>Systematic On-The-Job Training and Mentoring</u>

Finally, systematic on-the-job training and mentoring are supervisory techniques teachers working with paraprofessionals can use in classroom settings. Teachers can provide on-the-job

training in numerous ways that include meeting formally or informally, modeling, providing

feedback, and coaching paraprofessionals through various situations.

Seven major themes emerged in the data regarding on-the-job training and mentoring

related to paraprofessionals and their supervision in middle school classrooms. These include the

following: (a) no training is provided or paraprofessionals are unsure how to obtain training; (b)

training takes place through inservice opportunities; (c) training is informal; (d) training consists

of hands-on activities in the classroom; (e) training consists of written information being

provided to the paraprofessional; (f) previous life experiences constitute training; and (g)

teachers need training to effectively supervise paraprofessionals. Appendix G5 illustrates the

themes that emerged from the data.

No Training is Provided

Paraprofessionals often walked into a classroom with no previous training to prepare

them for their position. When asked if teachers provided any training, one paraprofessional

replied: "Not really. For a while I felt like I was on my own. At that point, I did not know if I

was doing the right job" (I/P4B/6). For many, this kind of situation can be unnerving, as can

working with students with emotional and behavioral challenges without any training. Another

paraprofessional described this situation: "I don't have any training to work with [students

labeled with emotional disturbance]. The students are hard for me sometimes to handle and I

want to help them so much academically but I can't get through to them" (I/P3A/9). Because

schools often require paraprofessionals to work with students displaying behavioral problems,

the least trained people are expected to know how to cope with the most difficult children in the

school. They, therefore, need careful supervision in order to learn how to handle these children.

Not only did most paraprofessionals lack training, they were also unsure if any training opportunities exist at all. When asked if training opportunities were available to her, one paraprofessional responded: "I don't believe so. Being in the classroom is new to me, so I would imagine if you were not performing, they would approach you as to what you should be doing" (I/P2B/4). As already has been shown, this is a naive expectation, but since, like paraprofessionals, teachers are unaware if there is any on-the-job training or mentoring available to paraprofessionals, they cannot point the paraprofessional in the direction of training opportunities. One general education teacher stated: "I'm sure there [are training opportunities available]. I know I hear of meetings from time to time but I have no specifics" (I/GE2A/3).

By not having information or training opportunities available, teachers, perhaps unwittingly, increase their supervising responsibilities. Research documents the importance of on-the-job training and mentoring for paraprofessionals (D'Aquanni, 1997; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Mueller, 1997). It is critical that these opportunities are readily available to paraprofessionals and that all involved parties are aware of those.

Training Takes Place Through Inservice Opportunities

Both schools participating in this study were involved in building level inservices for paraprofessionals as well as district wide training opportunities. Some teachers and paraprofessionals attended training specifically designed for collaborative teaching teams consisting of both a general and special education teacher. A teacher explains: "We had a day of training, but honestly, the training was really directed toward the collaborative teaching" (I/GE2B/4). It seems as if the school that provided this training attempted to include paraprofessionals in other training opportunities that were not related to their positions.

Documents reviewed indicated that paraprofessionals within the district have participated for several years in summer inservice opportunities and hour-long inservices during the school year. These training opportunities have included information related to role clarification, conflict mediation, information on confidentiality, examples of planning processes, general information related to the district, a review of federal and state regulations, the special education process, and discipline. Evaluations reported an extremely favorable response from the paraprofessionals regarding the training. A critical piece missing from the district training is the fact that neither teachers not administrators are involved in these opportunities.

Training is Informal

Training for paraprofessionals was often a very informal process. One method was pairing paraprofessionals with a "buddy" to assist them within the school. One special education coordinator described this buddy system as follows:

When the new ones (paraprofessionals) come in, we generally put them with a buddy. This is the way we do things. It helps if they have questions. In some instances, we've probably put a life jacket on them and thrown them out there. Sometimes, we don't even give them a life jacket, we just let them go. (I/SECA/3)

Teachers were unclear as to what true mentoring entails. When a special education teacher was asked how she provided on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals, she replied:

I go over what the expectations are in student's IEPs and what the expectations are for the paperwork type things we are required to do here at school. So I guess that would be the training I provide. As for mentoring, I just make sure that she is happy that she is here. I bring her treats. I can't think of anything particularly mentoring that I do, but she knows

that my door is open if she has any concerns, questions, grievances, or anything like that.

(I/SE1A/3)

When one paraprofessional was asked how teachers provide on-the-job training to

paraprofessionals, she responded: "Well, in little bits and pieces and as needed. People who have

seen me struggling with things will say, 'This is not the way to do that' or 'This might be more

helpful'" (I/P3B/10). A teacher commented: "I try to give them (paraprofessionals) tips for

calming students down or behavior issues" (I/GE2B/5).

Training Consists of Hands-On Activities

When one paraprofessional was asked how teachers provide training, she stated:

"She would show me, I guess. I mean, I've never really not understood" (I/P2A/3).

One teacher responded similarly by saying:

> I try to show [paraprofessionals] the correct way to teach phonics or the correct way to
>
> teach math. Sometimes I do this when we are alone after school. If the kids are there, I
>
> will say, 'Well here, let me show this child how to do that' so they feel professional or
>
> watch and then they will know how to do it next. (I/SE1B/6)

Another general education teacher stated:

> "[Although we do not model formally,] the whole first quarter we studied how to do
>
> experiments. I think that helped because she (the paraprofessional) was able to see
>
> procedures, because that was directly taught to the students" (I/GE2B/6).

The central office supervisor explained training as: "The bulk of what they get is on-the-job

training and it is hands-on" (I/C/3).

Although most identified mentoring and hands-on activities as a means of training, one

paraprofessional simply commented: "We (paraprofessionals) receive no mentoring or training"

(I/P3A/8). This last comment is perhaps the most telling, because it implies that some of the paraprofessional are not seeing what the teacher does as training or worse yet, the teacher is making no effort to supervise the paraprofessional.

Training Consists of Written Information

At the start of the year or during the year, paraprofessionals were given written information that constituted training. Written information included detailed lesson plans, lists or written directions from teachers, inservice handouts, or notebooks that provide information regarding completing certain job tasks.

