DISSERTATION

SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

Submitted By

Keelee K. Burtch

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Spring 2009

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

March 30, 2009

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY KEELEE BURTCH ENTITLED SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFULLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

Committee on Graduate Work

James Banning

Lise Marie Youngblade

Rod Lucero

Advisor Jean Lehmann

Director Timothy G. Davies

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS:

A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine how teachers provide supervision to paraprofessionals in elementary classrooms. This descriptive case study examines how teachers provide supervision to paraprofessionals in elementary school classrooms. Research questions regarding the teacher's role as a supervisor resulted from Pickett's (1999) supervisory framework, which addresses five areas: planning, task delegating, role clarifying, performance monitoring, and on-the-job training and mentoring. The results of this study indicated that paraprofessionals specifically, and both special and general education teachers do not understand their roles, planning between teacher and paraprofessional in elementary school classrooms is spur of the moment, and teachers do not receive adequate training in supervising paraprofessionals. This descriptive case study offers a reality of what supervision actually looks like in two elementary schools. Recommendations to enhance effective paraprofessional supervision in elementary school classrooms include teachers and paraprofessionals know their roles; districts need to allow for planning time between teachers and paraprofessionals, colleges need to provide teacher preparation courses on supervision techniques; and administrators mandate collaboration meetings amongst general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals.

Keelee K. Burtch
School of Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Spring 2009

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my son, Kyler. Thank you for giving me the extra push to finishing this journey. I am ecstatic about your arrival and love you more than you will ever know. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Michael, whose overwhelming love and support guides me through every day.

I want to extend a very special thanks to my family. I am so grateful to my parents, Ken and Peggy Faulk, who instilled in me at a young age the importance of education. Your unconditional love and support for all my adventures has been unwavering. Thank you for all your encouragement and for your help in making all my dreams come true. Thank you also for being the best role models a daughter could possibly have. Thanks to the love and support from my sister Kara Hornbuckle, I am fortunate to call you not only my sister, but best friend.

A special thanks to all my friends throughout my educational journey. Thank you for understanding when I couldn't make it to social gatherings or events because of my school or writing schedule. I appreciate all of your encouraging words and for sticking by me through this incredible ride. I can't promise that I am completely done pursing degrees and higher education, but I can tell you that I am going to take a break for awhile and enjoy some down time with my family and all of you.

This is also dedicated to all the paraprofessionals I have had the pleasure to work with. Thank you for the numerous lessons you have taught me and for giving me inspiration for completing this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMNTS

I would like to express a tremendous appreciation to those people who have guided me throughout this dissertation process.

A sincere thanks to my committee members for their questions, collaboration, and steadfast support as I experienced this process: Dr. Jean Lehmann, Dr. James Banning, Dr. Lise Marie Youngblade, and Dr. Rod Lucero.

I want to extend special thanks Dr. Jean Lehmann, my committee chair and advisor, for her extensive time, phone calls, emails, meetings, support, attitude, edits, and persistent faith in me to be able to complete this journey. I would like to extend a special thanks to Dr. James Banning as well. Thank you for giving me great advice regarding my methods and for exposing me to several different types of qualitative research approaches throughout my coursework. I would like to give a special thanks to three other professors who inspired me during my coursework, Dr. Timpson and Dr. Richburg both of Colorado State, and Dr. Bianco of the University of Colorado at Denver.

I am forever indebted to Randi Fuller and Kathy Lucas in the School of Education at Colorado State who expeditiously answered my frantic emails, completed paperwork, and returned phone calls. I cannot thank you enough, without you I would have not been able to get through this process.

I would also like to thank the paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators who participated in this study. I would have not been able to complete this study without your willingness, time, and dedication. I sincerely appreciate all of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, paraprofessionals (also known as paraeducators, teacher aides, instructional assistants) are being utilized as key service delivery supports to assist in educating students with a range of disabilities (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Minondo, Meyer, & Xin, 2001; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Paraeducator is a term that refers to individuals who work under the direct supervision of special and general education teachers or other professionals to assist in the education of students with disabilities (Pickett, Linkins, & Wallace, 2003). Federal law lists the typical duties of paraprofessionals, but does not define the term paraprofessional. The abundance of job titles that fall under the term paraprofessional reflects the assortment of tasks that are typically assigned to them. In school districts, paraprofessionals are often defined by job titles, such as teacher assistant, instructional assistant, bus aide, or job coach (French, 1998; Pickett & NEA, 1994).

In recent years, the employment process for and supervision of paraprofessionals has increasingly become a critical issue for special education and regular education administrators at all levels, especially in reference to the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) in 2001 and the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act in 2004 (IDEIA 2004). Both address paraprofessional employment, preparation, and supervision. Both IDEIA and Title I of NCLB require that paraprofessionals provide instructional support under the direct guidance and supervision of qualified staff. This affirms that state education agencies are required to "establish and maintain standards" and to ensure that paraprofessionals are "appropriately and

adequately prepared, trained, and supervised in accordance with state law, regulations, or written policy" (IDEIA) [Sec. 612(a)(14)(G)(i)].

Although the significance of the paraprofessionals' roles has been well documented (Blalock, 1991, Daniels & McBride, 2001; French 1998; French & Chopra, 1999; Garner & Reissman, 1974; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001; Hofmeister, Ashbaker, & Morgan, 1996; Jones & Bender, 1993; May & Marozas, 1981; Mueller, 2002; Pickett, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Picket & NEA, 1994; Villegas & Clewell, 1998, Wallace, Shin Bartholomay & Stahl, 2001), research studies indicate that their supervision by teachers is minimal and inadequate (French, 1998; Pickett, 1997). Ghere and Your-Barr (2003) also argue that there is a significant gap in our knowledge in reference to how districts address paraprofessional employment, direction, and development and the degree of communication and coordination that occurs between those on different levels in districts.

Paraprofessionals are employed to provide assistance in special education programs, and special education teachers have been given de facto responsibility for their supervision (French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett, 1989; Vasa, & Stechelberg, 1997). According to French (2001), there is broad agreement that teachers and special educators, in particular, who supervise paraprofessionals, have minimal or no training in supervision. Given the fact that paraprofessionals currently provide instructional support, with limited or no supervision at all, administrators, district officials, local education agencies (LEAs), and state education agencies (SEAs) may be compelled to set standards for training teachers in directing, monitoring, and assessing paraprofessionals duties (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

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 roles they must assume in reference to the growing numbers of paraprofessionals (Pickett, 1993). Pickett, Vasa, and Steckelberg (1993) found that in far too many cases, teachers are not prepared to direct paraprofessionals, to evaluate their performance, to provide feedback and training, or to assess the potential for greater use of paraprofessionals in order to free teachers so that they are able to provide increased instructional services.

Statement of the Problem

Anna Lou Pickett is the Director of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCP). The mission of NRCP is to address policy questions and other needs in the field, provide technical assistance, and share information about policy questions, management practices, regulatory procedures, and training models that will enable administrators and staff-developers to improve the recruitment, deployment, supervision, and career development of paraprofessionals (Pickett, 2006). Pickett and numerous special education researchers have found that paraprofessionals are generally not properly supervised. Issues regarding the importance of effective supervision of paraprofessionals are frequently mentioned in the professional literature (D'Aquanni, 1997; Guess, Smith & Entsminger, 1971; MacKenzie & Houk, 1986), and these issues require more thorough examination.

Background of problem

Paraprofessionals have been employed by school districts for more than 50 years, and their roles and responsibilities have changed over time (Pickett, 1996). There is substantial agreement in the literature that teachers should assign specific tasks, deliver on-the-job training, hold planning meetings, design instructional plans, and directly monitor the day-to-day activities of the paraprofessionals with whom they work (Doyle, 1997; French, 1998, 1999; French & Pickett, 1997; May & Marozas, 1986; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities [NJCLD], 1999). The amount of research on the use of paraprofessionals in schools, particularly in reference to special education, has increased dramatically during the last decade, especially as it relates to paraprofessional roles, responsibilities, development, and support. Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, and Doyle (2001) concluded, "Gaps in the literature exist on... topics such as acknowledging the work of paraprofessionals, guidelines for hiring and assigning them, interactions with school staff and students, and supervision" (p. 57).

French (2001) found that there is broad agreement that teachers and special educators, in particular, who supervise paraprofessionals have minimal or no training in supervision. According to Pickett and Gerlach (2003), currently, paraprofessionals provide instructional support, among other duties, with limited or no supervision at all. There is limited amount of research addressing supervision of paraprofessionals, especially in inclusive settings (Mavropoulos, 2006). However, paraprofessional roles and responsibilities, training, and qualifications are major topics of interest, and numerous studies addressing these issues can be found in the literature (French 1998, Giangreco et al., 2001; Pickett & Gerlach 2003).

The reluctance of special educators to supervise paraprofessionals is suggested by the lack of face-to-face meetings, possibly due to time constraints, lack of planning for activities performed by paraprofessionals, and the actual content of plans regarding Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals and the documenting of student progress (Mavropoulos, 2006).

In 2001, French examined the performance of special education teachers in terms of supervising paraprofessionals. In this regard, teachers appear to rely on "real life experience" as the primary source of their knowledge in terms of supervision of paraprofessionals (French, 2001). Results from French's' study indicate that hardly any teachers participated in selecting or hiring paraprofessionals who they supervised; nevertheless, half of the respondents were responsible for assessing the duties of the paraprofessional.

The Need for More Research

The literature offers limited information and leads to more questions than answers regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals (French, 2001). Despite the indicators for training of qualified personnel to supervise paraprofessionals, it has been well documented that teacher education programs are slow in providing teacher education candidates with knowledge of basic training in the supervision of paraprofessionals (French, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

The need to study how paraprofessionals are supervised becomes more apparent when the changes in their numbers and their deployment are reviewed (Chisom, 2002). 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).

The Purpose of the Study

This purpose of this study is to examine paraprofessional supervision in two elementary special education programs in Colorado and to contribute to the knowledge base surrounding the present practices in supervising paraprofessionals in school settings. Pickett (1999) developed a research-based framework comprising the primary components of effective supervision of paraprofessionals, including planning work assignments, delegating tasks clarifying roles, monitoring daily performance, 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. The following research questions regarding the role of teachers as supervisors are drawn from Pickett's (1999) framework and Chrisom's (2002) study on the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Research Questions:

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 Significance of the Study

This study will provide actual data about how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision process in two elementary school special education programs. It is intended to offer a systematic inquiry into the supervision of paraprofessionals. One result of this study may involve training implications, especially in the area of staff development. The results may also lead to dramatic repercussions involving not only paraprofessionals, but teachers who deliver instructional supervision to them. Due to the growing numbers of paraprofessionals in school environments today, as well as the restricted amount of research in the area of their supervision, it is probable that this research will make a contribution to the body of knowledge of existing practices in supervising paraprofessionals in public schools, as well as the retention of paraprofessionals.

Definitions of Terms

Administrators: principals, assistant principals in the elementary, middle, or high schools, as well as special education directors and coordinators of special education.

Competencies: the knowledge base and skills required for employment and advancement within different professions or occupations, programs, or positions, and the advancement of professionals in education.

General Education Teacher: a qualified professional with a teaching certificate to teach in an area of the general curriculum.

Guiding Principles: statements of beliefs that provide a philosophical framework on which state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), and other associations can build to ensure appropriate team roles, supervision, and professional development in reference to paraeducators. One result of the training is that it should lead to a perception of greater respect for paraeducators (Pickett, 1999).

Inclusive Setting: a general education classroom that offers a learning environment in which all students belong, are accepted, and are educated with their peers to the greatest extent possible under the teacher, the special educator, and support persons' supervision (McGregor & Volgelsberg, 1998).

Professional Development (or in-service): a planned sequence of experiences, based on activities and studies designed to develop or improve the competencies and skills of educational staff while on the job (Ysseldyke, Algonzzine, & Thurlow, 1992).

Instructional Team: a group of professionals and paraprofessionals who provide direct or indirect instructional support or other related services to students, with or without disabilities, in a variety of educational settings.

Para-educator or Paraprofessional: a school employee who works under the supervision of a certified or licensed staff member and provides support and assistance with instructional and related services. These employees may offer direct and/or indirect services to students and their parents. However, the certified/licensed staff member

remains responsible for the overall conduct and management of the classroom or program, including the design, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional program and student progress (Picket & Gerlach, 1997).

Pre-service: activities such as workshops, seminars, courses, and other learning experiences offered to education professionals before they begin their jobs (Ysseldyke, Algonzzine, Thurlow, 1992).

Qualified Personnel: individuals who have met state-approved certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which they provide special education or related services.

Special Education Director(s) or Coordinator(s) (also found under Administrator): individual(s) who directly supervise, monitor, and make hiring and assignment decisions for and with special education personnel. They work within the special education departments of school districts, supervisory unions, and individual schools.

Special Educator: a person with a teaching certificate in an area of special education or a related service provider with appropriate certification or licensure in his or her professional area.

Standards: statements that describe job functions and responsibilities related to competency areas for a profession or occupation. The standards include knowledge and

skill competencies and performance indicators to ensure that individuals have attained the required skills.

Supervision: an operational definition of instructional supervision of paraprofessionals, as derived from Pickett's (1999) framework, including a) planning of work assignments; (b) delegating tasks to paraprofessionals; (c) sharing information with paraprofessionals regarding roles; (d) monitoring the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals; and (e) providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals.

Supervisory Skills: Adapted for Pickett's (1999) model and referring to the core functions of supervising paraprofessionals. These include (a) orientation and role clarification, (b) task delegation, (c) planning, (d) mentoring and training, and (e) evaluation and performance monitoring.

Limitations

The study will be conducted in two elementary schools in Colorado. This setting may limit the applicability of this study to other settings, such as more urban areas and differing geographical areas. The study, however, also furthers the existing body of knowledge and it encourages others to conduct studies that add to the findings. An additional potential limitation is that the understanding of the participants interviewed and observed in this study may not echo those working in other classroom or school settings. When writing the methodology section of this dissertation, information about the school district and each participating school will be provided so that readers may determine whether this study could be easily transferable to other settings. A further

possible limitation is that there is a high turnover rate of paraprofessionals. Each participant will be selected carefully with recommendations from the principal at each school and the director of special services to ensure more accurate data.

Major Assumptions

1. Paraprofessionals adhere to federal, state, and local district standards, and as members of the educational team, they assist in the implementation of educational programs.
2. Special educators refer to the core functions of supervising paraprofessionals according to Pickett's (1999) model. These include a) planning work assignments; (b) delegating tasks to paraprofessionals; (c) sharing information with paraprofessionals regarding roles; (d) monitoring the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals; and (e) providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature focused on special education paraprofessional use has grown significantly during the last decade, especially as it relates to paraprofessional roles, responsibilities, development and support. Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, and Doyle (2001) stated that there are still significant gaps in the literature. These gaps include acknowledging the work of paraprofessionals, guidelines for hiring and assigning them, interactions with school staff and students, and supervision. This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the supervision of paraprofessionals. The topics include employment of paraprofessionals (historic perspective and current analysis), hiring and assigning, utilization, preparation and professional development, and supervision. Legislation and policies are discussed, as well as trends in paraprofessional supervision. The chapter concludes with Pickett's (1999) framework for paraprofessional supervision.

Who Are Paraprofessionals

The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCP) defines a paraprofessionals as an employee: 1) whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers other direct and indirect services to children, youth and/or their parents; and 2) who works under the supervision of teachers or other professional personnel who have ultimate responsibility for a) the design and implementation of education and related services programs, and b) the assessment of the impact on student progress and other education outcomes (Pickett, 1994, p. 8).

Employment of Paraprofessionals

Historic Perspective

A variety of job titles are used throughout the United States to refer to personnel who function in the role of paraprofessionals (Doyle, 2002). Multiple terms to describe paraprofessionals have been created in response to their evolving roles in the education field over the past 50 years. Their shift in their responsibilities is evidenced in the titles assigned to them. "Paraprofessional," as referenced in IDEIA 2004 [Sec. 612(a)(14)(B)(i)] is synonymous with educational assistant, paraeducator, instructional assistant, teacher aide, therapy assistant, transition trainer, and job coach (French & Gerlach, 1999).

Paraprofessionals have been employed in public schools for more than 50 years, and their roles and responsibilities have changed over time (Riggs & Mueller). Each year public school students are being assessed and qualified for special education at rapid rates. This leads to the need for more special educators and paraprofessionals to assist the special educators. Since the early 1960s, the total number of paraprofessionals employed in the public schools has exploded from approximately 10,000 to over 500,000 positions (Blalock, 1991; Pickett, 1996).

