



## **Guide on the Side: The Role of the Educational Assistant**

**By Dr. Ashleigh Molloy**

The noble role of an educational assistant (also referred to as teaching assistant or paraprofessional) is paramount as a “guide on the side” for students. The E.A. is part of a dynamic duo working alongside of the teacher. The common goal of this collaboration is to provide an improved student learning experience.

This partnership will be strengthened through following these practices:

- 1) Develop a respectful working relationship with the teacher through on going communication.
- 2) Avail of opportunities for professional development and training on curriculum technology and policy.
- 3) Following implementation of a lesson, report to the teacher on the student outcome. Too hard? Too easy?
- 4) Articulate your needs. Share your frustrations and challenges with the teacher.
- 5) Utilize the Internet to expand your knowledge of specific student disabilities.
- 6) Utilize the Internet to search for sample lesson ideas to share with your teacher partner.
- 7) Attentive listening
- 8) Ensure that the implementation plan for all lessons is mutually understood.

Of course, in all that you do you will be helping your students learn social skills, including the skills involved in making friends. Wherever possible, help students with and without disabilities to connect meaningfully and to appreciate each other. In this, you can be an important model for how to relate to your students.

Salary does not constitute the measurement of a person’s worth. Paraprofessionals work with a challenging community of learners. They perform invaluable service for students with exceptionalities. They can be proud of their greatest gift to the education system: their service to those students who are most in need of facilitation to being the best that they can be.



In the words of my Irish Language: BEIR BUA (May You Succeed!!)

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