Previous Experiences Constitute Training

Several paraprofessionals in this study cited previous experiences as training for their current position. Previous experiences included being a parent and volunteering in schools. While these experiences are valid, they may not have been extensive enough to substitute for real training sessions.

Teachers Need Training Regarding Paraprofessionals

Although much of the discussion revolves around the paraprofessional needing training, the issue of teacher training is equally important. Teachers need to be trained to supervise the paraprofessionals in their classrooms.

A special education coordinator described participating in a district training session designed to teach her how to better supervise paraprofessionals. LRConsulting, a national consulting and training program, provided the curriculum for this training (D/C/5). I had the opportunity to review this curriculum when I was examining the district documents. It included information regarding building effective relationships with paraprofessionals, general information about students with disabilities, how to determine the amount of support a student

needs from a paraprofessional, roles and responsibilities of both teachers and paraprofessionals, and both communication and problem-solving techniques. The materials in this training module were designed for the teacher to utilize on a daily basis with paraprofessionals.

Although the issues addressed in the teacher-training program seem to be well suited for effective paraprofessional supervision, only the special education coordinators in this study received training on paraprofessional supervision. Other teachers, either special education or general education, were unfamiliar with the training, and, therefore, not using its information in their classrooms. One special education teacher commented: "I never did receive any training. I don't think that there is any" (I/SE2A/3). Another commented: "I did not receive any training to supervise paraprofessionals- not ever in my 13 years of teaching" (I/SE1A/4). A general education teacher simply said, "no" when asked if she had received any training as to how to supervise paraprofessional.

One special education teacher shared that paraprofessional supervision had been addressed in her college preparatory program: "They (my college) discussed paraprofessionals in one class over the course of a couple of days. They gave us this huge packet of information but there was not a lot of class time spent on in" (I/SE2B/1). Although providing future teachers with a packet of information is helpful, it is not truly useful unless the teacher reads and absorbs its contents.

It seems as if one school participating in this study tried to "fit" training for paraprofessionals into existing training opportunities rather than develop a training session specifically targeted to paraprofessionals and their supervisors.

In addition, time constraints continued to hinder training opportunities. For this reason, many teachers provided written information to paraprofessionals in their classrooms. Allowing

this training method to take the place of more formal training raises problems: There is not time set aside to process or discuss the written information after it is provided; and the written information may be unclear to the paraprofessional.

In addition, the word "training" may be deceiving. People may tend to view training as more formal opportunities such as inservices and conferences. Although these are effective methods of training, it is important to remember to acknowledge the importance of on-the-job training, modeling, and other informal methods. If teachers fail to do these things, paraprofessionals may learn how to carry out their day-to-day responsibilities through trial and error. The responses in this study parallel those of Frith and Lindsey (1982) who recommend that hands-on activities with children be included in the training of special education paraprofessionals. Even though this recommendation continues to be mentioned in research dating back as far as 1982, everyday practices show we are still not doing enough of this.

Finally, Guess, Smith, and Entsminger (1971) found that nonprofessional people, including paraprofessionals, could positively impact student performance after they receive appropriate training. Knowing this research dates back more than thirty years, it is unfathomable that respondents in this study continue to state they receive no training or mentoring in middle school classrooms.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers in middle school classrooms supervise paraprofessionals. Questions regarding the teacher's role as a supervisor were derived from Pickett's (1999) framework, which addresses five areas: planning work assignments, task delegating, role clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring. This section offers a discussion of the findings of the study. It begins

with an explanation of the purpose for the study and then highlights the findings as they relate to each component of Pickett's (1999) framework.

A model illustrating the supervisory components that serve as the framework for this study were illustrated in Chapter Three (Figure 1, p. 59). A richer portrayal of this case with descriptions of how these supervisory elements are addressed in the two middle schools that participated in this study is included in Figure 2. These figures differ slightly. I originally had thought the data would be significantly different in the two schools participating in this study because of the varied school sizes and cultures. For this reason, the original diagram lists two separate setting boxes, one for School A and another for School B. However, once observations and interviews began, responses from participants in both schools were so similar that I combined the setting box to state Middle Schools A and B.

Describing the Supervision of Paraprofessional in Middle School Classrooms

The findings show that time constraints significantly limit planning time between teachers and paraprofessionals in middle schools. For this reason, teachers often choose to share information with paraprofessionals such as lesson plans instead of taking the time to outline a daily plan and explain what needs to be accomplished during a class period. In addition, paraprofessionals initiate formal and informal planning opportunities with their supervising teachers. Ideally, this should be the job of the supervisor with the paraprofessional asking for extra meetings when there is a problem with planning or a need for further clarification. The data indicate that teachers often confuse planning with task delegation.

Teachers are uncomfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals. When they do delegate, this is often spontaneous and occurs through casual conversations and verbal requests.

**Middle Schools
A & B**

(Descriptive)

I. PLANNING

- Time constraints limit planning opportunities
- Planning between teacher/ paraprofessional teams is inconsistent in schools
- Paraprofessionals often initiate both formal and informal planning opportunities
- Teachers often share information (i.e., plans) with paraprofessional rather than planning together
- Teachers may confuse planning with delegation

V. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND MENTORING

- Training is often not provided or not individualized specifically to paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers
- Training may be formal (inservices, conferences) or informal (hands-on activities, modeling, and on-the-job training)
- Teachers need to attend training sessions with paraprofessionals so everyone "hears" the same information
- Time constraints impact training opportunities

Supervising Paraprofessionals in Middle School Classrooms: A Case Study

II. TASK DELEGATNG

- When tasks are not delegated to paraprofessionals, they adopt an "I just know what to do" approach to their job
- As relationships grow, less delegation may be needed
- Teachers are not comfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals
- Delegation is often spontaneous
- Teachers need to learn to delegate
- Tasks may be delegated to paraprofessionals in writing or during meetings

IV. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- Teachers are often uncomfortable and unprepared to monitor a paraprofessional's performance
- Teachers view courtesies as monitoring performance
- Paraprofessionals should receive constructive feedback from teachers
- Communication is critical when supervising paraprofessionals
- Monitoring often takes place through observations
- Paraprofessionals often solicit feedback from their supervising teachers