In the 1950's, postwar teacher shortages compelled local school districts to identify alternative education providers (Pickett, 1996). At that time, paraprofessionals were employed to perform clerical duties in order to help teachers have more instructional time with student (Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Morehouse & Albright, 1991, Pickett, 1999, Wallace, Shine et al, 2001).

The key finding in a study by Cruikshank and Haring (1957) was that the primary responsibilities of paraprofessionals were the same regardless of the educational setting in which they worked. Paraprofessionals were examined in two different regular education classes. One of the classes included students with blindness and the other class was a general education classroom with students labeled as gifted. The third setting was a self contained special education classroom. The responsibilities observed were clerical duties, student supervision in class and playgrounds, housekeeping task in the classroom, material preparation, and record keeping. Teachers were available to implement their instructional skills with the attendance of paraprofessionals. Results indicated "teacher assistants" were well used to enhance instructional programs.

From 1950 through 1970 several efforts were put forward for racial equality to ensure the civil rights of children and adults with disabilities (Gartner & Riessman, 1974). One of the most notable court cases was in 1954 when the Court rejected the "inherently unequal" in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. This case influenced the equal treatment of individuals with disabilities which lead to the passing of Education for all Handicapped Act of 1975 (EHA), Public Law 94-142. It was the first compulsory federal special education law that mandated a free, appropriate public education for all students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21 (Marvopoloulos, 2002). Public Law 94-142 was renamed in 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The passage of this law created the need for more teachers to teach students with disabilities.

Legislation acts allowed for the increase of paraprofessionals roles. Multilingual members of communities were employed by school districts with the passing of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. The Amendment of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1966 was another act that provided federal money to help with economically disadvantaged people nationally. Gerber et al. (2001) thought that these two acts produced the progress for the employment of more paraprofessionals.

During the 1970's, school districts turned to paraprofessionals residing in the local communities to serve as liaisons between home and school. This was one of the earliest documented occurrences that paraprofessionals provided instructional support to students and parents (Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Green & Barnes, 1989).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amplified the need for more paraprofessionals in the 1970's and 1980's (Pickett & NEA, 1994). In the 1980's there was a decrease in educational funding, which made the decade less promising than the 1970's (Pickett, 1996).

Current View

Literature focused on the paraprofessional employment process is extremely limited (Ghere & York-Barr, 2003). Over the past five decades changes in the educational landscape necessitated the increase of paraprofessional utilization (Marvopoloulos, 2002). Teachers in the field of special education has increased by 11% between 1990 and 1999, with 323,565 teacher positions in the 190-1991 school year and grew to 358,537 special education teachers by the 1999-2000 school year as cited by IDEA Data (2003). Katsuyannis et al. (2000) cites a 1997 study by French and Pickett showing that the continuing shortage of special education teachers has created larger

caseloads being assigned to special education teacher and other licensed staff creating the need to employ more paraprofessionals to assist these teachers. Presently there are more than 525,000 paraprofessionals serving in American schools (Trautman, 2004).

Paraprofessionals today increasingly engage in instructional activities, student supervision, and other tasks that typically have been considered teachers' roles (French & Gerlach, 1999; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett, 1996; Rigss & Mueller, 2001). Questions regarding their roles, responsibilities, training, and supervision have been longstanding and continue to date (Giangreco, Eldelman, Broer, & Deyle 2001; Jones & Bender, 1993; Wallace, Shin, Barholomay, & Stahl, 2001).

As cited in Marvoulous (2005), according to Pickett and Gerlach (1997) five factors have contributed to the changing roles of paraprofessionals. These factors include (a) changing roles of teacher and special educators, (b) increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) continuing teacher shortages, (d) rising needs for additional services to students with disabilities, and (e) ongoing efforts to implement inclusion of student with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Recruitment

Current practices in hiring and assigning paraprofessionals are based on needs (Pickett, 1997). Increasing teacher turn over and growing student enrollment are factors affecting hiring and assigning of paraprofessionals (Pickett & NEA, 1994). Literature focused on the paraprofessional employment process is extremely limited. Strategies used in recruitment, application, screening, interviewing, and hiring and their effects on developing a paraprofessional workforce have not been researched (Ghere & York-Barr 2003).

Blalock (1991) proposed various paraprofessional recruitment strategies (e.g., substitutes, volunteers, college students) and recommended that schools conduct team interviews as a strategy for initiating relationships. It has also been suggested that interviews serve as an important opportunity for articulating the program philosophy, communicating roles and responsibilities, and beginning to share knowledge about students with disabilities (Carroll, 2001).

The remarkable increase in numbers of paraprofessionals could potentially represent a source of prospective new teachers (Genzuk & Baca, 1998). White (2004) conducted a review of the arguments for recruitment of paraprofessionals into teacher education and special education. He found that when given the financial support and opportunity, most paraprofessionals succeed in teacher education. A model career ladder has been developed by the National Resource Center for Paraeducators in Education that provides excellent direction toward these ends (Pickett, 2000). If those considering entering the paraprofessional field knew they would be given financial support for higher education as well as a higher paying job as a teacher, they may be more inclined to commit. The Recruiting New Teachers (RNT; Kaselkorn & Fidler, 1996) argues that for paraprofessional-to-teacher programs to be viable, sustained financial commitment must exist at local, state, and national levels.

Tutoring and mentoring programs are accessible at many schools and can offer opportunities to high school students who would like to help younger students. Clewell (1995) found that mentoring programs such as educators clubs offer intensive teaching experiences to high school student who in turn become interested in these course offering at 2 and 4-year colleges.

The ways in which paraprofessional positions are assigned affects how paraprofessionals are used to support students (Ghere & York-Barr, 2003). The specific set of responsibilities assigned to paraprofessionals varies depending on whether they are designated as assistants for one student or assistants to a teacher or to an entire program. Teachers may feel more limited in how they can assign direct work when paraprofessionals are designated to support one specific student. Teachers can be more flexible and, potentially more efficient, in assigning work to support a program more broadly when paraprofessionals are designated as resources to support teachers and programs (French, 1998).

Various factors, including the needs of students, the learning atmospheres in which they partake, and the likely supports available in those environments should be considered when establishing the level of paraprofessional support. Freschi (1999) proposed a decision-making flow chart to facilitate the problem-solving process. In this process, justifying the need for a paraprofessional, identifying expected student outcomes, providing paraprofessional development, and evaluating the effectiveness of the paraprofessional support are identified as key considerations (Ghere & York-Barr, 2003). Giangreco, Broer and Edelman (1999) also developed a series of guidelines for teams to consider. These guidelines recommend identifying student needs within the educational context, utilizing existing resources within teams of special and general educators and looking organizationally to efficiently schedule paraprofessionals or reallocate resources to better support all students (Ghere & York, 2003).

A study by Haring and Mithchelson (1986) showed that interpersonal skills and attitudes of applicants and also interest in self improvement may be better indicators of

how well a candidate fit into the team. Job experience, references, educational level, literacy, and language skills applicable to the specific position are important selection criteria for successful candidates (French, 1998). Giangreco, Broer, and Edleman (2002) reported that hiring practices targeted individuals who were energetic, caring for students, resourceful, productive, and knowledgeable.

Paraprofessionals are assigned to work with students who have the most challenging behavioral and learning characteristics (Blalock, 1991). Commonly, it is recommended that administrators and teachers/supervisors identify specific needs of students based on the educational setting, efficiently utilize existing resources, including special and general education staff, and assign paraprofessionals accordingly (Giangreco, et al., 1999).

Utilization of Paraprofessionals

Due to the increase in employing paraprofessionals in special education programs, there have been many concerns about their utilization (Jones, 2006). Paraprofessionals have been shown to be used in diverse ways when looking at the history. A majority of the literature surrounding paraprofessionals focuses on their roles and responsibilities. There is greater agreement and clarity regarding the general categories of paraprofessional responsibilities than the appropriateness of the components of the responsibilities (Ghere & York-Barr, 2003).

A 1998 reports by the National Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) commented that, "the intent of using paraprofessionals is to supplement, not supplant, the work if the teacher/service provider" (p.39). This concern was reiterated by Giangreco, et al., (1999), when special educators defer decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and

management about a student to the paraprofessional, this is one indication that too much responsibility has been assigned to paraprofessionals.

Katsiyannis et al. (2000) cited a study conducted by Jones and Bender, "The roles and duties of paraeducators have become more complex and demanding. Despite their increasing and extensive involvement in the education of students with disabilities, paraeducators generally enter the school setting without formal training or preparation in working with students with disabilities," (p.7). IDEA requires states to appropriately train and prepare paraprofessionals as well as supervise the paraprofessionals (Lasater, Johnson, & Fitzgerald, 2000).

Much responsibility is put on paraprofessionals when they are required to support individual or small group learning, assist with data collection, and implement all aspects of individual education plans (Carroll, 2001; Pickett, 2002). Teachers and students recognize the importance of paraprofessionals' support on a daily basis (French & Chopra, 1999). Because there is more than one adult in the average classroom, students feel that they receive increased attention for their individual needs (French & Gerlach, 1999). With increased paraprofessional participation in the daily classroom activities, teacher and special educator's roles have evolved to cover monitoring, coaching, and guiding. This shift in roles has permitted paraprofessionals to offer more instructional assistance while teachers remain exclusively accountable for student outcomes (French, 1998; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

Despite the increased in use, confusion still exists about the role of paraprofessionals compared to the roles of teachers, special educators, and related service personnel (French & Pickett, 1997). A few studies suggest that paraprofessionals are

"responsible" for the instructional programming of a student, including teaching academic and social skills, making curricular modification, and managing student behaviors. Paraprofessionals expressed that it was more appropriate for the classroom teacher to assume these primary responsibilities (Giangrecom Efelman, Lusielli, & MacFarland, 1997; March, Schrader, & Levine, 1999).

Giangreco, Edelman, Broer and Doyle (2001) stated the training and supervision of paraprofessionals is of great importance. They explained that the importance is due to the fact that paraprofessional assistance is an indirect service, not a direct service. Giangreco and his colleagues noted that direct services are services provided by "qualified personnel" (p. 47). Smith-Davis and Littlejon (as cited in Giangreco, et al 2001) explained indirect services as services provided by other personnel under the "direct supervision of qualified personnel" (p.47). Those personnel able to provide direct services, according to Giangreco and his colleagues, are special educators, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, as well as other non-specified personnel.

Preparation and Professional Development

The current state of developing and directing the work of paraprofessionals is like a puzzle with many pieces missing (Ghere & York-Barr, 2003). According to D'Aquanni (1997), dated job descriptions, imprecise supervision, ineffective team practices, and insufficient training all donate to the confusion of what it is that paraprofessionals actually responsible for. Many paraprofessionals go into the field with inadequate training, and at times, no training at all. In many cases paraprofessionals assume their responsibilities upon appointment. They begin their positions not ready to deal with

students' behaviors, running small-group activities, and support the execution of lesson plans.

Paraprofessionals are asked to provide one-on-one attention to highly involved special education students (Daniels & McBride, 2001; French, 1998; Pickett, 1999; Villegas & Clewell, 1998). Schools assign a paraprofessional to work one-on-one with a student or to work with groups of students with significant disabilities (Chisom, 2002). This kind of assignment frequently happens without any prior training and no ongoing supervision (Frank, Keith, & Steil,1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999).

Training of paraprofessionals often falls into the lap of the special education teacher with whom the paraprofessionals directly report. According to Trautman (2004), there are three primary ways in which training programs can occur: pre-service training, on-the job training, and in-service training. In a study done by French (2001) it was found that "special education teachers have reported that real-life experience, rather than train, is the primary source of knowledge about how to supervise paraeducators" (p.45). The study showed that more than 88% of the teachers surveyed about their per-service training to supervisors paraprofessionals, received their knowledge by "real-life experience."

Carroll (2001) suggested that special education programs would "run more smoothly" if special education teachers trained paraprofessionals, met with paraprofessionals on a regular basis, and provided the paraprofessionals with evaluations and constructive feedback. The quality of paraprofessional support is usually related to the quality and quantity of training.

Special education teachers are responsible for creating individualized educational programs for students with special needs (Jones, 2005). Often these teachers plan for and assign different roles to paraprofessionals. In a survey of teacher practices, French (2001) found that 35% of survey respondents reported planning alone for paraprofessionals or gibing oral instruction ahead of the instructional time. It was also found in the same study that only 13% of the respondents said that other teachers plan for paraprofessionals. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents in the same survey reported that they (paraprofessional and teacher) sit down to plan together.

French (2001) also found that when planning for and working with paraprofessionals, formal meeting between the teacher and paraprofessionals were not a common occurrence. Only 25% of the teachers responding to a question about formal sit-down meeting reported they never met with their paraprofessionals. The remaining respondents to the same question reported meeting with paraprofessionals at different intervals during the school year. When asked about what is included in plans for paraprofessionals, French (2001) found that teachers included directions for how to do an activity (63.3%) very often, as well as how to manage behavior (55.5%). She also found that teacher never or rarely included questions to ask students (25%) and IEP goals (24.7%).

Skills that paraprofessionals must learn are dependent on and most appropriately taught in their contexts of practice by the special education teacher who is directing their work (Vasa & Steckelberg, 1997). Limited studies have focused on how to efficiently provide job-embedded progress of this sort. Most responsibility for developing and supporting paraprofessionals in their work with students, falls to special education

teachers, frequently teachers are not well prepared to assume this responsibility (Hilton & Gerlach, 1997; Pickett, 1996; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995). With recent legislation, the challenge, is to develop superior paraprofessional development systems that support the various levels of training (e.g., district in-services, job-embedded development, postsecondary education) (Harkness, 2003).

Overview of Supervision

Special educators, increasingly, take on more demanding responsibilities. One of these responsibilities that special educators are called upon to be is supervisors. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) define supervision as "assistance for the improvement of instruction" (p.10). This distinction becomes important in conveying the idea that position title of supervisor is not required in order for supervision to occur in one's job (Marvopolous, 2005).

Studies that Support Picket's (1999) Model

Pickett (1999) has developed a conceptual framework that addresses paraprofessional roles, preparation, and supervision. Her framework includes planning, delegating tasks, sharing information regarding roles, providing on-the job training, and monitoring performance of paraprofessionals. 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.

Pickett and Gerlach (2003) argue that supervision of paraprofessionals is broken into two main roles. Using the top down approach, the first part includes supervisors at the district level, including building administrators, local district administrators, and program coordinators. Second, special educators, as well as general education teachers,

act as paraprofessional supervisors. Administrative personnel serve as managers responsible for the employment, preparation, evaluation, and dismissal of paraprofessionals on one hand (French, 1998; French & Gerlach, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). On the other hand, teachers are responsible for delegating tasks and supervising paraprofessionals (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Supervising and delegating work to paraprofessionals is not a separate duty, but falls within multiple aspects of special educators jobs. It is suggested by French (1999) that teachers preserve the duty of assessing students, planning the lessons that address Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, set the learning environment, *and* direct the work of paraprofessionals. Successfully directing the work of paraprofessionals involves clarification, both formally and informally, of roles and responsibilities (French & Pickett, 1997; Freschi, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997); preparation of teachers to supervise paraprofessionals (Pickett, 1990, 1997; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001); and a high level of communication with paraprofessionals, including regular meeting times to discuss student performance and programs (Blalock, 1991; French, 1998).

According to Boomer (1980) teachers are suppose to do the planning, scheduling, directing, and delegating of tasks to paraprofessionals (Boomer, 1980). Wallace et al. (2001) identified knowledge and skills important for teachers and other professionals who direct the work of paraprofessionals and examined the extent to which these competencies are demonstrated in educational environments. Increasingly, teachers are expected to determine how to best work with paraprofessionals within these changing environments.

In a study by McKenzie and Houk (1986), twenty- three resource teachers received a questionnaire that briefly described some of the job responsibilities that a special education paraprofessional may execute. The teachers did signify a need to be a part of the process of hiring and assigning paraprofessionals. Numerous recommendations were also made, "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.

It was reported by Harrington and Mitchelson (1987) that teachers did not want to supervise. They also reported that teachers valued their presence and that paraprofessionals provided individualized instruction, clerical and logistical support, classroom continuity, emotional support to teachers, and important community linkage. French (1998) also determined that teachers were hesitant to supervise, because they did not make available written plans or have formal meetings, yet they were displeased with the lack of communications between themselves and paraprofessionals. Teachers also reported that they favored paraprofessionals who would work with little guidance or supervision.

Chisom (2002) performed a descriptive case study that examined how teachers provide supervision to paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms. Like this study, questions regarding the teacher's role as a supervisor were derived from Pickett's (1999) supervisory framework, which addressed five areas: planning, task delegating, role clarifying, performance monitoring, and on-the-job training and mentoring. The results of her study supported Pickett's (1999) framework and added additional information to

effective paraprofessional supervision. Specifically, her results indicated that planning, formal or informal, does not exist, as it should, between teacher and paraprofessional teams. She also found that teachers are often uncomfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals. The study pointed out that roles remain unclear for both teachers and paraprofessionals and that training for both paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers is minimal.

A total of seventeen studies were examined that referenced one or more of the elements of the supervision of paraprofessionals in Picket's (1999) model. Only three of the studies examined, Chisom (2002), Floyd (2004), and Marvopolous (2005), looked at all five elements of Picket's (1999) model. A synthesis of literature related to Pickett's model is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Study Descriptions as the relate to Picket's (1999) model

Author/ Year	**Planning**	**Delegating**	**Performance Monitoring**	**On-the-Job Training**	**Role Clarification**
Boomer (1980)	X	X			
Chisom (2002	X	X	X	X	X
D'Aquanni (1997)	X				X
Floyd (2004)	X	X	X	X	X
French (1997)		X	X	X	X
French (1998)	X	X	X	X	
French (2001)	X	X	X	X	
Guiangreco, et al (1997)	X		X	X	X
Harrington, Mitchelson (1986)		X			X
Jensen, Parsons & Reid (1998)			X	X	

Marks, Schrader, Levine (1999)	X	X			X
Marvopolous (2005)					
McClain	X	X			X
McKenzie, Houk (1986)		X			
Milner (1998)				X	X
Prigge (1996)	X				X
Rose (2000)	X				X

Even though each of the studies included in this review of literature clarify the importance of one or more of the five domains in Pickett's framework, to date there has only been three studies that have investigated precisely how these five domains are executed in school settings.

Legislation and Policies

Federal

There have been quite a few laws that have impacted defining roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, as well as the hiring and assigning practices, funding, and policy-making (Gartner & Riessman, 1974; Pickett, 2001; Pickett, & Gerlach, 2003). The current reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004 tackles the requirement of paraprofessional training and supervision to provide assistance in special education. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, also delivers new standards for the hiring of paraprofessionals who work with students in Title I programs. NCLB requires that paraprofessionals who work in schools that accept Title I funds meet these standards. They include:

(a) Hold an associate's or higher degree (the equivalent of 48 credit hours)

(b) Completion of two year of study at an institution of higher learning

(c) Completion of a formal assessment that demonstrates a rigorous standard of quality, knowledge, and ability to assist in reading, wiring and mathematics instruction or reading, writing and mathematics readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2002),

State

Unfortunately, many states and localities do not currently have structured training systems in effect, even though the IDEIA now mandates appropriate training and supervision. Many Local Education Associations (LEA) are struggling to determine how to do this effectively and efficiently.

There are approximately nineteen states that have developed standards for paraeducators (National Education Association, 2000). States that have applied standards to support the efficient employment of paraeducators in public school include California, Georgia, Maine, Iowa, Washington, West Virginia, and Vermont. Thirteen states require a certification, while others have licensure requirements which includes; Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin (Beale, 2001).

According to IDEIA 2004 [(IDEIA), 20 U.S.C. 1400 ed seq.] state education agencies are "to establish and maintain standards" to make certain that paraprofessionals who "assist in the provision of special education and related services, are appropriately and adequately prepared, trained, and supervised in accordance with state law, regulation, or written policy" [20 U.S.C. 1412 612a(14)(G)(ii)]. The enactment of NCLB in 2001, requires that paraprofessionals "may not provide any instructional service to a student

unless the paraprofessional is working under the direct supervision of a teacher" [(NCLB) Title I-Part A 1119g(3A)]. These laws mutually mandate that paraprofessional supervision is an inherent requirement that state and local education agencies will have to implement.

Little has been done in developing credentialing systems, even though many states have established guidelines for paraeducators. The increased use of paraprofessionals and the recent federal requirements made the states recognize the importance of developing their own standards and credentials (Beale, 2001; French & Pickett, 1997; Hilton & Gerlach, 1997). The development and strengthening of standards for credentialing will serve to better define roles and responsibilities and ensure a higher level of quality service (American Federation Teacher, 1998).

Trends in Supervision

By aiding the learning process for students with disabilities in classroom settings, paraprofessionals play a vital role in schools today. They need to be given sufficient preparation and supervision. It is evident through the literature that both are crucial in order for paraprofessionals to maximize the student learning process. 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.

Within the literature this is substantial agreement that teachers should assign specific tasks, design instructional plans, deliver on-the-job training, hold planning meetings, and direct and monitor the daily activities of the paraprofessional (Doyle, 1997; French, 1998; French & Pickett, 1997; French, 2001; NJCLD, 1998). It is recommended

that teachers provide orientation to new paraprofessionals, provide on the job training, hold meetings, and plan for paraprofessionals (Alexander, 1987).

As cited by French (2001) states, "in spite of this widespread agreement that the supervisory role is appropriate and even though teachers have had these responsibilities for many years, pre-service teacher training regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals is, and always has been, conspicuously absent in special and general education certification or endorsement programs (Lindeman & Begle, 1998; Marozas, 1984; May & Marozas, 1986; Morgan, 1997; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995). Moreover, there is little in the literature that provides a picture of what teachers are currently are doing about supervision, considering the lack of formal preparation (French, 1998; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995).

While there is a long history of developing training material and resources for preparing paraprofessionals for their roles, the history of identifying knowledge, skills, and preparation needed by teachers to direct the work of paraprofessionals is not as long (Wallace et al., 2001; French, 1997; Mueller, 1997; NJCLD, 1998; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Radaszweki-Byrne, 1997). Competency requirements regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals have not been included in most special education and general education certification or endorsement programs (Morgan, 1997; Salzberg & Moran, 1995).

Conclusion

Despite functions associated with the supervision of paraprofessionals that have been suggested (e.g., planning, managing schedules, delegating, orienting the new paraprofessional, providing on-the-job training, evaluating paraprofessionals' job

performance, and managing the work environment) few empirical studies have been conducted to investigate competencies required of teachers to effectively supervise paraprofessionals (French 2001; French, 1998, Giangreco et al., 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

Paraprofessionals and teachers will describe the supervision process in this study. A descriptive case study will be utilized to take a closer look at how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in two elementary schools in a Colorado school district. I am seeking to answer the following questions derived from Pickett's (1999) framework by replicating Chisom's (2002) study:

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 limited literature base gives rise to more questions than answers about teacher practices (French, 2001). Pickett (1999) created a valuable framework to show what effective supervision of paraprofessionals should look like in classroom settings. The questions center 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).

Due to the increase in paraprofessionals in current school environments, as well as the limited amount of research concerning their supervision, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the body of knowledge that speaks to supervising practices of support personnel. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this study will have an impact on teacher preparation programs, professional development personnel, teachers who supply instructional supervision to paraprofessionals, and for the paraprofessionals themselves.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This chapter explains the research methods used for this study. The first section provides an overview of the study, including the research approach and rationale. The second section offers participant information, including the demographics of the district and the two schools within the district that have been chosen for this study. The third section reviews the measures. The fourth section explains the procedures and methods of data collection. Data analysis will then be discussed and lastly, arguments are made for the trustworthiness of the study.

Overview of the Methods

The literature review demonstrated that there is a critical need for further research in the area of supervision of paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; Giangreco et al., 1997; Jensen et al., 1998; Rose, 2000; Milner, 1998). As of this date, only three studies -one qualitative and two quantitative- have examined paraprofessional supervision using the inclusive skill set outlined in Pickett's (1999) model, whereas other studies have only looked at one or more of the supervisory responsibilities. A descriptive case study was used to examine how teachers supervise paraprofessionals in two programs in two elementary school classrooms in Colorado. Permission was granted by Jessica (Chisom) McClung to replicate this study from her dissertation in 2002 by using her data collection techniques and research questions. Questions used in the case study are fashioned from Pickett's (1999) framework that looks at paraprofessional supervision:

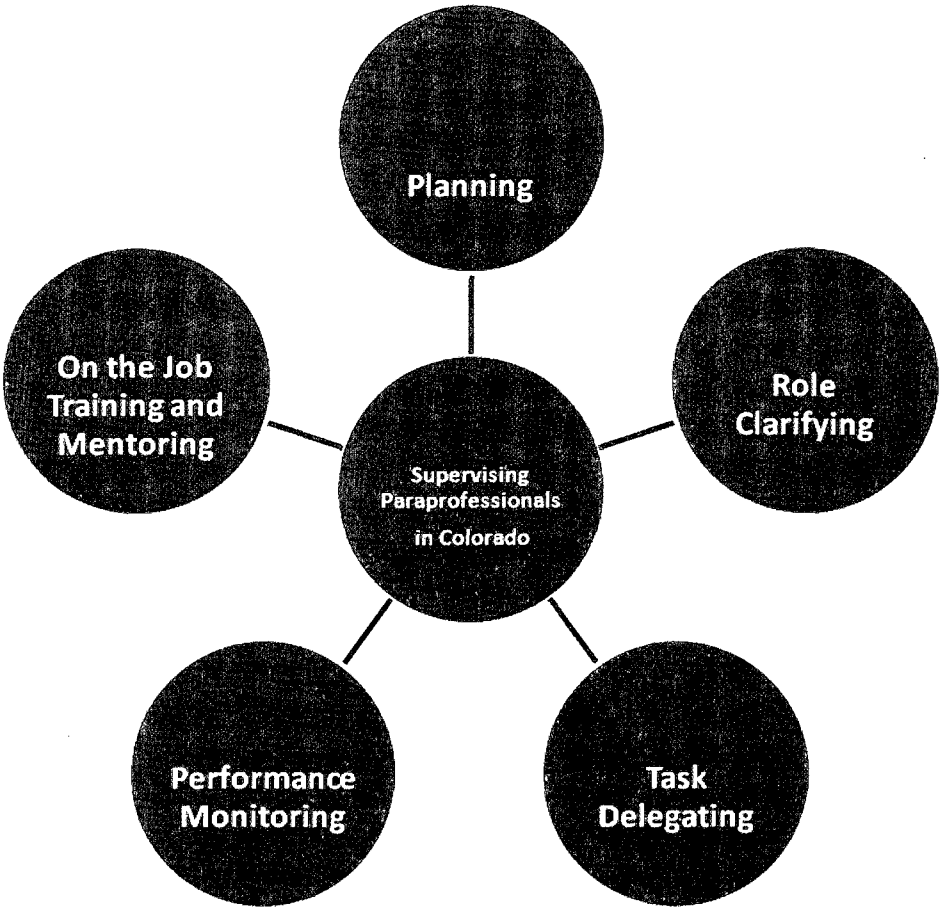
1. How do teachers plan work assignments for paraprofessionals?
2. How do teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals?

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.



DESCRIPTIVE

Study Model

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

The data analyzed in this study could have a significant impact on attrition and retention of paraprofessionals, on district level professional development staff, teachers who supervise paraprofessionals, administrators who have paraprofessionals in their buildings, and universities that have teacher preparation programs. The research that was conducted contributed to the understanding of existing practices of the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Research Approach and Rationale

Qualitative inquiry accepts the complex and dynamic quality of the social world (Cronbach, 1975). Qualitative research is an umbrella theory covering numerous forms of inquiry that help researchers comprehend and clarify the significance of social phenomena with as little interference of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known and should take place in natural settings. Observations of the supervision of paraprofessionals in special education programs were conducted in the classrooms in which they work. Creswell (1998) suggests that the tradition of qualitative inquiry selected by a researcher can shape the design of the study. Qualitative research methods, for this study, gave in-depth information regarding paraprofessionals and the teachers who supervise them. Creswell (1998) suggests that "the best studies have a strong inquiry procedure" (p. 27).

Design

Case studies are comprehensive examinations of individual people, groups, organizations, or other social units (Key, 1997). The qualitative research design of a case study is chosen when the phenomenon being investigated is not readily discernible from its context (Yin, 2003). A case study design is executed to gain a thorough grasp of the circumstance and significance for those involved (Merriam, 1998). Case study design was selected for this research to gain a comprehensive understanding of the supervision of paraprofessionals in center-based, elementary school special education programs and to try to influence policy and practice at the district level. Theories generated from case studies can persuade policy, practice, and future research (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher conducting a case study attempts to analyze the variables relevant to the subject under study (Polit & Hungler, 1983). A qualitative case study provides an in-depth study of this "system," based on a diverse array of data collection materials (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). Case studies in qualitative research are investigations of "bounded systems" with the focus being either the case or an issue illustrated by the case (Stake, 1995). Case studies have been increasingly used in education.

In education, a descriptive case study displays an intricate basis of the phenomenon examined (Merriam, 1998). A descriptive case study demonstrates a comprehensive description of a phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2003). Merriam (1998) states "descriptive means that the end product of a case study is rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study," (p. 29). "Thick description" is a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal, description of the incident or entity being investigated (Merriam, 1998). Pyecha (1988) used this methodology to study special education. This study examined how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision

process in two public elementary school special education programs using a descriptive case study.

Participants

There were a total of thirteen participants in this study. After receiving approval from the district research coordinator to perform the study, to solicit participants for the study, the director of special services was contacted and then interviewed. The special education director was able to suggest schools and programs that met the research criteria. Several of the suggested schools were contacted, and finally two schools were chosen. The principals at each school were interviewed to determine which staff would appropriate. The principal gave the names of potential participants. The final participants included special education teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, and the director of special education at the district level.

Confidentiality

The participants were guaranteed confidentiality and were given a written description of the study. Each participant signed a consent form agreeing to partake in the study (Appendix B). Pseudonyms were used to guard the identity of each participant in the study.

Interview Participants:

Director of Special Services	
School A	School B
Principal	Principal
1Special Education Teachers	1Special Education Teachers
1 General Education Teacher	1 General Education Teacher
3 Special Education Paraprofessionals	3 Special Education Paraprofessionals

District Information

The district chosen for this study is in a major city in Colorado. There are 54 schools in the district: two early childhood education, twenty-nine elementary schools, three K-8 schools, seven middle schools, four comprehensive high schools, one pilot high school, one vocational/technical college, one gifted and talented K-8 school and six charter schools. Thirty-eight percent of the students are second language students. These students speak 95 different languages with 89% of this group being Spanish speakers. The percentage of students that receive free and reduced lunch is 63.4%. The district's annual budget for 2008-09 is $248 million. Seventy-six cents of every dollar from the operating budget goes directly to support the instructional program.

Colorado uses the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) to test students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 3 through 10 and in science in grades 5, 8 and 10. The CSAP is a standards-based test, which means it measures how well students are mastering specific skills defined for each grade by the state of Colorado. The goal is for all students to score at or above proficient on the test.

The district follows Colorado State guidelines for qualifying students for special education. There is a director of special education as well as an assistant director who manage all of special education programs within the district.

School A

School A has 968 students and is kindergarten through sixth grade school and offers a pre-school program for 3 and 4 year-old children. The ratio of students to

teachers is 19.5:1. The demographics of the students is as follows: White 26%, Hispanic 48%, Black 21%, Asian 5%, and American Indian 1%.

In regards to special education School A has three resource rooms each with one special education teacher and two paraprofessionals, a Gifted and Talented teacher, a Significant Limited Intellectual Capacity (SLIC) classroom with one special education teacher and three paraprofessionals, and a Severe Needs classroom that has one special education teachers and six paraprofessionals. There is also a school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, two speech paraprofessional, occupational therapist, and positive behavior coach for all students who qualify for those services.

School B

School B has 540 students and is kindergarten through fifth grade school and offers a pre-school program for 3 and 4 year-old children. The ratio of students to teachers is 18:1. The demographics of the students is as follows: White 34%, Hispanic 52%, Black 11%, Asian 3%, and American Indian less that 1%.

School B provides a curriculum that is based on district adopted curriculum materials that focus students on what they need to know based on the state standards. Each grade level participates in an anti-bullying program to ensure a safe and secure learning environment. Teachers work in grade-level teams to plan units and prepare materials that will provide students with a variety of educational experiences. Additionally, children meet with Specials Teachers for Art, Technology, Music, Library, and Physical Education.

In regards to special education School B has a resource room with one special education teacher and two paraprofessionals, a Significant Limited Intellectual Capacity

(SLIC) classroom with one special education teacher and three paraprofessionals, and Multiple Handicap classroom that has two special education teachers and six paraprofessionals. There is also a school psychologist, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, and positive behavior coach for all students who qualify for those services.

Measures

Multiple sources of data increase a study's dependability, and they also provide for analysis that involves systematic descriptive coding in order to categorize themes within the data (Chisom, 2002). To assure a comprehensive picture of the topic is being examined, adequate case study research depends on numerous sources of data. 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, as cited in Chisom, 2002). This study used multiple sources of data that include interviews, observations, and assessments of documents to study paraprofessional supervision. Each are addressed in depth in the procedure section of this chapter.