III. ROLE CLARIFYING

- Formal training for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers to necessary help establish clear roles
- When roles are unclear, paraprofessionals often determine their own roles
- Roles may be clarified in writing or through training opportunities
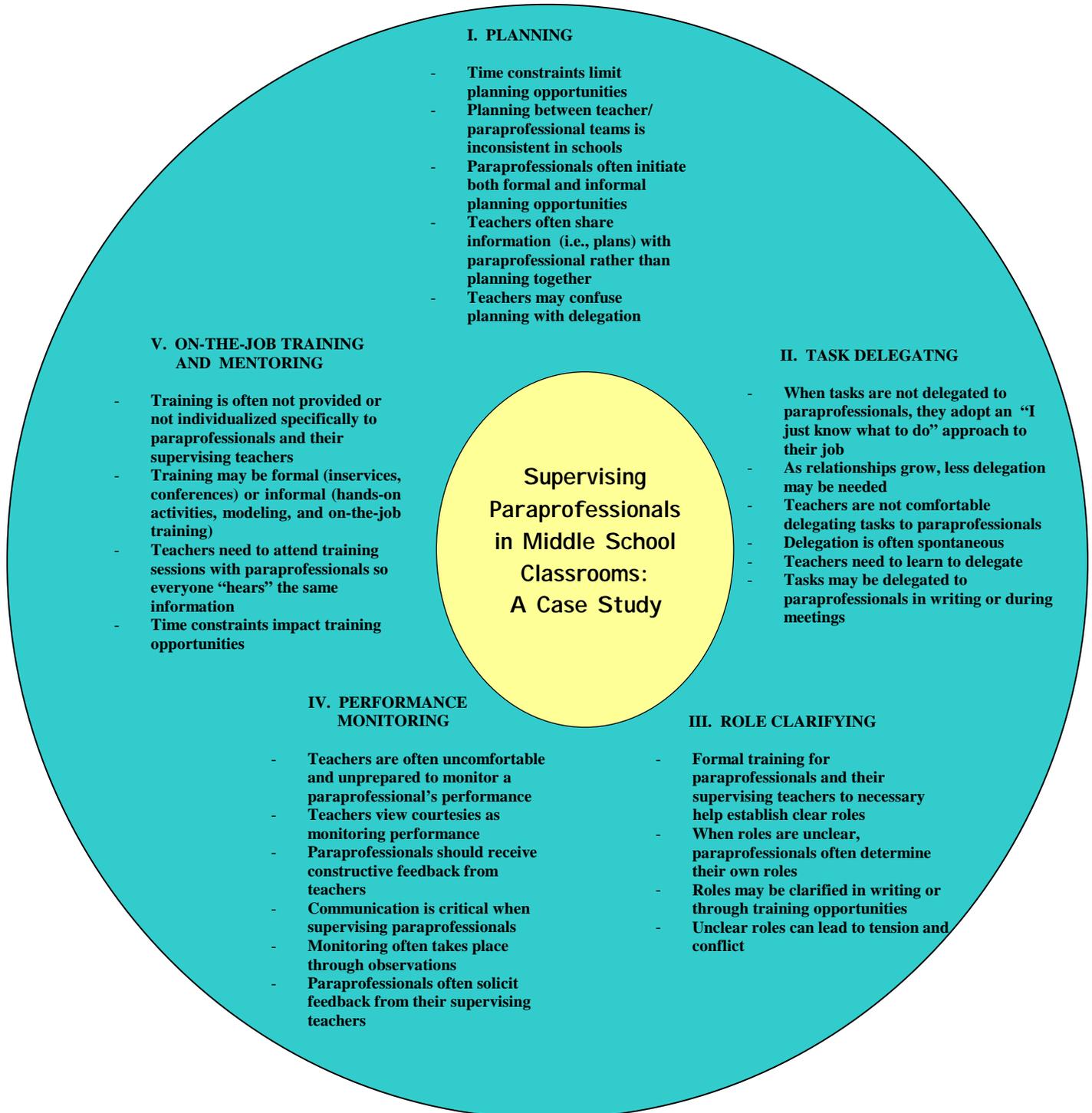- Unclear roles can lead to tension and conflict

Figure 2. Case study themes and ascertains based on Pickett's (1999) framework surrounding effective paraprofessional supervision.

However, as relationships grow between teachers and paraprofessionals, less delegation may need to occur. In conclusion, when teachers fail to delegate tasks appropriately, paraprofessionals tend to feel they "just know" what to do, which may or may not be accurate. It also may mean that the teachers are failing to use paraprofessionals to their fullest extent.

Although many paraprofessionals who participated in this study had received training as to their specific roles in the classroom, supervising teachers had not "heard" the same messages. For this reason, formal training opportunities must exist for teacher and paraprofessional teams together. When roles are unclear, paraprofessionals may determine their own roles, thus leading to tension and conflict within the team.

The responses of teachers show that most of them are unprepared and uncomfortable supervising paraprofessionals. Communication is critical to performance monitoring. Paraprofessionals need teachers to let them know they are doing things correctly, and they also need constructive feedback regarding their job performance. When paraprofessionals are not monitored, they tend to solicit feedback from the teachers with whom they work. When teachers do monitor paraprofessionals, the monitoring most often consists of observation within the classroom.

Training opportunities for paraprofessionals, both formal (inservices and conferences) and informal (hands-on experiences, on-the-job training, and modeling) are scarce. This is most likely due to significant time constraints within the school day. When training is provided, it is important for teachers to attend with their paraprofessionals so that confusion surrounding any issue is limited.

Although each component of the framework explored in this study is independent of the others, there are several common threads that run through each. These include time constraints, a

general lack of training for both paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers, and the need

for ongoing communication between teacher/paraprofessional teams.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The purpose of this study has been to examine how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms in order to determine if there is a need to teach teachers how to be supervisors. Questions on the teacher's role as a supervisor were derived from Pickett's (1999) framework, which addresses five areas: planning work assignments, task delegating, role clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and systematic on-the-job training and mentoring

Results of this study both corroborate and add to research findings previously reported in the literature review. This chapter will draw conclusions from the data. In addition, implications for recommendations for practice will be discussed and recommendations for future research will be explored. Finally, concluding remarks highlight the interdependence of teachers and paraprofessionals that extend far beyond working in a classroom.