Procedures

Data Collection

The investigator is the primary agent for compiling and examining data in a qualitative study (Merriam, 1998). Yin (1994) asserted that a case study investigator must be able to operate as a senior investigator during the course of data collection. Interviews were conducted of the participants, and data was analyzed weekly throughout the research process for emerging themes.

Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) identified at least six sources of evidence in case studies. The following is not an ordered list but reflects the research of both Yin (1994) and Stake (1995): documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. An audit trail, interviews, observations, and a review documents were used in this study in order to thoroughly examine the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Audit Trail

A sequence of data was preserved by keeping a log trail so that any external observer will fully understand the inquiry's development and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. The log trail contained document hunches, thoughts, theories, and conclusions from the beginning of the process through the end, as well as provided structure to ensure the protocol was being followed. As the data were compiling, at each stage, reasons were logged regarding how the data were separated and analyzed. The log trail included reflections of any personal opinions regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals. Clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation during the study is imperative (Merriam, 1998). This allowed for personal biases to be examined and noted.

Document Review

Stake (1995) states, "gathering data by studying documents follows the same line of thinking as observing or interviewing-one needs to have one's mind organized, yet be open for unexpected clues," (p. 68). Using documentary material such as data is not much different from using interviews or observations (Merriam, 1998). Several documents were collected for this study. These included policies and procedures in the district

specific to supervising paraprofessionals, the district's policy manual, handbooks from the administration building and each school, and memos from the administration office and within each school. Documents are useful for making inferences about events. Other documents collected included school schedules, district and school demographics, mission statements of district and each school, school improvement plans, job descriptions, professional development plans, and professional development training schedules. Other documents collected included lesson plans and paraprofessional schedules (Appendix F).

Documents were coded for themes and categories derived from Pickett's (1999) model, which guided the questions of the study. The investigator must rely on skills and intuition to find and interpret data from documents (Merriam, 1998). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) recommend that the researcher ask the following questions in regards to document review: What is the history of its production and use? How is its use allocated? Is its selection biased? How might it be distorted or falsified?

Interview

Qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) stressed that the interview is the main road to multiple realities. Merriam (1998) states, "interviewing is the best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals," (p. 72). This study had thirteen participants and the interviews were an integral piece of the data collection.

Chisom (2004) stated, "as part of the procedures and protocols, I will utilize open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews with individuals in each school," (p. 59). This method was used in this study since Chisom's (2004) Interview Protocol is being

used (Appendix C). The Interview Protocol delineates the interview questions and prompts that were given to each administrator, teacher, and paraprofessional. When the teachers, administrators, and the director of special services were interviewed, the wording was slightly changed to reflect each participant's respective profession. Participants were informed of the length of each interview and reminded of anonymity.

Each interview was audio-taped in a private location within each school. It is important to audiotape, because transcripts may not express precisely what respondents mean and may arrive long after context and innuendo have slipped away (Stake, 1995). Condensed notes were taken during each interview with expanded notes written immediately following all interviews (Creswell, 1998). All interviews were transcribed, and participants received pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Direct Observation

Observations provide the researcher further understanding of the case (Stake, 1995). Observational data represents a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview (Merriam, 1998). Kiddler (1981) argues that observation is only a research tool when it (1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability.

First, informal visits to the school were completed to understand the culture. Participants were seen in their natural contexts. Light was shed on the relationships amongst staff, the school climate, and the daily operations of the school.

When the informal observations were complete, a time schedule was set with each school for the formal direct observations. These observations took place over a period of

four weeks. Days and times observations took place at each school site varied each week; however, the duration and frequency did not change. Observations were held at each school for four hours each week using the Observation Document Protocol (Appendix D). Direct observation required hours of intensive work, because the observer needed to become accepted as a natural part of the culture in order to assure that the observations were of the natural phenomenon.

Data Analysis

Essentially, analysis means taking something apart (Stake, 1995). The correct way to analyze data in qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) recommends on-going analysis to keep the data from becoming unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming. The data collection process can extend indefinitely; however, at some point, this part of the investigation must end, and intense data analysis must begin.

This descriptive case study examined how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervisory process within two public elementary schools, center-based special education programs in Colorado. The data analysis was organized, and descriptive coding was used to identify themes and categories that materialized from the data were collected. Interview transcripts, observation notes, documentary analysis data, and journal notes were read through at three times in order to become immersed in the data.

I used a template analysis approach for the all the interviews. In this approach, a set of codes is used as the starting point of the analysis (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). From the first interviews participants identified broad categories to describe effective paraprofessional supervision. These categories corresponded to existing concepts of

paraprofessional supervision created by Picket (1999) and formed a rational starting list of broad categorical codes.

I then assigned descriptive sub-codes to more specific factors in the supervision of paraprofessionals within each broad priori category. As new codes emerged I revisited previous codes to compare and contrast them, and to recode if appropriate.

Persistent ideas, inquiries, and feelings were documented in the audit trail. As these thoughts emerged, prominent categories were recognized. When the data did not belong in a certain priori, it was placed into a miscellaneous priori until there were enough to develop their own theme. A final template was developed once all themes were established (Appendix G).

Trustworthiness

Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998). Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in a qualitative paradigm. Patton (2001) argues that validity and reliability are two factors that any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results, and judging the quality of the study. There are several strategies that can increase internal validity, reliability, and external validity of qualitative data. Tactics to manage and increase credibility, transferability, and dependability follow.

To increase internal validity, researchers must ask how similar are the results with reality (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that reality is "a multiple set of mental constructions...made by humans their constructions are on their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them" (p. 225). Merriam (1998) also

argues that internal validity in all research, therefore, is contingent upon the meaning of reality. Since human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observation and interviews (Merriam, 1998). Internal validity is a strength of qualitative research when reality is viewed in this manner.

Stake (1995) stated that the protocols used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations are called triangulation. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. In case studies, this can be ensured by using multiple sources of data (Yin, 1984).

In this study, triangulation of the data was made possible by utilizing several data collection methods, including audit trail, reflective journal, interviews, long-term observations, and document review. Triangulation is defined as "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Mathison (1988) elaborates on this by saying the following:

> Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. (p. 13)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize "inquiry audit" (p. 317) as one measure that might enhance the dependability of qualitative research. An audit trail was used as my "inquiry audit." This can be used to examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Hoepfl, 1997). The consistency of data will be achieved when

the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (Campbell, 1996). This also documented any changes that occurred in the study to ensure dependability. The audit trail provided a thorough accounting of the methods and procedures followed during and after data.

Lastly, every effort was made to present the reader with sufficient accounts of the time, place, context, and culture throughout the study. 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 (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, this inquiry examines paraprofessional supervision in two elementary special education programs in order to identify, document, and assess problems and issues that supervisory role raises for both teachers and paraprofessionals. This study 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 significant documents and materials; and (d) a research journal containing document hunches, thoughts, theories, and conclusions from the beginning of the process through the end, as well as provide structure to ensure the protocol is being followed. Although it is not always the case, Pickett's (1999) framework assumes that the teachers act as supervisors to paraprofessionals. This framework was used because it emphasizes 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.

Conceptual Framework

To illustrate my findings and to help develop a thematic presentation, I used Pickett's (1999) framework presented in Chapter Two as the conceptual framework. Miles and Huberman (1994) note that, "the typical mode of displaying qualitative research has been through words in a narrative text" (Merriam, p. 233). There is not a

standard format for reporting data (Wolcott, 1990); therefore, this chapter uses a narrative text to review the data in light of Pickett's (1999) framework.

Similar to Chisom's 2002 study, each case (School A and School B) is described to set up the framework in which the data can be best understood. Second, each domain under Pickett's (1999) framework is discussed presenting a meticulous description illustrating the themes. This includes quotations from those 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). Next, interpretative commentary is presented, because it "provides a framework for understanding of general descriptions just discussed" (Merriam, 1990, p. 235). A discussion of the findings and a summary of what supervision actually looks like will conclude this chapter.

Descriptions of Schools in the Case Study

In order to understand and know which schools within the school district held the types of programs that I was looking to examine, I first met with the Director of Special Education for the school district. She gave me the names of principals at seven different elementary schools that had center-based special education programs. I contacted each principal and five responded. I then set up meetings with each of the principals separately to go over my study and to see if the teachers and paraprofessionals at each site would be interested in participating. Four of the schools agreed, however I chose the two based on having the most participants available, being the most welcoming, and gaining their trust allowed for immediate access.

Observations in both schools participating in this study occurred over a one-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.

School A

I began my observations at School A which was established in 1974. Due to rapid growth, School A has added on four portables that are used as additional classrooms. For being over thirty years old, the school was still in good shape, and the foyer was very tidy. As you walk in there were several signs ushering you into the main office where all "visitors" must go to get a name tag and sign in. There were two secretaries in the main office, the one closest to the entry said, "Hello, how may I help you?" I informed her that I was there to conduct observations in the special education program. She had me fill out a name tag and pointed me into the principal's office. The principal greeted me kindly and told me it was great to finally meet me in person. This was her first year as principal of the elementary school. She had been an assistant principal for several years at a neighboring school before being promoted as the head principal of School A. The principal and the assistant principal together complete all teacher and staff observations and evaluations, monitor the cafeteria during daily lunches, handle the school budget, deal with all student and staff issues, and attend any meeting requiring an administrator both on and off campus.

As I began the observations I spent a majority of my time in the special education classroom. I also shadowed several paraprofessionals as they assisted students with special needs in regular education classrooms. I was able to observe all of the potential interview participants at School A for some segment of their school day. This allowed me to see first-hand the interactions between the teachers and paraprofessionals. When I began to seek interview participants, all of the teachers and paraprofessionals said they would be willing. I determined my final interview participants by pulling names out of a cup. I was able to interview two teachers, and three paraprofessionals at School A.

School B

School B is much younger and much smaller than School A. When I arrived at the building the first thing I noticed was the beautiful landscaping and the newness of the entire area. The building opened its doors in 2004 after an explosive population boom in the area. To enter the building, first the secretary had to push a button to allow the door to open to let me in. Through an intercom and video camera I told her who I was and she allowed me to enter. I was very impressed at the security in the school. The principal, who has been there since the school opened, must have overheard my intercom conversation because he was waiting for me at the office door. Although security was tight at School B, after entering the building the school felt more relaxed than School A. Due to the newness of the school, it seemed to be in immaculate condition. All the paint was fresh and the carpet had minimal staining. There was an immense amount of natural light that came into the building through an overabundance of windows and sun lights. The principal gave me a brief tour, school biography, and then escorted me to the special

education classroom. Because this school is smaller, there is just one principal with no assistants.

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

Participant Characteristics

A total of thirteen participants were included in this study. At the district office I met with the Director of Special Education twice, once to get the names of schools with the programs that I was looking to examine and a second time to interview her for the study. At School A the participants included the principal, one general education teacher, one special education teacher, and three paraprofessionals. At School B the participants included the principal, one general education teacher, one special education teacher, and three paraprofessionals. As shown in Table four, participant backgrounds were varied. There were a total of ten women interviewed and three men. The special education director has been in the position for the past six years. Both of the principals interviewed for this study, one female and one male had six and seven years experience in administration respectively. Each of the teachers had between seven and fourteen years of teaching experience. Paraprofessional experience ranged between one year and eleven years. As you will read later, even with the differences, responses to interview questions were consistent.

Table 4
Participant Characteristics

Participant/Title	Gender	General Information
Director of Special Education	Female	Six years in this position, previous experience as assistant director and school principal
School A Principal	Female	6 years of administrative experience
General Education Teacher	Female	Seven years teaching experience, works three hours per day with paraprofessional
Special Education Teacher	Female	Four years teaching special education, works majority of day with paraprofessional
Paraprofessional #1	Male	Six years experience, completing special education teaching certificate
Paraprofessional #2	Female	First year, no previous experience
Paraprofessional #3	Female	Nine years experience, previous experience parenthood
School B Principal	Male	Seven years experience, previously assistant principal and teacher
General Education Teacher	Male	Thirteen years teaching elementary experience, has paraprofessional in classroom for three hours a day
Special Education Teacher	Female	Fourteen years as special

		educator, has paraprofessional in classroom for majority of the day
Paraprofessional #1	Female	Three years experience, previous experience is parenthood
Paraprofessional #2	Female	Two years experience, previous experience owned an in-home daycare
Paraprofessional #3	Female	Eleven years experience, degree in communications

Findings

The elementary school teachers in this study described struggling with regard to their roles and responsibilities in supervising paraprofessionals. Although each school was different in size and culture, the responses of participants in regards to paraprofessional supervision were similar, as shown through the quotes and vignettes within each section below. This section of this chapter addresses the research questions by presenting a description of paraprofessional supervision in elementary 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.

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; A

–Principal; and C- Director of Special Education). 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.

Planning Work Assignments

In Pickett's (1999) framework, the first essential skill for effective supervision of paraprofessionals is planning work assignments. 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). Given this understanding then, planning, which may be formal or informal, is the responsibility of the teacher but as shown in the data, must include paraprofessionals. Planning activities for teachers generally involve writing task analyses to teach students' skills, creating forms for data documentations, collecting data documentation, giving research-based instructional strategies for paraprofessionals to implement, adapting the curriculum, meeting with other service providers to help with adaptations, and documenting student needs to determine goals and objectives.

Three major themes emerged from the data about planning that occurs between teachers and paraprofessionals in elementary school classrooms. These are as follows: (a) perceptions of planning, (b) characteristics of planning and, (c) barriers to planning. These themes, including the data sources in which the information was identified during the study, are highlighted in Appendix G1.

Perceptions of Planning

Throughout the interviews and observations it became apparent that the teachers and paraprofessionals had different perceptions about what planning activities were and

the amount of time that should be devoted to planning. For example, paraprofessionals responded to questions with information about daily lesson planning and how information about plans is communicated to them. When asked to describe how teachers plan assignments with them, both teachers and paraprofessionals reported brief encounters during the day to address the immediate teaching of students. A paraprofessional from School A stated,

> If the teacher is leading an activity I simply walk around and make sure that all the students I am responsible for are okay. I don't need a lesson plan to do that, I know when a student needs help (I/P2A/3).

A similar response was given by a paraprofessional in School B,

> The teachers are too busy with paperwork to make a plan for me every day, I know where I am suppose to be and I know the students that need the most help, I don't need training for that, I am pretty perceptive and know when I am needed, (I/P2B/4)

It wasn't just the teachers and paraprofessionals, who described planning activities as daily conversations administrators also did. The school leaders confirmed that planning between paraprofessionals and teachers was focused on immediate needs of students. According to one principal,

> I frequently see the special education teacher popping into classes to make sure there is a plan for the paraprofessionals who work in regular classes. I know the teachers give the paraprofessionals as much information as possible in regards to

> their lesson plans. Sometimes, though, with students with special needs you have to be flexible and a plan can't always be followed. I know that because of the hectic schedules of the paraprofessionals there is not much time for all staff working with a particular student to get together, (I/AA/3).

When asked whether paraprofessionals are given information on student individualized education plans (IEPs) or student modifications, the same principal stated,

> I know that typically paraprofessionals are not invited to IEP meetings, so the only way they would have specific information about each student is if the special education teacher shared the information with them. Through our online IEP system each general education teacher can look up each student's disability and the accommodations that are allowed in each specific academic area (I/AA/3).

Participant responses shed light on the fact that many teachers perceived the need for planning to entail the delivery of instructional interventions in classroom. There was no mention about the potential usefulness of informing paraprofessionals how their work in the classrooms was linked to students' annual IEP goals. More specifically eleven participants, including paraprofessionals, teachers, and an administrator believed that planning consists of providing access to teacher lesson plans on a regular basis although this was done regularly. Only one participant reported actually sharing lesson plans and this was on an "as needed" basis. Four participants confirmed that paraprofessionals were given information regarding student modifications and one paraprofessional stated that they were given access to student IEP's and other confidential records.

Given their understanding and descriptions about the planning process, it is not surprising that teachers agreed; providing the assignment or the daily schedule in either a typed form or on the wipe board was sufficient for planning assignments. According to one general education teacher,

> When paraprofessionals enter my classroom they can see the daily assignment on the board, therefore I do not need to meet with them to give them the assignments. Unless it is a field trip or something that has to do with a physical accommodation for a student, I do not feel the need to meet individually with the paraprofessionals to plan, (I/GEB/2).

The interviews showed that participants have a sense of urgency in working with students act on the notion of planning as being quick and related to the immediacies of the day versus taking a broader view (i.e., having regularly scheduled time for long term student planning. Because paraprofessionals and teachers perceive they don't have enough time in their day to meet for other than just brief amounts of time, the data supported that sharing information informally was the planning strategy used most.