Conclusions

Data concerning paraprofessional supervision were obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis in two middle schools in a suburban school district in Virginia. The results tended to corroborate research findings previously reported in the literature review. The following conclusions highlight the need for the ongoing and effective supervision of paraprofessionals.

Conclusion #1: Revisiting Pickett's Framework

Pickett (1999) established benchmarks for what effective supervision of paraprofessionals should entail. These benchmarks include planning, task delegating, role clarifying, performance monitoring, and on-the-job training and mentoring. Although Pickett implies these five supervisory skills are important, it appears that the schools in this study fell

short of demonstrating this level of supervisory competence. These schools were not able to adequately address the practices described under each area of Pickett's (1999) framework and came up wanting in each area. This implies that there is more work to be done in order to maximize the supervisory skills of teachers.

Conclusion #2: Teachers Lack Supervisory Training

One conclusion that can be drawn from the data is that teachers lack the training necessary to effectively supervise paraprofessionals. This theme resonated throughout the interviews. Teachers overwhelmingly received little or no training regarding roles for teacher/ paraprofessional teams. In addition, because they are not trained to delegate tasks, they are often uncomfortable doing so. Finally, teachers are not trained to monitor the performance of the paraprofessionals assigned to their classrooms. These findings argue for establishing mandatory district and/or statewide training for teachers who supervise paraprofessionals so that teachers can learn what is expected of them as supervisors.

Conclusion #3: Collaborative Training Opportunities

The data gathered in this study identified the fact that paraprofessionals received training, yet the supervising teachers working with them did not attend the same training sessions or even have access to the materials reviewed in these sessions. As a result, paraprofessionals were often more aware of what their duties could be than were their supervising teachers. This argues that training should take place collaboratively with the paraprofessional and supervising teacher so that both know what the paraprofessionals understands his or her job to be. This prevents misunderstandings and miscommunication.

Conclusion #4: College Preparation Programs

Only one teacher who participated in this study gave any indication of even minimal discussion or preparation at the college level for future teachers in regard to their supervisory role in working with paraprofessionals. This preparation consisted of a packet of information that was provided to her. Simply giving a packet to future teachers does not necessarily mean they will even read over that material. Providing a packet of reading materials also leaves the information open to different interpretations. These findings would argue that students in college preparatory programs should be provided ample time and guidance to become familiar with the definition and role of the paraprofessional as well as the supervisory expectations of teachers who will be working alongside paraprofessionals.

Conclusion #5: Time Constraints

Because time constraints were noted as hindrances throughout all categories of Pickett's (1999) framework, administrators need to ensure adequate time is built into the school day for teachers and paraprofessionals to train and plan together. Although this could have significant funding implications for schools, there are ways schools can work around this. For example, time could be allotted to teacher/paraprofessional teams for training on work days or early release days, when the paraprofessional is already scheduled to be in the building. In addition, compensation time could be provided for paraprofessionals who choose to stay after contracted hours to plan with teachers. Although there are various suggestions for combating the problem of limited time, these data argue for the fact that administrators will need to "think outside of the box" in order to develop and implement viable solutions.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Numerous implications and recommendations for practice that may be valuable to teachers, paraprofessionals, and school administrators can be drawn from this study's conclusions. These are as follows:

1. Implication: Time constraints were noted as a barrier across all areas studied, including planning, role clarification, task delegation, performance monitoring, and providing training and mentoring to paraprofessionals.

   Recommendation: Administrators must provide ample time for teachers and paraprofessionals to work through issues collaboratively.

2. Implication: Teachers either may not realize they are indeed responsible for supervising paraprofessionals or they may not be aware of what constitutes the effective supervision of paraprofessionals.

   Recommendation: Administrators should make teachers aware of their supervisory responsibilities in relation to paraprofessionals working in their classrooms.

3. Implication: Co-workers in the same classroom often are unsure of their roles and boundaries and, therefore, tend to "step on each other's toes."

   Recommendation: Teachers and paraprofessionals who work together need to collaborate to clarify their roles.

4. Implication: Some training is provided to teachers or paraprofessionals, but not simultaneously.

   Recommendation: Teachers and paraprofessionals receive training together so that each group "hears" the same information.

5. Implication: Schools are responsible for the supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals. This responsibility may vary from classroom to classroom, school to school, or district to district.

   Recommendation: Teachers and paraprofessionals should both be aware of who is responsible for supervising and evaluating paraprofessionals in their school and district. In addition, specific job descriptions are necessary for both teachers and paraprofessionals.

6. Implication: Teachers are often unsure about who is responsible for monitoring paraprofessionals or what performance monitoring entails.

   Recommendation: Formal methods of performance monitoring should be in place for teachers who are responsible for the supervision of paraprofessionals.

7. Implication: Training for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers is often incorporated into existing training opportunities that may not meet the needs of these two groups.

   Recommendation: Training should be designed specifically for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. Schools should not "fit" these groups into existing training opportunities that may not address the issues appropriate to paraprofessionals and their supervision.

8. Implication: The majority of teacher participants in this study received no information regarding supervising paraprofessionals in their college preparation programs. The only participant who did have any information provided to her on this subject was simply given a packet of information to read.

<u>Recommendation</u>: College preparation programs need to incorporate comprehensive instruction on the supervision of paraprofessionals in order to prepare education graduates thoroughly for their role as a supervisor/manager of paraprofessionals.

<div align="center">The No Child Left Behind Act</div>

As implications for this study are discussed, one factor that will significantly impact paraprofessionals and their supervision is the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, now called the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which George W. Bush signed into law on January 8, 2002. The law, which takes into account standards and assessments and focuses on accountability by requiring all schools to make adequate yearly progress toward specific goals, includes minimum qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals.

The part of this act that is most significant to this study is the requirement that paraprofessionals have high qualifications. Cowan, Manasevit, Brustein, and Manasevit (2002) explain, "A paraprofessional [whose position is funded with Title I funds] must either have completed two years of higher education, earned an associate's degree, or met a rigorous standard of quality and passed a formal state or local assessment" (p. xvi). Paraprofessionals already employed must meet these new requirements by 2006.