Responses to interview questions revealed the overlap between what participants described as planning activities and how the literature describes the supervisor's task of delegation. Again, planning refers to a designated time that the paraprofessionals and teachers meet to plan assignments for students, delegation on the other hand is the assignment of authority and responsibility from the teacher to the paraprofessional. This overlap was evident when participants were asked how teachers planned for paraprofessionals, typical

answers were: "Assignments are on the wipe board," (I/GEA/3). Teachers described the spontaneity of their communications: "Often times I catch a paraprofessional in the hall and tell them what students will need the most help that day," (I/SEA/3). Paraprofessionals confirm the regular use of this approach; "my teacher tells me periodically if any more accommodations such as shortened assignments need to take place," (I/P1A/3). The administrators also supported the finding that planning occurs in an informal manner:

> The teachers at this school do a great job at giving the paraprofessionals a heads up if anything new or different is happening at the school. Particularly fire drills, (I/AB/3).

Teachers also reported working with paraprofessionals to identify tasks that build on the paraprofessional's strengths as illustrated in this teacher's quote:

> At the beginning of the week we look at the bulletin to see if there are any special activities and I let each paraprofessional pick which student they feel comfortable taking to the certain activity (I/SEB/2).

As evidenced by the comments above, teachers often gave paraprofessionals directions or delegated tasks to them through a quick conversation. Planning in the true sense of the definition was not consistently happening at either school, if at all.

Characteristics of Planning

Participants described planning as something that occurred somewhat spontaneously during the school day, that did not consume a lot of time, but provided

critical information about students that the paraprofessionals found useful. Planning was seen as a way to address the urgency of those students' needs primarily on a daily basis. There was also some conferring between special education teachers and paraprofessionals to prepare for a longer view of the students' situations. Note that, special education is a very data driven field. Thus special education teachers probably based many of their directions to paraprofessional on the individualized education plan and also on their observations of students' daily progress towards the goals. Paraprofessionals are also responsible for collecting data on a regular basis about student progress. The need for having a way to share information was confirmed by this special education teacher who reported:

> If a particular student is on a behavior plan, I always take time weekly to look at the data the paraprofessional takes in the regular education classroom and try to brainstorm with her what we may do differently the following week to try to change the students' behavior, (I/SEA/3).

Methods of planning can be both formal and informal. Formal planning refers to a designated time that the paraprofessionals and teachers meet weekly to plan assignments for students, review IEP goals and objectives, review data collection and analyze progress, and discuss implementation of research based strategies and interventions. Informal planning has characteristics of brief conversations throughout the day between paraprofessionals and teachers regarding planning student goals and objectives, data collection, and intervention strategies.

The participants' descriptions of their experiences planning fell into the informal planning arena because there was not a designated time for communication between paraprofessionals and teachers. Instead, they spoke sporadically during the day in response to immediate needs and classroom occurrences. The nature of this planning is epitomized in this teacher's comment, "I will discuss briefly with a paraprofessional in the hallway any particular activity we are going to do that day and any accommodations that could be made," (I/GEA/2).

Informal planning was either an oral communication or involved written directions. It was not unusual for both regular and special education teachers to give paraprofessionals a quick note with a sequence of activities for that day, or a note on a particular student that explained a difficulty he or she might have. Paraprofessionals described the great a value in receiving these notes. One paraprofessional stated,

> A couple of times when a student has had difficulty at home the previous evening the teacher will write me a note to keep me informed of what is happening with the student. This also let me know how much to push the student in their regular education classes. I appreciate this type of communication because I am able to plan more effectively for the student (I/P2B/2).

Barriers to Planning

The data acquired in this study from both teachers and paraprofessionals showed that in these elementary classrooms time is a central issue. For example, having a structured time for planning work assignments that the paraprofessional will carry out does not often occur.

Planning activities are hindered by time restrictions. Most participants reported that they had no time built into their daily schedules for working together to plan for students. When asked if teachers and paraprofessionals had common planning time, responses included, "Our lunches at times overlap, and in the morning when the students are working independently I may ask a few questions about the day," (I/SEA/3). "Our schedules just don't sink up," (I/GEA/2). "Our students are so needy that there is not any down time to try to plan together," (I/P3A/2).

The only day that teachers and paraprofessionals have together to plan is a professional development day scheduled before school starts (D/A/2). Unfortunately for School A, not all paraprofessionals showed up on that day, as noted by special education teachers. Paraprofessionals are not typically included in other professional development days that occur during in the school year. Paraprofessionals in this school district are only at school when students are at school, with the exception of the first day of school. Participants noted that this one opportunity for meeting and planning was not sufficient as shown in the following quote;

> The day before the school starts as our only planning day is a joke. We are so busy setting up the classroom and making adjustments to students' schedules that we do not have time to effectively plan for even one week. (I/SEA/4).

The fact that paraprofessionals have little time to meet is not surprising given that the district paraprofessional handbook states that, "Paraprofessionals are only to be paid for the contact hours with students," (D/AB/6). This means that if paraprofessionals were

to attend meetings before or after school it would require that the district pay them overtime.

Time restrictions were evident during my observations. In both School A and School B, paraprofessionals went from classroom to classroom and to different activities within the school throughout the day. I did not see opportunities for the special education staff to meet because they were rarely in one place, at the same time. The intense and varied needs of students at both schools made it nearly impossible to find a time for everyone to gather together to develop strategies for working with students or discuss if strategies needed to be revised. Students with varying needs such as toileting, feeding, swimming, physical therapy, and special classes such as music, adapted physical education, and art spread the paraprofessionals all over each school throughout the day.

In the past, students with special needs were educated in special education classrooms and were not exposed to regular education. Gradually paraprofessionals have been placed throughout the school in all settings to assist students with disabilities who are included in general education classrooms (Chisom, 2002). The constraints related to supervision and planning were enhanced in the regular classroom.

Further special education teachers seemed to recognize the importance of planning for working with paraprofessionals more than did general education teachers, a special education noted, "I like making sure my paraprofessionals know what they need to be doing when they are in my class. I also like them know what they need to be doing when they are in the general education classes as well," (I/SE1B/2). However, one general education teacher reported, "I don't really need to plan for the paraprofessional, she comes into the class with the student and adapts all the work herself," (I/GE1B/1).

The paraprofessional confirmed the general education teacher' statement with, "I have never been given lesson plans; I walk into the room everyday and just deal with what I have been given," (I/P3B/1). Another paraprofessional responded likewise with: "Lesson plans have never been shared with me," (I/P2A/2).

Because paraprofessionals sometimes worked in the regular classroom under the direct supervision of the regular education teachers but also reported to the special education teacher presented confusion about everyone's role. Misunderstandings included questions about who decided what assignments students were supposed to complete. For example, one paraprofessional stated,

> At times I do not know who my supervisor is, especially when I am in regular classrooms. I know what is expected out of me in the special needs room, however in the regular education classroom I do not get any direction and do not know from day to day if I should be working on the assignments the special needs teacher gave me or do the work the regular education teacher passes out in class, (I/P2B/2).

Task Delegating

The second essential aspect of effective paraprofessional supervision in Pickett's (1999) framework is task delegation. The term "delegation" refers to the assignment of certain tasks to others to allow the leader or supervisor to focus on more critical tasks at hand. The context for understanding is best described by one of the special education teachers who explained:

> Each paraprofessional has a list of the goals and objectives that each student should be working on. When the paraprofessional is in the regular education class

it is the paraprofessional's responsibility to ensure that the goals are being worked on, (I/SEA/3).

The connection between the written IEP and the role of paraprofessionals in assisting students to meet their annual goals was highlighted by an administrator who also emphasized the importance of communication:

> The teachers in the school district are aware of their duties to be able to delegate tasks; whether it be through a written schedule, or through verbal instruction, paraprofessionals should be given tasks to carry out the IEP's of all the students with special needs they come into contact with, (I/C/4).

Participants however, described different scenarios that became three major themes: (a) tasks are not delegated, (b) tasks are delegated verbally and through written methods (c) tasks are delegated verbally to the paraprofessional from another paraprofessional. Appendix G2 illustrates these themes related to delegating tasks to paraprofessionals in elementary 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 other.

Tasks Are Not Delegated

Chisom (2002) noted the fact that teachers are often uncomfortable supervising paraprofessionals and, therefore, are reluctant to delegate tasks, due to the friendships and close working relationships paraprofessionals and teachers have. Similar to Chisom's findings, teachers in this study offered several reasons for being uncomfortable

delegating tasks including the type of relationship they had developed with their paraprofessional and also the amount of experience and knowledge the paraprofessional demonstrated. Many special education teachers have built and maintained relationships with the paraprofessionals that work in their classrooms and consider the paraprofessional to be their co-workers or peers; not as supervisees. As one teacher pointed out,

> We see each other every day, we work closely together for seven hours straight, and they have become my friends. It is difficult giving instruction to them because I feel they may be resentful and it would affect our personal relationship. (I/SEB/4)

The paraprofessionals confirmed teachers' feelings of awkwardness about delegating as noted in this paraprofessional's response:

> I think the teacher I work with feels bad giving me direction, she is always saying, 'do you mind...,' I want to tell her of course I don't mind because it's my job, (I/P1A/3).

Teachers, both general education and special education, acknowledged paraprofessionals' competence in the classroom saying that paraprofessionals "just know" what to do and, therefore, it was not necessary to delegate tasks to them. In contrast many paraprofessionals were uncomfortable with this perception and the resulting lack of supervision they received. This dissatisfaction is evident in the following three quotes from paraprofessionals. The quotes illustrate paraprofessional's sense of

responsibility about the students they serve and how the lack of direction diminishes their perception about the importance of their work:

> Since I have began my job at this school I have never been told if what I am doing is correct. I would like to know because I would do not want to jeopardize any student's education, (I/P2B/3).

The consequence of not having work are evident in this paraprofessional's statement, "I come in everyday and never know what the day will bring. I sometimes walk around aimlessly because I do not feel that I am needed," (I/P1A/4). Yet another paraprofessional lamented, "There are days I make things up for myself to do, such as cleaning or reorganizing because I don't know what to do," (I/P2B/3).

In contrast the administration was adamant about the importance of the delegation supervisory function as found in this quote:

> Each teacher should give each paraprofessional a schedule of where they are supposed to be and what they should be doing. This is how we run a structured, organized school that meets the needs of all students, (I/AB/4).

I noted that there seemed to be uneasiness among both special education and general education teachers when observing them and interviewing in regards to task delegation. A teacher explained her uneasiness, "I feel as though I ask so much of her, I hate asking her to do my job for me," (I/SEB/4). The paraprofessionals seemed aware of teachers' awkwardness. A paraprofessional acknowledged:

> At times I can feel the guilt in their voices when they ask me to complete a task. I want to scream at them and say 'it's my job', but I just quietly say "don't worry about it." (I/P1B/4)

The lack of formal task delegation created a stressful dynamic between teachers and paraprofessionals described in this paraprofessional's comment:, "I know she (the teacher) is busy all day, but if she just let me know what to do more often maybe I could relieve some of her business," (I/P2A/5). Administrators admitted that poor delegation skills could lead to paraprofessionals losing their respect for their immediate supervisors. According to a special education director:

> Teachers need to delegate to their paraprofessionals so that paraprofessionals understand what is expected of them. If this does not happen I have seen several paraprofessionals lose respect for their supervising teachers and therefore take control themselves, (I/C/6).

A concern I left with was that perhaps with the lack of task delegation, paraprofessionals begin to view the teacher that supervises them as being less competent.

Tasks Are Delegated Verbally and in Writing

In terms of the manner in which teachers did delegate tasks, I found the most common method was through written tasks that the paraprofessionals needed to complete. For example, when a special education teacher was asked how she delegated tasks to the paraprofessionals assigned to her classroom, she said:

> I give them a schedule every so often of where they are suppose to be and what student they are suppose to be helping so they know what they are suppose to do. (I/SEB/4)

Another teacher explained, "the activity is on the wipe-board, so they know what the assignment is," (I/GEA/3). A general education teacher expanded on this view suggesting a more in depth delegation process is needed:

> Although the paraprofessionals seemed to be informed through writing of each student's goals and objectives, the special education teacher should be monitoring their performance and giving the paraprofessionals specific tasks for each student when they are in the regular education classroom, (I/GEB/3).

The popularity of the use of various written methods of communications for delegating tasks is supported by Chisom (2002) who argues that written methods of task delegation through notes, lists, or schedules of tasks relieves teachers of the burden of finding time to meet with paraprofessionals. Written delegation also removes any social stress from interactions incurred by face-to-face communications with someone they perceive as a friend or peer versus an employee.

Another common form of delegation was through a spur-of-the-moment verbal request or directive. Given the day-to-day realities in classrooms with many students and multiple mini emergencies; communicating requests and directions often occurred on the spot in both regular and special education classrooms. For example, one special education

teacher noted, "Task delegation is in the moment. If I need something done I just ask the paraprofessional to do it," (I/SEB/4). Similarly, a general education teacher stated, "during class I will walk up to the paraprofessional and ask them to do whatever task at hand," (I/GEA/5). Paraprofessionals agreed with these perceptions: "The teacher just asks me to do something when she needs help" (I/P2B/3).

Tasks Are Delegated Verbally to Paraprofessionals from other Paraprofessionals

Although it seems to be the teacher's responsibility to delegate tasks to paraprofessionals, throughout the observations I noted on several occasions the delegating of tasks from paraprofessionals to other paraprofessionals. Sometimes this form of task delegation occurred seemly out of the teacher's sight and sometimes it occurred with teachers' blessings. One particular instance a paraprofessional walked into the special education classroom and teacher was gone at lunch. The paraprofessional who was newer to the school asked a more tenured paraprofessional about a student's schedule. The experienced paraprofessional identified the tasks the newer paraprofessional needed to perform for the rest of the day. I observed this type of situation, when the teacher was out of the classroom or when the teacher did not appear to be aware, another paraprofessional jumped in to assign tasks. When asked about the assumption of the supervisory role, the paraprofessional replied:

> I have been at this school in this classroom for years. The teachers usually ask me what to do. I usually train the new paraprofessionals and in return they turn to me to answer questions or for guidance throughout the year, (I/P3B/4).

Some teachers were very content with the paraprofessionals delegating to each other. In some instances it almost felt as though the teachers were relieved to not have to delegate. One teacher stated,

> I am not good at delegating. I have a paraprofessional that works with me who has been here for years. She knows the ins and outs of this school and every student. I feel very comfortable when she trains or delegates tasks to other paraprofessionals. It makes my job a lot easier to know I can trust someone so much, (I/SEA/5).

The data indicated that teachers were frequently 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 main method of task delegation was informal and regularly resulted from spur-of-the-moment conversation rather than from planned assignment. The data also indicated that paraprofessionals delegate tasks to other paraprofessionals.

Role Clarification

The third essential skill of supervising paraprofessionals is role clarification. According to Pickett (1997), teachers and paraprofessionals need to understand the expectations for their job performance. The roles of both paraprofessionals and teachers have evolved with an increasing number of paraprofessional now working in classrooms (Pickett). The clear delineation of job tasks and an understanding of what your job and the work of others is necessary to maximize the learning of students. Roles, therefore,

need to be discussed and clarified (Chisom, 2002). Two major themes emerged in the data regarding role clarification for teachers and paraprofessionals: (a) teachers and paraprofessionals lack a clear understanding of their roles; and (b) roles are negotiated . Appendix G3 illustrates the themes that emerged in the study related to the roles of paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers in elementary school classrooms.

Teachers and Paraprofessionals Do Not Understand Their Roles

An overwhelming majority of the participants stated that they had never seen any information that established role clarification such as job descriptions or employee handbooks. All participants were asked if they had been presented with information related to roles and, with the exception of the administrators, all said they had not. Paraprofessionals' responses showed there had not been much, if any information about their responsibilities and that at times they were not certain what they were supposed to be doing. A typical paraprofessional response was: "I was told at my interview what my responsibilities included, since then I do whatever I am asked to do within reason," (I/P1A/5). When asked if they were given any written information from the school pertaining to their work roles, one paraprofessional stated, "I have never received anything except a paycheck," (I/P2A/5). Another paraprofessional remarked, "I use to wonder if there were any written guidelines. In my interview they just asked that I was okay with changing students' diapers and I agreed," (I/P3B/5). Another paraprofessional stated, "I have always been confused over what my exact job duties are. Until there is a problem I won't ask what they are," (I/P3A/5).

Teachers concurred about the lack of information although they expressed more clarity about their own responsibilities than about those of their paraprofessionals, "as a

special education teacher you pretty much know your role. The only time I have questions are in regards to legal matters," (I/SEB/5). A general education teacher emphasized the importance of understanding paraprofessionals' work saying, "it would be nice if I had a copy of these roles so that I knew what to expect in my classroom," (I/GEB/4).