This law also impacts teachers because it prohibits assigning paraprofessionals in Title I supported programs to provide direct instructions to students unless they are under the direct supervision of a teacher. However, it does not specify what direct supervision entails. Furthermore, principals of each school operating a program with Title I funds will be required to submit in writing, on an annual basis, the school's compliance with this law. It is apparent that these requirements, which initially began as of January 8, 2002, further heighten the need for professional development for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

As the numbers of paraprofessionals in schools continue to grow, this growth has led to changing responsibilities of paraprofessionals and has also forced teachers into assuming supervisory roles they have received no training for and often find uncomfortable. This study grew out of my concern this situation has on the morale of both teachers and paraprofessionals as well as how it affects efficient use of paraprofessionals in classrooms. Although I undertook this study to assess these problems, it is limited, because it was conducted in only two suburban middle schools in Virginia. Therefore, experiences of the participants interviewed and observed in this study may not reflect those of others working in other classroom or school settings around the state and country. Because this may limit the applicability of this study to other settings, others are encouraged to conduct similar studies that may add to these findings.

In addition, research is needed to determine what programs will effectively train teachers to supervise and prepare paraprofessionals to assume broader responsibilities. If schools have existing training programs for teachers and paraprofessionals, research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these.

Another topic for future research is that of policy and regulations surrounding paraprofessional supervision. There appears to be a lack consistency between federal, state, and local policies and standards. In addition, with the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act in December 2001, there are many new implications for paraprofessionals and their training that should be explored.

Additionally, further research may reflect on the evaluation methods for paraprofessionals in schools. Questions in this research could revolve around factors that

constitute appropriate job performance of paraprofessionals and the indicators of effective paraprofessional performance.

Because many school systems offer formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers, further studies could address teacher mentoring specific to paraprofessionals. This could include mentoring for teachers to become better supervisors of paraprofessionals and also mentoring specifically for the paraprofessionals.

As noted in this study, administrators often lack an understanding of the differences in roles for both paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. In addition, it is often the responsibility of the building level administrator to provide ample planning time for teams during the school day, clarify the roles for teams, and establish appropriate monitoring systems for the supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals within their buildings. This could become an interesting topic for future research, because administrative support is, at times, lacking for teacher/ paraprofessional teams.

Finally, further research could help to identify what existing communication infrastructures are in place for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. This could also include identifying what type of communication structures would foster more effective paraprofessional supervision in schools.

<center>Post Script</center>

Relationships between teachers and paraprofessionals often extend far beyond the classroom. Although this study focused on paraprofessional supervision from a more technical point of view, another way of "telling the story" could be through the lens of the intricate relationships that exist between teachers and paraprofessionals.

These concluding remarks are dedicated to one of the general education teachers, Grant (not his real name), who participated in this study. Grant was severely burned in a house fire shortly after I completed collecting the data for this study. He suffered second- and third-degree burns over 30% of his body, with his legs and feet being the most severely burned.

Grant and his wife were in their basement when a gasoline spill, ignited by a pilot light, exploded. Somehow, Grant managed to push his wife out of the path of the fire when the explosion occurred, but he was not as fortunate. He was forced to run through the flames to escape.

Once outside, Grant cried for help and was heard by Lindsey (not her real name), the paraprofessional who worked with him during the school year and who also happened to live on the same street. Lindsey helped Grant into a neighbor's swimming pool and stayed with him until the paramedics arrived and took over. Although Grant and his wife survived the accident, they lost virtually all of their possessions, including two family pets who were killed in the accident. In addition, they have both experienced and are still experiencing a long and painful recovery period.

It is interesting to step away from this study and examine the often dynamic relationships of teachers and paraprofessionals that take place both in and out of the classroom. This situation demonstrates the interdependence between a teacher and paraprofessional team that extends far beyond the doors of the classroom. It signifies the importance of mutual trust and support in their relationships.

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Appendix A

Appendix A

Summary Chart of Research Synthesis: Supervision of Paraprofessionals Based on Pickett's (1999) Framework

Author/Year	Purpose	Relation to Pickett's (1999) Framework	Methodology/ Sample	Results
D'Aquanni, M.M. (1997)	To investigate The role of the para-professional as it is being molded by the changing educational system and the actions of those engaged in the system.	Noted a need for role clarification, on-the-job training, and planning between teachers and paraprofessionals.	Methodology: Ethnographic approach utilizing observations, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis. Sample: 11 paraprofessionals working in grades 2-5 in four elementary schools from four districts in New York State.	• Job descriptions have not coincided with the evolving role of paraprofessionals • There is an absence of clearly articulated supervisory responsibilities. • Ineffective teaming practices existed between paraprofessionals and teachers. • Time was rarely provided for on-the-job training opportunities. • There was an absence or lack of planning time between paraprofessionals and teachers.
French, N.K. (1997)	To describe the experiences of a newly graduated Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) working in an education setting and her experiences with a series of Speech language assistants with various levels of qualifications and abilities.	Noted a need for the following: 1.) Clarifying professional and paraprofessional roles 2.) Developing job descriptions 3.) Providing appropriate supervision commensurate with the abilities of paraprofessionals 4.) Promoting professional skills development 5.) Evaluating job performance.	Methodology: Single-case interview study. 7 interviews were conducted throughout the study. Interview data were gathered during 7 interviews over the course of a year. Sample: One SLP and the five paraprofessionals who worked with her over the span of one year.	Formal preparation should equip SLPs to: • Clarify professional/paraprofessional roles. • Develop job descriptions. • Provide appropriate supervision commensurate with the abilities of the paraprofessional. • Promote paraprofessional skill development. • Evaluate job performance of paraprofessionals. • Intuition or common sense approaches to supervision are inadequate.

Author/Year	Purpose	Relation to Pickett's (1999) Framework	Methodology/ Sample	Results
Giangreco, M.F., Elelman, S.W., Luiseli, T.E., & MacFarland, S.Z.C. (1997).	To further extend recent research by highlighting some issues observed in general education classrooms where instructional assistants supported students with disabilities.	1.) Findings indicated that school teams need to explicitly clarify the role of the classroom teacher as its instructional leader in the classroom including their roles and responsibilities 2.) The teacher should provide instructional assistants with competency-based training that includes ongoing, classroom-based supervision. 3.) Noted a need for instructional assistants to have opportunity for input regarding instructional planning, but the accountability for planning, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting instruction should rest with the teacher.	Methodology: Qualitative methodology focusing on classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Sample: Data were collected in 16 classrooms in 11 public schools in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont where students with multiple disabilities were educated in general education settings.	When paraprofessionals remain in close proximity to students with disabilities, the following is noted: • Interference with ownership and responsibility by general educators • Separation from classmates • Dependence on adults • Impact on peer interactions • Limitations on receiving competent instruction • Loss of personal control • Loss of gender identity • Interference with instruction of other students
Jensen, J.M.; Parsons, M.B. & Reid, D.H. (1998).	To evaluate a means of training special education teachers in supervisory strategies for improving specific teaching-related performance of their para-professionals, teacher assistants.	Noted that supervisory performance was the initial focus for behavior change.	Methodology: A multi probe design across four groups of teachers and teacher assistants was used to assess the effects of the teacher supervisory training on the data-recording and teaching accuracy of the teacher assistants. Sample: Seven teachers were trained to systematically observe the data collection and teaching performances of their assistants as well as to provide contingent feedback. In addition, eight teacher assistants participated in the study.	• When teachers were trained to systematically observe and provide contingent feedback regarding the teaching related performance of their paraprofessionals, the targeted teaching skills of their assistants improved. • Improvement in other teaching skill applications also improved.

Author/Year	Purpose	Relation to Pickett's (1999) Framework	Methodology/ Sample	Results
McClain, C.H. (1993).	To determine what verbal and nonverbal communications occur between a paraeducator and a teacher.	Themes surrounded the following: 1.) The importance of planning, specifically the use of charts, written objectives, and lesson plans 2.) Found that delegation was taking place in the form of giving directions. Emphasized role clarification	Methodology: Ethnographic study utilizing observations and interviews Sample: Three instructional teams composed of a teacher and paraeducator serving elementary students with disabilities.	• In all 3 settings, paraeducators were able to explain the teacher's expectation for their performance. • Written information was prepared by all teachers to apprise paraeducators about the teacher's expectations for student performance. • Teachers and paraeducators indicated ongoing communication was an important factor in their team relationships.
Milner, C.A. (1998).	To describe the interactions of successful para-professionals with students with disabilities and general education teachers in inclusive settings.	Noted a need for role clarification and on-the-job training.	Methodology: Qualitative design utilizing observations and interviews. Sample: 3 special education teachers, 11 general education teachers, 3 middle school students with disabilities, and 6 high school students with disabilities.	• Deficits were noted in the area of communication regarding paraprofessionals' roles, responsibilities, and preparation. • General education teachers were unsure of their responsibility for paraprofessionals. • Deficits were found in the area of opportunities for on-the-job training and modeling for paraprofessionals. • Supervisory training for special and general education teachers was noted as being needed.
Prigge, D.J. (1996).	To identify strategies, from the perspective of teachers and special education para-professionals, which facilitate successful working relationships between general education teachers and special education para-professionals.	Noted a need for collaborative planning and role clarification.	Methodology: Survey data and interviews. Sample: Survey data gathered from 35 general education teachers and eight special education paraprofessionals assigned to those teachers	• Effective teacher and paraprofessional teaming needs to begin with communication regarding roles and responsibilities. • Two consistent themes revealed in the teacher and paraprofessional responses concerned effective communication and making time for communication. • Training is needed to prepare preservice and inservice teachers to supervise special education paraprofessionals. • Collaborative planning should take place between teachers and paraprofessionals. • Paraprofessionals require clearly defined roles. • General educators should be provided with specific training in the supervision of special education paraprofessionals.

Author/Year	Purpose	Relation to Pickett's (1999) Framework	Methodology/ Sample	Results
Rose, R. (2000).	To examine the use of classroom support in a primary school with a high proportion of pupils with special needs.	Noted a need for collaboration between teachers and paraprofessionals at all stages, including the planning and evaluation of lessons.	Methodology: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all the teachers in the sample to obtain information about the strategies that they had adopted to ensure access to their pupils with special educational needs. Sample: 10 teachers (seven female; three male) and six pupils (four male; two female)	Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) can be used to support an entire class, rather than concentrating solely on one student. The importance of teamwork and effective communication was seen as an essential feature of the school, with teachers commenting on the need to involve their LSAs in lesson planning. Positive outcomes were noted for students when the LSAs were well prepared, had a sense of purpose as a result of involvement in planning. Defined roles and management responsibilities are clearly an essential factor in ensuring that classroom support is both unobtrusive and focused upon addressing the most urgent needs at a given time. The effective management of LSAs can provide benefits for all students in a classroom

Appendix B

Appendix B

Justification of the project:
The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers provide supervision to paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms. The numbers of paraprofessionals in school settings have continued to increase thus causing roles for both teachers and paraprofessionals to evolve. Teachers and paraprofessionals perceive the teacher's supervisory role differently. Consequently, this descriptive case study examines how teachers provide supervision to paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms. Questions regarding the teacher's role as a supervisor are derived from Pickett's (1999) framework, which addresses five areas: planning, task delegating, role clarifying, performance monitoring, and on-the-job training and mentoring.

Because case study research relies on multiple sources of data, I plan to conduct semi-structured interviews asking a set of open-ended questions. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed. In addition to interviews, I will conduct informal observations to gain a more thorough understanding of the school, its climate, and its day-to-day operations. I will also review documents related to paraprofessional supervision in the school district selected for this study. Documents will include, but are not limited to, policy manuals, school handbooks, web site information, and memos. Finally, I will maintain a researcher's journal. This will allow me to document a chain of evidence throughout the study.

Procedures:
To obtain permission to conduct this study, I will begin by telephoning the superintendent to introduce the focus of the study and data collection procedures to be used. I will follow this contact with a written request to conduct the study, including the permission of Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board to conduct such a study. As soon as this is obtained, I will telephone the principals at each middle school selected. Principals will be asked to provide me with the names of teachers and paraprofessionals to solicit for participation. The purpose of the study and procedures to be used will be discussed with all the participants, whose involvement is voluntary. All participants will be informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time.