Administrators' perspectives contrasted somewhat with the other participant groups and showed some contradictions on this issue. Administrators described the importance of written materials documenting job responsibilities as shown in this principal's statement, "I do believe they have guidelines of overall job responsibilities, however it encompasses so much it would be difficult to narrow it down to one page," (I/AA/5). Another principal mused that having more information would be helpful: "I am not sure there are definite roles written anywhere, maybe there should be, that may help some of my teachers that have difficult paraprofessionals to work with," (I/AB/6).
In addition to understanding responsibilities, the need for knowing what the paraprofessional daily schedule was became apparent. For example one special education teacher stated,

> I would love to know how much time paraprofessionals are allotted for lunch and breaks. I hear different things all the time. I just listen to my paraprofessional that has been here the longest because she seems to know best, (I/SEB/6).

The lack of guidelines or descriptions seemed to make teachers' role as supervisors more complicated and less effective as shown in this special education teacher's response:

> I feel I am pretty certain with what their roles are, I just wish we would have a sit down meeting with district level officials once in awhile to go over them. I hate being the bad guy and enforcing rules that I don't even know are correct, (I/SEA/5).

The role clarification findings in this study strongly paralleled Pickett's (1999) research identifying role clarification as an essential element 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.

The data collected in this study indicated that there is little information given to paraprofessionals pertaining to their roles. However, after collecting documents from the district office, as well as interviewing the director of special education, I found that one type of written role clarification does exist. This is the paraprofessional handbook which delineates paraprofessional's roles and responsibilities (D/C/1). The handbook provides a definition of a paraprofessional, gives a range of roles and responsibilities, and briefly explains special education law including the IEP (Individual Education Plan), FAPE (Free and Appropriate Education), and LRE (Least Restrictive Environment). The handbook also explains confidentiality matters, blood-born pathogens, sexual harassment, and contact hours including breaks and overtime. Only two of the six paraprofessionals interviewed for this study were aware of the handbook and only one of the schools had

the handbook on site. The contradictions in responses about having written job descriptions and the existence of the handbook was partially explained by an administrator who shared that the combination of a printed handbook shortage and the evolving nature of the paraprofessional role had been a problem:

> The paraprofessional handbook should be given to all paraprofessionals; however there may have been a time period when we were short of handbooks because we were re-defining our roles for paraprofessionals. Each special education teacher should have a copy of the new paraprofessional handbook and they should share it with their assigned paraprofessionals, (I/C/2).

Clearly the need for some formal method of conveying job information is needed for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. The use of the handbooks may increase knowledge and help avoid confusion but there may also be some real limitations to their use including the daily situations that teacher and paraprofessionals faced that are too unique and numerous to address is a handbook.

Role Negotiation

In lieu of defined, written job roles, all of the teachers interviewed stated that they created informal methods to help clarify roles. Some strategies involved writing lists and others were part of teachers' and paraprofessionals' daily, hurried, conversations. For example, one teacher explained:

> I have a list of the duties that need to be done during the week and each paraprofessional is assigned a couple of them. Occasionally they will rotate. I

> really don't have to make the list anymore because they all know what duties they need to perform, (I/SEB/6).

The data also indicated that another way that roles are identified is through open discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals as found in the following quotes. These interactions seem to happen on an ongoing basis through-out the year depending on the teacher and the needs of the students. The informal nature of these conversations is shown in this paraprofessional's description: "we try to meet once in awhile to discuss anything new or any student happenings" (I/P2B/6). A regular education teacher described a more formal process of negotiation as occurring at the beginning of the paraprofessional's tenure in her class:

> When a student with special needs has a paraprofessional and is assigned to my class for socialization purposes, I try to meet with that paraprofessional at some point in the beginning of the year to let them know how I run my class, (I/GEB/6).

Similarly, a special education teacher reported,

> I try to at the least meet at the beginning of every semester to go over any new roles. If something comes up between semesters then it's a spur of the moment discussion, (I/SEB/5).

The importance of informal negotiation strategies was recognized by administrators. According to the special education director,

> I would encourage all special education teachers and the regular education teachers who work with students with special needs to have open discussions daily in regards to what they see the paraprofessionals roles are. Since flexibility is key to being in special education, I would hope that all paraprofessionals are aware that their roles may change over a course of a year, (I/C/8).

Principals also had a similar message about the need for daily negotiations as shown in this response:

> I hope that teachers are able to give instructions daily to their paraprofessionals. I know that in interviews with paraprofessionals I always state that roles may change, (I/AB/6).

In looking at the responses, role clarification involved two aspects, an overarching understanding of one's job, particularly in relation to others with whom you work to teach students. Secondly, role clarity is intertwined with the daily operations of the classroom. In regards to the first aspect of role clarification, all participants appeared to be confused about what the parameters of the paraprofessional's job entailed and even about the job basic structure (i.e., lunch hours, breaks). The confusion is a roadblock to both the special education and regular education teachers' responsibilities for supervision. However, on an informal basis, teachers and paraprofessionals do communicate about the paraprofessionals' daily expectations on the job. More specifically, the data showed that daily discussions were the primary and effective

method of identifying tasks that had to be completed in the short-term—typically on a daily basis. There are also discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals at the beginning of the semester to provide guidance about the nature of work in the classroom. These discussions are practical and can be on-going as roles evolve or situations occurring in the classroom warrant changes during the school year (Chisom, 2002).

It did not appear that either special education teachers or regular education teachers ever received any formal training on supervising paraprofessionals in regards to role clarification. Respondents reported that the district does not offer any such training. Milner (1998) supports the data in this study that general education teachers are often not sure what paraprofessionals should be doing in their classrooms. This clearly suggests that training regarding the roles of both the paraprofessionals and supervising teachers should be provided. The data also indicated that the inability of supervising teachers to clarify roles for paraprofessionals caused some paraprofessionals to determine their own roles in the classroom. This can lead to paraprofessional not performing their tasks correctly, because their performance is simply a judgment call based on their individual perspectives (Chisom, 2002). Chisom (2002) also notes that this situation could impact students in a negative manner, depending on how paraprofessionals determine their role. Another problem this leads to is that because the teachers do not know the paraprofessionals' role, they most likely allow the paraprofessional the independence to complete tasks as they, the paraprofessionals, see fit.

The data indicated that roles were not clear to teachers and paraprofessionals. Although written methods of role clarification included in-service 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

The fourth essential skill of supervising paraprofessionals is monitoring performance, which includes both evaluation and feedback. Performance monitoring of paraprofessionals is vital to the academic and developmental progress of students with disabilities. Consistent daily feedback to paraprofessionals about their performance, as well as yearly formal evaluations, is crucial to the implementation of the IEP. 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). Daily feedback is often informal, however yearly evaluations follow a set rubric that is aligned with performance standards. In this section, participant responses revolve more around the daily performance monitoring, not the formal evaluation process.

Three major themes emerged in the data regarding the daily performance monitoring of paraprofessionals. These include the following: (a) how monitoring occurs (b) feedback and (c) the formal evaluation process. Appendix G4 illustrates the themes that emerged regarding daily performance monitoring.

How Monitoring Occurs

Paraprofessionals and teachers in both schools answered questions similarly regarding monitoring performance reporting the informal and reciprocal nature of their interactions. Performance monitoring was usually restricted to short, informal

discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals that occur seemingly naturally as paraprofessionals perform their jobs. For instance paraprofessionals described the monitoring of their performance as being directly related to the job: "she lets me know if there is something I have done that I could have done differently," (I/P2B/6). Paraprofessionals identified their comfort level with asking for feedback as shown in this representative quote: "I ask him if he needs me to do anything differently," (I/P3A/5). A general education teacher confirmed paraprofessionals perceptions about the monitoring process, "if I see that they are doing something that I do not think is appropriate I will let them know and show them what I need them to do," (I/GEB/7).

Administrators' responses also characterized the informal but helpful nature of teachers' supervisory task of monitoring paraprofessionals. According to a principal "I see the teachers telling paraprofessionals if what they are doing is proper," (I/AA/6). Another principal shared that performance monitoring happens most frequently in "spur of the moment discussions," (I/AB/8). The special education director added, "there does seem to be confusion surrounding performance monitoring. We encourage all staff to have open communication and give feedback daily," (I/C/7).

The informal nature of the monitoring process did present some problems including the fact that feedback provided publically was a problem. For example, one paraprofessional relayed her discomfort with informal discussions as a mode of performance monitoring saying,

> I don't mind if a teacher tells me what to do, but I do not like it when I am scolded in front of an entire class full of students. It makes me feel like an

idiot. I am sure the teacher could pull me aside and tell me after class, it's not like I am harming the student if it waits, (I/P1B/6).

Teachers were aware of the concern but did not have a strategy for addressing it. When asked about this a teacher noted, "I try to be discrete if it is something that I do not find appropriate. But sometimes it is difficult with all the little eyes and ears around," (I/GEB/7).

The main way paraprofessional's performance is monitored is through observational data. According to a special education teacher , "It's not like I fill out any forms daily on each paraprofessionals performance, but I have enough information stored in my head through observing them on a daily basis to conduct their annual evaluation," (I/SEB/6). A paraprofessional replied similarly, "I think the only way they really monitor our performance is through day to day observations" (I/P3A/7).

The director of special education agreed that the only performance monitoring that occurs is through direct observation. She stated, "there really is no formula or rubric to monitor paraprofessional by because all of their duties are different. The teachers are responsible for observing the paraprofessionals and commenting on their performance," (I/C/9).

This data indicates that informal observations were the most common means of monitoring a paraprofessional's performance. This can be very time consuming for teachers who are responsible for monitoring the performance of paraprofessionals who are not always placed in their classrooms. Monitoring requires a level of multi-tasking by special education teachers to be responsible for what is happening in their own

classrooms as well as be responsible for monitoring the performance of paraprofessionals that are in other classrooms. A related topic that continues to emerge in this study is that teachers and paraprofessionals do not know or understand their individual roles. Teachers may not even realize they bear the responsibility of monitoring a paraprofessional's daily performance (Chisom, 2002).

Overall, the interviews indicated that most paraprofessionals did not have an understanding of or much experience with being monitored. The confusion is not just on how paraprofessionals are monitored, it is also on who monitors them. According to a paraprofessional, "I think the principal is responsible for monitoring me, however I have never seen her observe me," (I/P3A/7). Another paraprofessional stated:

> I am not sure if I am monitored. I know that when I am in the special education class the teacher will give me directives occasionally, however in the general education classes I am left on my own and I have never seen anyone really monitor me," (I/P2B/6).

When a teacher was asked who monitors the paraprofessionals when they are outside her classroom she stated, "I think the general education teacher. I know that if there are any concerns the general education teacher will talk to me about it," (I/SEB/7). A general education teacher stated the opposite, "what I learned in graduate school is that the special education teacher is responsible for popping in and monitoring the paraprofessionals she supervises. I don't have time for that," (I/GEB/6).

Participants' responses indicated that they were unsure of who was responsible for monitoring as paraprofessionals traveled from special education classrooms to general education classrooms. Guidelines would help alleviate confusion and may help create more informed paraprofessionals as well.

Feedback

Feedback is essential to the monitoring process because it ensures teachers are aware of paraprofessional actions and it allows paraprofessionals to understand what it is they need to be doing in order to be effective. Feedback also affirms accountability. Paraprofessionals' responses to questions about feedback on their performance, provided information about the range of conversational feedback occurring between teachers and paraprofessionals, and empathized how feedback lops are initiated. Feedback was multidimensional. Teachers could offer positive feedback; feedback could be in response to paraprofessionals' questions; and feedback, similar to task delegation, could provide guidance for solving an immediate situation. By and large, however feedback was a reciprocal activity and this give and take was one of the criteria I used to separate the tasks of feedback from that of delegation.

The positive aspect of feedback was best described in this paraprofessional's comment, "she tells me all the time thank you and that she is grateful for my help. She also let me know if there is something that I should be doing differently," (I/P1A/6). Further, my observations confirmed reciprocal nature of the interactions. A typical example of feedback was found in this participants description, a paraprofessional asked, "is this the way you would like me to set up the table?" and the teacher stated, "yes, that looks great, you read my mind," (O/A/22).

Participant responses reflected that paraprofessionals are often the ones to initiate feedback from teachers. For instance, when asked how she knew if she was performing appropriately, one paraprofessional stated, "I usually ask teachers if I need to know if I am doing something right," (I/P2A/7). A common feeling among all of the paraprofessionals in this study was that they would like more feedback without having to initiate it. For instance, a paraprofessional reported "I just ask the teacher if what I am doing is okay, it would be nice to get more clarification though," (I/P1B/6). Another paraprofessional stated, "I just figure if they have a problem they would tell me, sure I wish she would tell me more, but I know she is busy," (I/P1A/7).

Teachers confirmed this feedback loop. When asked how the paraprofessional in her classroom knew if she was doing a task correctly, a teacher replied, "They will just ask," (I/SEB/6). Another teacher commented, "I try to let them know, but most have been working with me for awhile and they just know," (I/SEA/7). These teachers did not seem to realize that they should be taking the time to monitor the performance of their paraprofessionals and offering them encouragement in the form of praise and constructive criticism.

The Formal Evaluation Process

Although monitoring feedback and evaluation rely on observation, evaluation involves a written report, whereas the other tasks call for formal or informal conferring between teachers and paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002). Every paraprofessional who participated in this study is formally evaluated annually. The paraprofessional standard evaluation forms consist of seven sections: (1) Quality/Quantity of work; (2) Work habits; (3) Work relationships; (4) Work Commitments; (5) Student Interaction; (6)

Communication Skills; and (7) Overall performance. Several paraprofessionals and teachers expressed concerned over the evaluation process during the interviews. Paraprofessionals were unclear about the evaluation process and the standard to which they were being held and teachers were surprised about paraprofessional's lack of knowledge. For example, one paraprofessional conveyed her uncertainty by stating,

> I didn't even know I was formally evaluated. I suppose in every job there is some sort of evaluation process, but they [the school] was so desperate to hire anyone to do this job I guess I didn't realize that I was being formally evaluated," (I/P2B/7).

Another paraprofessional replied similarly, "It would be nice to see a copy of the evaluation form in the beginning of the year so I know exactly what I need to work on, (I/P1B/6).

Teachers were also concerned about the lack of knowledge paraprofessionals have about their evaluations. One teacher stated:

> At the end of last year I told all the staff that I needed to set up times for their evaluations and one of them looked at me stunned. She had no idea that we had a formal process, (I/SEB/8).

When probed about who she thinks is responsible for making paraprofessionals aware that they are formally evaluated each year she replied,

> I suppose I am. But you would think they would be given a handbook that had all of the information in it. I just assumed each paraprofessional knew that they were formally evaluated, (I/SEB/8).

This theme, like the others related to performance monitoring and evaluation, have in common the issue of communication, or the lack there of. If there was more open communication throughout the year, paraprofessional would know they are evaluated formally annually and what it looks like. They would also understand their roles, tasks, and more planning would take place. Communication is critical when supervising paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002).

The data indicated that teachers often considered praise or redirection as an acceptable method of monitoring the performance of a paraprofessional. As a result, many paraprofessionals perceived that they were not monitored at all by teachers or were evaluated 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

The final essential skill of Picket's (1999) framework on supervising paraprofessionals is systematic on-the-job training and mentoring. 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 (Chisom, 2002). Another term commonly used for training is professional development. Training is essential for paraprofessionals so that they can implement IEP goals and objectives and assist student progress. Training or professional development for paraprofessionals may include topics such as introduction to special education, overview of types of disabilities, positive behavior strategies, understanding and implementing the IEP, and various research-based instructional interventions in academic areas.

On- the- job training also coincides with mentoring. It is critical to have both elements when supervising paraprofessionals. Mentoring refers to a developmental relationship through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information, and perspective to encourage the personal and professional growth of someone else (Floyd, 2004). Mentoring helps build the relationship between the paraprofessional and the teacher. It also provides support for paraprofessionals and can supply the resources they need to carry out their job duties. Mentoring enhances the classroom dynamic.

The data revealed three major themes regarding on-the-job training and mentoring related to paraprofessionals and their supervision in elementary school classrooms. These include the following: (a) paraprofessional training and, (b) teacher preparation. Appendix G5 illustrates the themes that emerged from the data.

Paraprofessional Training

The majority of paraprofessionals enter the profession with absolutely no training (Pickett, 1997). Paraprofessionals in this study described their experiences in receiving training relevant to their jobs as being nonexistent. For example, when asked if teachers provided any training, one paraprofessional stated, "I haven't been given any training. I feel everything I do is trial and error," (I/P3B/7). Paraprofessionals did perceive a need for training as found in this response:

> I asked in my interview if I would be given any training because I was not knowledgeable at all about kids with special needs. I was assured I would be trained on the job, however I have yet to be trained in anything," (I/P2A/7).