A minimum of 20 different individuals involved in the supervision of paraprofessionals will be selected for participation in this study and include teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and a supervisor at the district's central office. To begin, a supervisor at the central office level will be interviewed, because that person has first hand knowledge about supervision and is involved with the development of related policies and procedures at the district level. This person will be interviewed first to gather general information about the school district regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals. In each school participating in the study, the principal, as well as two general education and two special education teachers will be interviewed, because paraprofessionals are involved daily with each of these professionals who play a role in their supervision. In addition, two paraprofessionals who work in general education settings and two who work in special education settings will be interviewed at each school.

All interviews will take approximately one hour to conduct and follow up interviews may be necessary to clarify data. Interviews will be held in a quiet space within the school building. See attached interview protocol.

Risks and Benefits:
There are no identified risks or direct benefits for participants who agree to participate in this study. However, the results of this study will have training implications for staff development personnel in schools, teachers who provide instructional supervision, as well as for the paraprofessionals themselves. In response to the growing numbers of paraprofessionals in school settings today and the limited amount of research in the area of their supervision, it is expected that this research will contribute to the knowledge base surrounding current practices in supervising support personnel.

Confidentiality/Anonymity:
The principals of each school will be asked to identify teachers and paraprofessionals to solicit for participation in this case study. Each teacher selected will have the responsibility of supervising paraprofessionals. Participant involvement is voluntary and all participants will be informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time. All participants will be assured of confidentiality. In addition, throughout the document analysis, pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of all participants in the study.

Interviews are a primary source of data collection in this project. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed at a later time. All tapes will be stored in a locked office with access available to only the researcher. Tapes will be destroyed at the completion of this research project, which is estimated to take approximately one year.

Informed Consent:
Not needed. As expedited referral is appropriate for this particular study.

Appendix C

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Time of interview: Date:
Place: Interviewer:
Interviewee: Position of Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

1.) How do teachers plan assignments for paraprofessionals in your school?

Prompts:
♦ Do teachers share lesson plans with paraprofessionals?
♦ Are paraprofessionals given information regarding student modifications?
♦ How do teachers and paraprofessionals set goals?
♦ How do teachers and paraprofessionals set expectations for outcomes?
♦ How do teachers and paraprofessionals identify tasks of importance?

2.) How do teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals?

Prompts:
♦ What types of tasks does the teacher assign you to complete?
♦ How do you know what tasks to complete each day?
♦ How do teachers communicate to you what you are expected to do each day?

3.) How do teachers share information about their roles with paraprofessionals?

Prompts:
♦ Describe your role, or job description in the school. How did your supervising teacher communicate the responsibilities of the position to you?
♦ How do you know what is expected of you in your job responsibilities each day?
♦ How was information provided to you regarding district and school policies and procedures?

4.) How do teachers monitor day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals?

Prompts:
♦ How do teachers give you feedback on your skill performance?
♦ How do you know if you are doing your job correctly?
♦ How do you know if you are not doing your job correctly?
♦ Does anyone observe you completing your daily routine? If yes, please explain.

5.) How do teachers provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals?

Prompts:
♦ How do teachers assess your current skill level?
♦ How do teachers introduce or coach new skills?
♦ Please describe any on-the-job training or mentoring you have received in your position as a paraprofessional.

Notes or observations during interview:

(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews.)

Appendix D

Appendix D

Observation Documentation Protocol

School: _____

Observation Date: _____

Observation Time: _____

Information will be recorded charting any observations related to the following categories:

Planning:	Delegating:	Sharing Information re. Roles:	Monitoring Performance:	Providing On-The-Job Training and Mentoring:	Miscellaneous:

Appendix E

Appendix E

Document Analysis Protocol

Document source:
Date:

Information will be recorded charting any information related to the following categories:

Planning:	Delegating:	Sharing Information re. Roles:	Monitoring Performance:	Providing On-The-Job Training and Mentoring:	Miscellaneous:

Appendix F

Appendix F

Documents Collected

School A

D/A/1	Paraprofessional schedule
D/A/2	Master schedule- school
D/A/3	Tone schedule
D/A/4	Web page (school)
D/A/5	Student agenda book
D/A/6	Paraeducator evaluation form
D/A/7	Paraeducator duty feedback list
D/A/8	Inservice handouts- Working with Paraeducators
D/A/9	Philosophy/mission statement and school beliefs
D/A/10	School newsletter (March 6, 2002)
D/A/11	Staff development plan (2001-2002)
D/A/12	Faculty/staff handbook
D/A/13	Instructional assistant job description
D/A/14	Periodic evaluation for instructional assistants
D/A/15	Lesson plans

School B

D/B/1	Tone schedule
D/B/2	Master schedule- school
D/B/3	School newsletter (March 2002)
D/B/4	Paraprofessional schedules
D/B/5	Teacher handbook
D/B/6	Staff development plan (2001-2002)
D/B/7	Daily school bulletin
D/B/8	Web page (school)
D/B/9	Lesson plans

Central Office

D/C/1	Instructional assistant handbook
D/C/2	Web page (district)
D/C/3	Paraprofessional evaluation forms
D/C/4	Paraprofessional inservice notebooks (1999, 2000, 2001)
D/C/5	Melding Module- LRConsulting training materials for paraprofessionals and supervising teacher

Appendix G

Appendix G1

Themes Surrounding Planning Work Assignments

Themes	Interview	Observation	Document
There is a general lack of planning between teachers and paraprofessionals	X	X	
There are significant time constraints that prohibit effective planning between teachers and paraprofessionals	X		
Teachers have difficulty giving up control in their classrooms	X		
Teachers and paraprofessionals have certain assumptions about planning	X	X	
Formal and informal opportunities exist to allow teacher/paraprofessional teams to plan together	X	X	
Planning often occurs by simply sharing information with paraprofessionals	X	X	X

There is confusion between planning and delegating tasks to paraprofessionals	X	X	X

_____

Appendix G2

<u>Themes Surrounding Task Delegation</u>

Themes	Interview	Observation	Document
Tasks are not delegated, but rather the paraprofessional intuitively "knows" what is needed	X		
Tasks are delegated through various written methods	X	X	X
Tasks are delegated verbally to the paraprofessional	X	X	