Another paraprofessional noted,

> I run around like a chicken with its head cut off. I never know if what I am doing is correct. I wasn't sure how long I would last at this job in the beginning, but I feel a little more comfortable now, (I/P1A/8).

Because most paraprofessional positions are hard to fill (French, 1997), most paraprofessionals go into the field working with students with the most challenging needs with the least amount of training. It is very important these paraprofessional feel supported and trained to decrease staff turnover and to increase student performance and paraprofessional confidence.

When the paraprofessionals were asked if they knew if any professional development training opportunities existed, they all expressed that they did not know if any trainings were available to them. A paraprofessional stated,

> "I have never been asked to attend training. The only thing required is First Aid and CPR, but really unless a student is hurt that has nothing to do with my job on a daily basis," (I/P2A/7).

Another paraprofessional responded similarly,

> I know that there are trainings occasionally on professional development days for teachers, however we are not paid for professional development days so I would assume they are not available to us [paraprofessionals], unless we wanted to come in on our day off and not be paid, (I/P3B/8).

One paraprofessional appeared fairly frustrated by the situation,

> It is upsetting when I am the least trained and I am working with the students directly and for the most amount of time. I often think about looking for another job, but in this economy and with the lack of skills I have, this really is all I have to pay the bills. Plus, I like the people I work with, (I/P1A/7).

Teachers also were unaware of training opportunities for paraprofessionals. A special education teacher reported:

> I use to work for a district that provided a three day training at the beginning of the school year for paraprofessionals. They were given a quick overview of special education law, different disorders and research based interventions to help, and positive behavior support. The paraprofessionals felt valued. In this district I have not seen anything like this. They receive nothing. Maybe it is because of budget constraints, but I have never seen any flyer or mention of training for them, (I/SEA/9).

The special education director confirmed that there is a lack of professional development opportunities and explained the reason why:

> We do need to work on offering more professional development for paraprofessionals, however it is difficult with budget cuts and with amount of paraprofessionals we have. If all paraprofessionals were offered training on the same day this would cause many problems for substitutes, the students they work

with, and with payroll. We need to really look at some way to create more training opportunities to paraprofessionals, (I/C/11).

By not having information or training opportunities available, teachers, perhaps unwittingly, increase their supervising responsibilities (Chisom, 2002). Research documents the importance of on-the-job training and mentoring for paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002; D'Aquanni, 1997; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Mueller, 1997). It is vital that these opportunities are readily available to paraprofessionals and that everyone knows where they can seek the information for participation in the trainings.

If there was any training provided at all, the data indicated that it was entirely informal. According to a paraprofessional: "the district uses a certain curriculum for students with autism. The teacher and speech and language therapist showed me how it is implemented and what I need to do," (I/P1B/8). Another paraprofessional confirmed this statement by replying, "if there is a certain curriculum that a student is using the teacher or another paraprofessional who knows the curriculum well has showed me how to implement it," (I/P3A7/).

Teachers agreed with the paraprofessional's sentiments surrounding on the job training, however they seemed confused as to what it meant to act as a mentor. For example, a special education teacher stated,

> All of the training the paraprofessionals receive is on the job. It's usually spur of the moment when I ask them to do something and I realize they have never performed that task before so I have to show them how to do it. I guess I would call that mentoring as well, (I/SEA/9).

Another general education teacher responded,

> I am not sure what you mean by mentoring. I usually mentor younger teachers who are just entering the field. I assume more tenure paraprofessionals would mentor the newer paraprofessionals, (I/GEA/8).

Teachers Preparation

Evident in the responses was the fact that teachers themselves need to be taught about how to train and mentor paraprofessionals but that support for this training is constrained by budgetary priorities. According to one administrator,

> We are lucky that in this area we have a couple experts in the field of supervising paraprofessionals. We need to get our teachers to these clinics so they can learn how to effectively supervise paraprofessionals. We use to do this in the past, but the past few years we have cut back on the amount of trainings we approve at the district's expense, (I/C/11).

The issues of teacher training go beyond delivery of ongoing professional development opportunities provided by the district. Teachers also spoke about the fact that teacher preparation programs at the college level do not provide enough coursework or trainings in how to effectively supervise and train paraprofessionals. As noted by a special education teacher,

> I never took one class during my teacher preparation program that prepared me to supervise or be more of a business manager. I wish they would because this seems to be the largest part of my job, (I/SEB/9).

Another teacher agreed that she had not been prepared during her pre-service training program, "I have never been trained in how to supervise paraprofessionals," (I/SEA/7). General education teachers experienced an even great disconnect regarding their role as a supervisor as found in this teacher's response:

> Because I went to school so long ago I couldn't tell you if I had a supervision course, however I never even thought that a paraprofessional would be in my classroom. When I started teaching we didn't have those [paraprofessionals], (I/GEA/9).

Although formal training is very effective, it is important to not forget the value of on-the-job training, modeling, mentoring, 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 (Chisom, 2002).

The data indicated that training for paraprofessionals was minimal, and usually took the form of hands-on or on-the-job training opportunities. Some in-services were available in this district to assist paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers, however they are typically after hours and not paid. A major theme in the data was that teachers were also in need of training regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this case study was to examine how teachers in elementary 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. A discussion of the findings is offered in this section. First there is an explanation of the purpose for the study and then highlights the findings as they relate to each element of Pickett's (1999) framework.

A model illustrating the supervisory elements that make up the framework for this study is illustrated in Chapter Three (Figure 1, p.35). Figure 2 offers a more in depth depiction of this case with descriptions of how these supervisory elements are addressed in the two elementary schools that participated in this study. Figure 2 represents the descriptions from participants. Responses from the schools are combined into one "case" because there were no discernable differences in accounts across schools.

One of the most significant findings through the data was the confusion and lack of understanding of roles. Clearly paraprofessionals were not clear about what their jobs entailed, and neither were their supervisors, special education and general education teachers. No one could clearly describe paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities. What is at risk with an ambiguous understanding about paraprofessionals is teachers' ability to completely perform supervision tasks as defined by Pickett (1999). Each element of Picket's (1999) framework overlap, and if the roles are uncertain it is nearly impossible then to carry out the rest of the essential skills necessary for supervising paraprofessionals. For example, how can you evaluate someone when you are not sure about what they should do?

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

The findings indicate that time constraints significantly limit allocating time for planning between teachers and paraprofessionals in elementary schools. Therefore, teachers chose to share information as needed with paraprofessionals as a replacement for outlining a daily plan and explaining what needs to be accomplished throughout the day. The data also indicates that paraprofessionals initiate formal and informal planning opportunities with the teachers that supervise them. Preferably, 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 (Chisom, 2002). The data also show that teachers repeatedly confuse planning with task delegation. Planning refers to reciprocated conversations; however the data showed that teachers believe they are planning when they are simply delegating a task. Another finding is that teachers are uncomfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals. If delegation takes place it is often spur of the moment and transpires through natural conversations and requests that are made verbally. Therefore if teachers are not clear about what needs to occur in the class, paraprofessionals are inclined to feel they "just know" what to do, which may not always be correct. Paraprofessionals also take it upon themselves to delegate tasks to other paraprofessionals when adequate task delegation from teachers does not occur. To maximize the use of paraprofessionals and ensure student success, teachers must delegate tasks appropriately to paraprofessionals.

Formal training opportunities must occur with both paraprofessionals and teachers are present to ensure they are hearing the same messages. If the roles are uncertain, paraprofessionals may establish their own roles, which could create friction, stress, and inconsistency within the team.

Teachers need to be trained in communicating more appropriately in order to monitor performance. Teachers need to be able to give constructive feedback to paraprofessionals regarding their job performance. Paraprofessionals request information and feedback from their supervising teachers when they are not monitored. If any monitoring takes place, it is most often informally through observation. The amount of formal and informal trainings for paraprofessionals is sparse. This has two main reasons, first there are time constraints during the school day, and secondly there are budget constraints. In order to create the most effective paraprofessional and teacher teams as well as limit confusion, it is extremely important that paraprofessionals and teachers together attend trainings.

Overall there were many common themes in each essential element of the framework that was investigated in this study. These include the need for role clarification, increased communication, time constraints, and the lack of training for both paraprofessionals and teachers.

What Supervision Actually Looks Like

The supervision of paraprofessionals in two elementary schools in Colorado actually consists of spur of the moment task delegation, which is misconstrued as planning. It also consists of limited performance monitoring, which consists of observations or paraprofessionals initiating feedback from teachers in regards to a task. On the job training for paraprofessionals is absent as well as formal training opportunities. What is clearly absent is the understanding of roles. If roles are not clear, then the remaining elements of Pickett's (1999) framework cannot be completely

effective. Figure 3 offers a description of what supervision of paraprofessionals looks like based on participant perceptions.

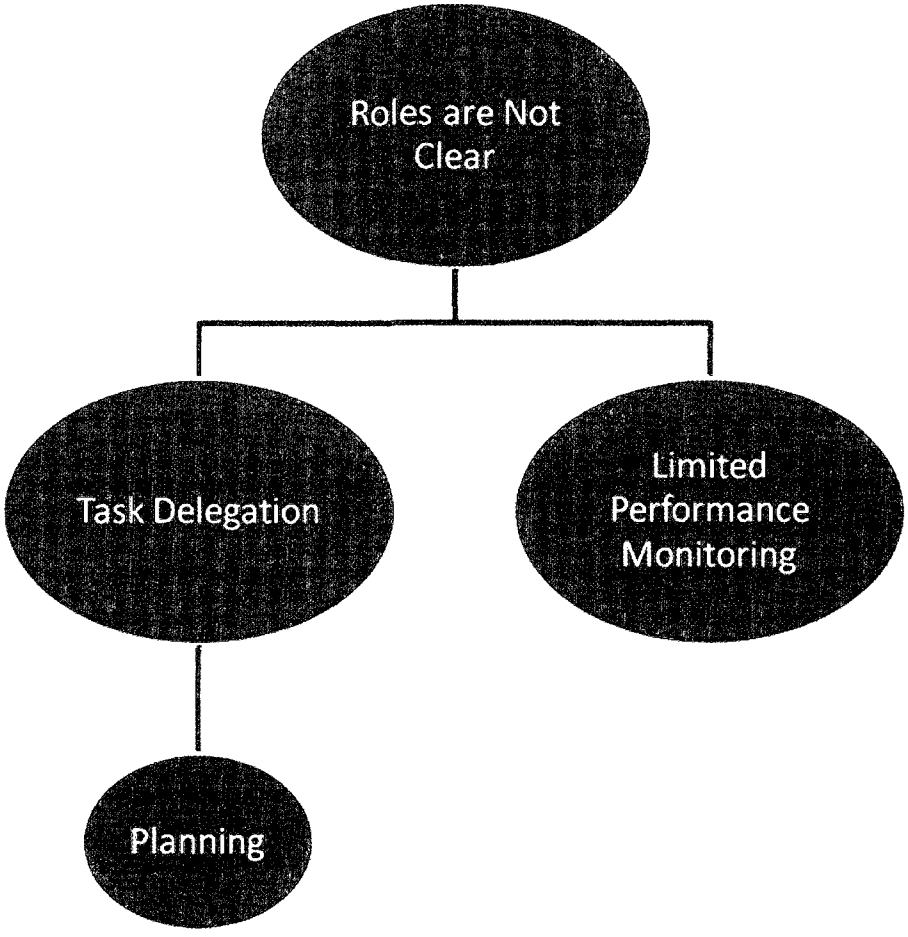


Figure 3. Actual case study themes based on Pickett's (1999) framework surrounding effective paraprofessional supervision.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions, Discussion, and Recommendations

This inquiry examined paraprofessional supervision in two elementary special education programs in order to identify, document, and assess problems and issues that the supervisory role raises for both teachers and paraprofessionals. Questions used in the case study were fashioned from Pickett's (1999) framework that looks at planning work assignments, task delegating, role clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and systematic on-the-job training and mentoring.

The literature review indicated that there has been research concerning paraprofessionals, however it is limited in regards to the supervision of paraprofessionals. The results of this study support and add to the findings in the literature review. In this chapter conclusions are drawn from the data, recommendations for practice will be given, legal implications will be discussed, and recommendations for future research will be given.

Conclusions

The data for this study was acquired through observations, interviews, and a document analysis in two elementary school special education programs in Colorado. The results of this study support the findings of previous studies that are discussed in the literature review. The subsequent conclusions emphasize the need for effective supervision of paraprofessionals based on Pickett (1999) standards for what effective supervision of paraprofessionals should entail. These standards include planning, task delegating, role clarifying, performance monitoring, and on-the-job training and mentoring.

Ultimately the data concluded that both schools did not fully address the practices described under each area of Pickett's (1999) framework and that many of these practices overlapped or were intricately linked. From my analysis I arrived at three major conclusions; a) teachers do not receive much, if any, supervisory training; b) confusion exists among educators at every level about working with paraprofessionals; c) there are systemic issues related to the effective supervision of paraprofessional. I end this section with a description of how the supervision of paraprofessionals occurs based upon the information obtained from the two elementary schools involved in this research study.

Supervisory Training for Teachers

Throughout the interviews teachers echoed that they lacked the training necessary to effectively supervise paraprofessionals. In fact, not one of the teachers interviewed for this study received training in the area of supervision of paraprofessional during their college teacher preparation programs. The teachers had limited mentoring and professional development opportunities in regards to the supervision of paraprofessionals. Since teachers training is limited in how to delegate tasks or plan for paraprofessionals, they were often confused about what to do with the paraprofessionals. Most were not clear about what roles paraprofessionals play and how to guide and monitor those roles. It can be argued that ultimately these gaps in information could lead to a lower quality service delivery system for students and their families. These findings suggest that college preparatory programs should offer content on the topic of supervision including information about the roles of teachers and paraprofessionals, collaboration strategies, and key aspects of supervision. These findings provide the basis for the argument that districts provide trainings and staff development opportunities for teachers who supervise

paraprofessionals so that teachers can learn what is expected of them as supervisors. Teachers could also benefit from receiving on-the-job mentorship from veteran teachers to help support their understanding of supervision of paraprofessionals.

Confusion

The observations and interviews of all participants indicated that there was a significant amount of confusion surrounding the supervision of paraprofessionals. At every level, including administration, there was confusion about roles, planning, task delegation, and performance monitoring. This was especially true when paraprofessionals were assigned to general education classrooms. The paraprofessionals, general education teachers, and special education teachers expressed ambiguity about who was delegating and monitoring the paraprofessionals while they assisted students in the general education setting. Clearly there is a need for collaboration meetings with general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals to increase communication and ensure student's needs are being met.

The confusion between delegating and planning was extremely evident. Teachers and paraprofessionals frequently interpreted task delegation as a mutual exchange replacing planning. This argues the need for the clarification of planning. This also argues the need for special education directors at the district level to inform school principals of the roles of paraprofessionals, to clarify who is responsible for their supervision, and to monitor and encourage effective planning between teachers and paraprofessionals.

Systemic Hindrances

District policies can hinder effective supervision of paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals are only paid and expected to be present the hours that students attend school. This means that paraprofessional arrive when students arrive and leave when students leave even if it is an early release day for the rest of the staff to attend trainings. The presence of paraprofessionals only when they are working direct with students creates a situation where there are limited opportunities for performing the tasks Pickett describes including most, importantly planning with teachers. There is no incentive for them to come before or after school to be trained or to meet for planning time because they are not paid for that time.

With limited opportunities for mutual planning between teachers and paraprofessionals, paraprofessionals have developed strategies for performing their daily duties. Examples include paraprofessionals asking teachers or other paraprofessionals what is expected of them, paraprofessionals taking it upon themselves to decipher appropriate instruction strategies, and paraprofessionals initiating or requesting feedback. This argues the need for administrators to make certain sufficient time is built into the school day for teachers and paraprofessionals to train and plan together. If both teachers and paraprofessionals are to be supported in performing their job well, districts should prioritize offering collaborative training and planning opportunities between paraprofessionals and teachers despite the cost. Planning is essential to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process. The current policy also limits the amount of training paraprofessionals can receive because they are not eligible for compensation or training on professional development days.

The Reality of Supervision

All of Pickett's (1999) elements for effective supervision are linked, and if one is not fully understood the others suffer. The one prominent element that affects the other elements is role clarification. If roles are not fully understood then task delegation, planning, performance monitoring, and feedback cannot be implemented properly or entirely effective. The reality of the supervision of paraprofessionals in the two elementary schools used for this study is that it is a complicated shared responsibility by both special education teachers and regular education teachers. The findings indicate that overall supervision is spur of the moment and informal.