Appendix G3

Themes Surrounding Role Clarifying

Themes	Interview	Observation	Document
Teachers and paraprofessionals lack a clear understanding of their roles	X		
Roles are clarified in writing	X	X	X
Roles are clarified through training opportunities	X	X	X
Roles are clarified through open discussions	X	X	

Appendix G4

Themes Surrounding Daily Performance Monitoring

Themes	Interview	Observation	Document
Courtesies can be mistaken for monitoring	X	X	
Monitoring takes the form of informal discussions	X	X	
Paraprofessionals are either not monitored or are unsure if any monitoring occurs	X		
Paraprofessionals solicit feedback from teachers	X	X	
Monitoring occurs through informal observation	X	X	X

Appendix G5

Themes Surrounding Providing Systematic On-The-Job Training and Mentoring

Themes	Interview	Observation	Document
No training is provided or paraprofessionals are unsure how to obtain training	X		
Training takes place through inservice opportunities	X	X	X
Training is informal	X	X	
Training consists of hands-on activities in the classroom	X	X	
Training consists of written information being provided to the paraprofessional	X	X	X
Previous life experiences constitute training			
Teachers need training to effectively supervise paraprofessionals	X		

Appendix H

Appendix H
Vita

Jessica E. Chisom

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EDUCATION:

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE & STATE UNIVERSITY, Blacksburg, VA
Ed.D., Supervision and Administration of Special Education, 12/02

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, Johnson City, TN
M.Ed., Special Education, 5/93

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY, Johnson City, TN
B.S., Special Education, 8/91

EXPERIENCE:

Assistant Principal, 10/00-Present
Northside Middle School, Roanoke, VA
- Cultivates strong relationships with parents and community members.
- Develops and maintains master schedule for the school.
- Observes and evaluates teachers to facilitate effective instructional practices.
- Participates in grade level activities such as IEP, child study, eligibility, triennial, and team meetings.
- Works in a proactive matter to settle disciplinary issues.
- Supports paraprofessionals, guidance personnel, custodians, cafeteria staff, and other support staff within the building.
- Collaborates with central office staff.
- Serves on various committees such as School Improvement, Character Counts, remediation, and drop out prevention.
- Supports extracurricular activities and programs.

Special Education Supervisor, 10/97-10/00
Roanoke County Schools, Roanoke, VA
- Planned and implemented various staff development and training programs.
- Interpreted special education programs to staff, parents, and community.
- Facilitated leadership in inclusive practices throughout Roanoke County Schools.
- Worked collaboratively with the Family Assessment and Planning Team as well as the Community Policy and Management Team to facilitate successful alternative education environments for students.
- Oversaw countywide programs for emotionally disturbed students.
- Supervised the program for students labeled as emotionally disturbed.
- Co-managed the Day Treatment Program for Roanoke County Schools in

conjunction with Blue Ridge Community Services.
- Assisted with policy and procedural changes (i.e., Policy Manual, Conduct Code).
- Served as a mentor/region supervisor to selected schools.
- Designed and maintains a special education web page.
- Performed turn-around training in areas such as person-centered planning, functional behavioral assessments and behavioral intervention plans.
- Initiated best practice methods for working with Instructional Assistants including handbook design, inservice and training opportunities.
- Assisted principals with teacher evaluations through observations and offering ideas and support to teachers throughout the county.
- Managed various budgets to support program needs.

Internship, 6/99-4/00

Virginia Department of Education, Richmond, VA
- Became acquainted with the Virginia Department of Education (i.e., policies, procedures, site visits).
- Served on the Task Force on the Training and Supervision of Paraprofessionals.
- Created a database for statewide survey data using SPSS, a statistical program.
- Analyzed survey data to assess statewide needs regarding training and supervision of paraprofessionals.
- Supported development of a handbook for paraprofessionals and supervisors.
- Attended various training opportunities.
- Completed grant application and managed sliver funds through the State Improvement Plan.
- Assisted with the implementation of sliver grant funds focusing on a training initiative for paraprofessionals in Roanoke County Schools.
- Managed pilot program The Virginia Paraprofessional Partnership.

Special Education Teacher, 8/95-09/97

Andrew Lewis Middle School, Salem, VA
1996-1997- 6th, 7th and 8th grades, emotionally disturbed/learning disabled/educable mentally disabled
1995-1996- 6th grade emotionally disturbed/learning disabled/educable mentally disabled
- Designed and implemented effective Individualized Education Plans.
- Developed a vast amount of alternative assessment techniques in order for students to achieve academic success.
- Worked cooperatively with the total staff.
- Established curriculum appropriate to meet all standards of learning.

- Executed a variety of behavior modification strategies necessary to promote learning as well as self-esteem.
- Integrated social skills into daily curriculum.
- Served and co-chaired school climate subcommittee during the school renewal process.

<u>Special Education Teacher,</u> 1993-1995, Summers 1994-1997
    Northside Middle School, Roanoke, VA
    <u>Summer 1997-</u> K-5th grades learning disabled
    <u>Summer 1996-</u> 6th grade educable mentally disabled
    <u>Summer 1995-</u> 9th-12th grades emotionally disturbed
    <u>1994-1995-</u> 6th grade emotionally disturbed/learning
    disabled/educable mentally disabled
    <u>Summer 1994-</u> 9th-12th grades emotionally disturbed
    <u>1993-1994-</u> 8th and 9th grades, emotionally disturbed/learning
    disabled

- Formulated, planned and implemented Individualized Education Plans for all students.
- Communicated effectively with parents.
- Designed lesson plans for all disciplines.
- Devised behavior modification techniques to be executed with individuals and entire classes.
- Collaborated with entire staff and administration to ensure success of all students.

ORGANIZATIONS/AFFILIATIONS:

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
National Education Association
Roanoke County Education Association
Virginia Middle School Association
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders
Gamma Beta Phi, National Honor Society
Council for Learning Disabilities
Virginia Council for Learning Disabilities
Council for Administrators in Special Education

COMPUTER SKILLS:

Netscape Communicator (Electronic Mail & Internet)
Word Perfect
Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint, FrontPage & Outlook)
Windows
Web Page Design
SPSS (Statistical Program)
Starbase