A question that arose is does the reality of supervision work? Obviously the schools are able to get by with the limited supervision of paraprofessionals; however the current system does not maximize the learning and outcomes for students with disabilities. It was apparent there was also frustration amongst the participants. If all aspects of Pickett's (1999) model were implemented, it may alleviate frustration and maximize the learning of all students'.

Recommendations for Practice

Several recommendations can be made from this study that would ensure effective paraprofessional supervision.

1. Colleges should require students enrolled in teacher preparatory programs to take a seminar class on the definition, role, collaboration, and supervision of paraprofessionals. This seminar or course should define and give strategies for each of Picket's (1999) standards for effective paraprofessional supervision.

2. Districts need to provide mandatory trainings for teachers who supervise paraprofessionals so that teachers can learn what is expected of them as supervisors. This training should define and give strategies for each of Picket's (1999) standards for effective paraprofessional supervision.
3. Teachers should receive on-the-job mentorship from veteran teachers to help support their understanding of supervision of paraprofessionals.
4. Administrators need to mandate collaboration meetings amongst general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals to increase communication and ensure student's needs are being met.
5. Special education directors at the district level must inform school principals of the roles of paraprofessionals, clarify who is responsible for their supervision, and encourage principals to monitor effective planning between teachers and paraprofessionals.
6. Teachers and paraprofessionals need to know who is responsible for supervising and evaluating paraprofessionals in their school and district. Also, specific job and role descriptions are vital for both teachers and paraprofessionals.
7. Administrators need to make certain sufficient time is built into the school day for teachers and paraprofessionals to train and plan together.
8. Districts need to place a higher value on collaborative training and planning opportunities between paraprofessionals and teachers despite the cost.
9. Performance monitoring needs to be formalized for teachers who are responsible for the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Legal Implications and Competing Interests

There are several federal laws that impact service delivery for students with disabilities. The reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004 and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Amendment 2001, also known as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, addressed paraprofessional employment, preparation and supervision.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 looks at standards and assessments and focuses on accountability by requiring all schools to make adequate yearly progress toward specific goals. Within NCLB minimum qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals are included. Paraprofessional are to have "high qualifications." Each state can interpret "high qualifications," however the data shows that several paraprofessionals have never received any training. "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" (Cowan, Manasevit, & Brustein 2002, p. xvi). Paraprofessionals who were already employed at the time of the signing of the law had to have met these requirements by 2006.

This law also does not allow teachers to assign paraprofessionals to give direct instruction to paraprofessionals unless they are under the direct supervision of the teacher. Direct supervision, however, is not clearly defined which allows districts to interpret. Administrators at of each school that receives Title I funds is required to present in writing, on an annual basis, the school's compliance with this law. It is

pertinent due to these regulations that paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators receive collaborative training.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

The rights students with special needs have under Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act 2004 (IDEIA) could be marginalized when their specific Individual Education Plan's (IEP) are not known by all staff. It is also important to note the a range of ideas school staff had about planning for paraprofessionals, several participants indicated that because paraprofessionals just "know" what to do, planning is unnecessary.

These contradictory positions greatly impact the planning between teacher and paraprofessional, and could do so in a negative way. "Just knowing," is not the right way to implement the goals and objectives of students with special needs and does not follow guidelines under Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE). Paraprofessionals need to understand interventions for each goal and objective and the only way to know how to implement the interventions is through planning.

Competing Interests

Elementary schools, as well as school districts as a whole, have critical issues they face daily. Many of these issues are essential to maximizing the learning of all students. Students with special needs, who are on Individual Education Plans (IEP's), whom paraprofessionals work with, only represent ten to twenty percent of the total student population in school districts. A greater emphasis may be placed on the education of the other eighty to ninety percent of students. There are several competing interests that are critical in schools today which are included in the following section.

As mentioned before, No Child Left Behind requires that all schools are on-target for teaching students standards, each state sets specific benchmark goals for the percentage of students in each school that are expected to demonstrate proficiency on state tests in language arts and math. In order to tell whether schools and districts are on-track to meet that goal, each state sets benchmark goals to measure whether schools and districts are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward teaching all students what they need to know. A state could jeopardize federal funding for its schools if it categorically rejects the goals embodied in NCLB by refusing to implement a system of standards, assessments, and accountability (NCLB, 2001). Administrators and district officials place high priority on implementing a system of standards because if AYP is not met then schools are placed on improvement plans.

The high demands of AYP impact the education school day by putting a high emphasis on literacy and math instruction. The school day is already compact because of the stress of core academics, physical education, technology, library, art, music, and recess breaks. Some schools have cut back to one recess a day to have sufficient time for all of the aforementioned subjects. Teachers are obligated to not just teach and plan for these core subjects, but they also are required to fulfill other duties within the school such as recess, hall, and bus duty. This limits the time that both general and special education teachers have to plan for the subjects they teach, let alone meet with paraprofessionals to plan effectively for students with disabilities.

Another competing interest is the emphasis placed on Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). The term Professional Learning Community describes a group of administrators and school staff who are committed to student learning. They share a

vision, work and learn collaboratively, visit and review other classrooms, and participate in decision making (Hord, 1997). The benefits to the staff and students include a reduced isolation of teachers, better informed and committed teachers, and academic gains for students. As powerful as this is for staff-development and as a strategy for school change and improvement, it does not include paraprofessionals. Professional Learning Communities meet during collaboration time or before or after school when paraprofessionals are not on the school grounds or are supervising the students with special needs while the teachers and administrators meet.

Creating the 21st Century learner (technology education) is also a competing interest for schools. Administrators and teachers have to decide how 21st century curriculum is organized, how facilities will be updated to handle greater technology, student access to technology within the school, how students will be assessed in technology, how to purchase resources, how to acquire and utilize the new technologies, and what this means in an era of standardized testing and accountability. Schools must set clear goals that incorporate 21st century skills so schools can truly prepare students to succeed throughout their entire education, workplaces and community life.

Aside from the impacts of No Child Left Behind, Professional Learning Communities, and 21st Century Learning, resources in most schools are scarce, time is restricted, and money allocated is tied up. Schools have other priorities that most likely take precedence over effective strategies for supervising paraprofessionals.

Comparison to Chisom's (2002) Study

With her permission, this study was a replication of Chisom's (2002) study concerning the supervision of paraprofessionals. My main motivation in replicating the study was to see what the supervision of paraprofessional looked like ten years after I began in the field of special education and eight years after Chisom's study was completed. I wanted to see if any progress had been made in effective strategies for supervising paraprofessionals. Replication has the potential to empirically support the findings of the original study, either by extending their generalizability or by clarifying issues raised by the original findings. I also found that the current literature and policy agenda relating to the topic is able to support its continuing relevance. I also felt that as the researcher, I had expertise in the subject area and had access to sufficient information relating to the original study to be able to design a replication.

I used her research questions which were based from Picket's (1999) model as well as her study design, a descriptive case study. The interview protocol, observation protocol, and document analysis protocol were also replicated. Like Chisom, I also used a researcher's journal to document any personal bias that came about throughout the research. Our data analysis techniques were similar, however I used a template analysis approach, and she used broad categories, both however were based on Picket's (1999) model.

One major difference was that I conducted the research in two elementary schools in Colorado, where as Chisom conducted her research in two middle schools in Virginia. Another difference is that Chisom used twenty participants, and I only used thirteen. Our participant's job experience also differed.

When it came to our findings there were many similarities and some differences. In regards to planning, we both found that planning was limited; there was confusion between planning and delegating, and that there were significant barriers to supervision, including time constraints. Chisom, however, found that teachers have difficulty giving up control in their classrooms and that formal and informal opportunities exist to allow teacher/ paraprofessional teams to plan together. When it came to task delegating, we both found that tasks are not delegated. I found that paraprofessionals delegate tasks to other paraprofessionals. We also both found that teachers and paraprofessionals do not understand their roles. My data indicated that teachers and paraprofessionals negotiate their roles, where Chisom found that roles were clarified through open discussions. The data from both studies showed that monitoring takes the form of informal discussions, paraprofessionals request feedback, and monitoring happens through informal observation. Both studies also found that no training is provided to paraprofessionals and that teachers are not trained in regards to the supervision of paraprofessionals.

I extended Chisom's study by providing a narrative description about what the reality of supervision of paraprofessionals actually is. I felt this was crucial to note because if one of Pickett's (1999) elements for effective supervision is not understood, specifically role clarification, then the other remaining elements are limited. I also raised the question, does the reality of the supervision of paraprofessionals work? Clearly schools are able to cope with the limited supervision of paraprofessionals; however the reality is not in the best interests of students.

Overall both studies had similar results in that the supervision of paraprofessionals is a complicated, informal, and spur of the moment. Both studies

overall conclusions were similar in that the main themes were confusion, lack of supervisory training, and time constraints due to systemic hindrances.

Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the increase in employment of paraprofessionals, teachers have increasingly been given more responsibilities in regards to paraprofessional supervision. The data showed that often teachers feel uncomfortable with this aspect of their job. As a special educator myself, I was interested in this study because of my own apprehension and lack of understanding of supervising paraprofessionals throughout my first three years of teaching.

Another area for future research would be to identify which colleges offer supervision and collaboration courses or seminars to students going through their teacher preparation programs. It would also be beneficial to see what states and school districts offer trainings to teachers in regards to the supervision of paraprofessionals. These courses/seminars/trainings should be assessed to determine effectiveness.

An area that could also be addressed in future research is to investigate the notion of a "head" paraprofessional who trains the other paraprofessionals in the schools. The data suggested that there seems to be an "alpha" paraprofessional at each school site, this could be used to the schools advantage by training that paraprofessional thoroughly and then the paraprofessional bringing the information back to the school to train the other paraprofessionals and serve as a mentor.

Policies and regulations surrounding paraprofessional supervision is another area for future research. There seems to be a lack of consistency between federal, state, and

local policies and standards. There also should be research conducted in how each state and district defines the loose interpretation the federal government gives in both IDEIA and NCLB.

In addition, research should be conducted to see how school districts make funding decisions for the professional development of paraprofessionals and teachers. This could also include research into different training models and time allotted in different school districts for planning.

The last area that could be an area for future is to evaluate administrative support of teacher and paraprofessional collaborative planning. Administrators generally do not understand the difference in roles between paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. It would be interesting to see if there are administrators who offer sufficient planning time throughout the school day, who understand and clarify roles, and create appropriate monitoring rubrics for the supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals.

Limitations

I conducted this study to evaluate the supervision of paraprofessionals. One limitation is that the study conducted in only two elementary schools in Colorado. Further, the participants I interviewed were a small sample with one special educator and general education teacher at each school. Consequently, experiences of the participants interviewed and observed in this study may not reflect those of others working in different school settings around the state or country. However, the depth at which I described the perceptions of the participants and my own observations may be useful for others when comparing this information to their own experiences. I assume there will be many similarities found.

Another limitation is that in my interview I did not specifically ask whether the dynamic between the teacher and paraprofessionals interfered with the quality of education the students receive. I assume that the dynamic between the teachers and paraprofessionals does impact the quality of education each student receives. I also believe however, that in my own professional practice had I had an informed understanding of supervision this would have greatly improved the provision of services for students as well. I did not ask participants what would be the ideal working relationship.

Personal Reflection

This study evolved out of my personal experience supervising paraprofessionals. At a young age I was teaching students with special needs and supervising paraprofessionals. I found supervising paraprofessionals the most difficult aspect of my job. I had never been trained in effective management techniques and I did not understand the roles of paraprofessionals. I knew then that I would one day investigate how teachers are taught to supervise paraprofessionals.

This study did, in part, validate my personal experiences. I received little pre-service training regarding supervision. I still was hoping that 10 years after my own graduation from college that there had been change. Listening to the participants respond to the questions was at times frustrating because I too had felt the same way. I was alarmed at the lack of advancement in this area not just through the interviews and observations but after reviewing the literature.

I believe that from this study I will be able to make gradual change to the supervision of paraprofessionals in the district I am currently employed. I will present my

findings to our director of special education and I will continue to provide trainings to teachers in the supervision or paraprofessionals. I also would like to publish the findings in an educational journal that administrators read. When administrators begin to understand the repercussions of the lack of supervision of paraprofessionals then possibly they will advocate for more planning time as well as more training to both paraprofessionals and teachers.

Although the current system "works" what does this say about the lack of emphasis we place on students with special needs and their effective instruction? We put the least trained, least paid, least experienced staff with our neediest students. How can we expect positive student outcomes or progress on IEP goals when they are the least priority? How can we assure research-based interventions are properly being implemented to our students with disabilities if those who are delivering instruction do not even understand their roles?

I am hoping that those who read this study and previous research surrounding the supervision of paraprofessionals will be interested in designing more studies to contribute to this body of knowledge. My primary expectation is that the special needs students everywhere will benefit by this research, paraprofessionals will receive the training they need, formal planning time is allotted into the school day, and that teachers everywhere understand how to adequately supervise of paraprofessionals.

REFERENCES

Alexander, H. L. (1987). Developing a working relationship with teachers and paraeducators. Topeka, KS: Kansas State Department of Education.

Alvarez, M., Binkley, E., Bivens, J., Highers, P., Poole, C., & Walker, P (1990). Case-based instruction and learning: An interdisciplinary project. *Proceedings of 34th Annual Conference (pp. 2-18)*, College Reading Association. Reprint.

Blalock, G. (1991). Paraprofessionals: Critical team members in our special education programs. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 26, 200-214.

Boomer, L. W. (1994). The utilization of paraprofessionals in programs for students with autism. Focus on Autistic Behavior, 9(2). Austin: Pro-Ed.

Boomer, L. W. (1980).Special education paraprofessionals: A guide for teachers. Teaching Exceptional Children, 12(4), 146-149.

Chisom, J.(2002). *Supervising paraprofessionals in middle school classrooms: a descriptive case study.* Dissertation presented to the faculty at Virginia Polytechnic University, Blacksburg, Va.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-131.

Cronbach, L. J. (1975, February). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. *American Psychologist, 30*(2), 116-127.

Daniels, V.I., & McBride, A. (2001). Paraeducators as critical team members: Redefining roles and responsibilities. *NASP Bulletin* (85) 623, 66-74.

D'Aquanni, M. M. (1997). The role of paraprofessionals in quality inclusive educational programs. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58, 12-A. (Doctoral Dissertation Syracuse University; 1997) 0659.

Downing, J. E., Ryndak, D. L., & Clark, D. (2000).Paraeducators in inclusive classrooms: Their own perceptions. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(3), 171-181.

Doyle, M.B. (1997). The paraprofessional's guide to the inclusive classroom: Working as a team. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks.

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, 20 U. S. C. sec. 1400 *et seq.*

French, N. K. (1998). Working together: Resource teachers and paraeducators. *Remedial and Special Education*, 19 (6), 357 – 368.

French, N.K., & Chopra, R. (1999). Parent perspectives on the roles of paraprofessionals. *The Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 24, 259-272.

French, N. (2001). Supervising paraprofessionals: A survey of teacher practices. *Journal of Special Education* 35, 41-53

Freschi, D.F., (1991). Guidelines for working with one to one aides. Teaching Exceptional Children, 31 (4). 42-45.

Frith, G. H., & Lindsey, J. D. (1982). Certification, training and other programming variables affecting special education and the paraprofessional concept. *The Journal of Special Education*, 16, 229-236.

Gartner, A., & Riessman, F. (1974). The paraprofessional movement in perspective. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 53, 253-256.

Ghere, G. & York-Barr., J. (2003). *Employing, Developing, and Directing Special Education Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Education Programs: Findings from a Multi-Site Case Study.* Institute on Community Integration (UCEDD) & Department of Educational Policy and Administration, University of Minnesota.

Giangreco, M.F. & Doyle, M.B. (2002). Students with disabilities and paraprofessional supports: Benefits, balance, and band-aids. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 34* (7), 1-12.

Glickman, C.D, Gordon, S.P., & Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2001). Supervision and instructional leadership (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Guess, D., Smith, J. O., & Entsminger, E. E. (1971). The role of nonprofessional persons in teaching language skills to mentally retarded children. *Exceptional Children*, 37, 447 - 453.

Hofmeister, A., Ashbaker, B., & Morgan, J. (1996). *Paraeducators: Critical members of the rural education team.* (Report No., RC 020556). Logan, UT: Utah State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 394757)

Hoepfl, M. C. (1997). Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers. *Journal of Technology Education*, 9(1), 47-63. Retrieved February 24, 2008, from http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/v9n1/pdf/hoepfl.pdf

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, (Pub. L No. 105-17), 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 et seq.

Jones, K. H., & Bender, W. N. (1993). Utilization of paraprofessionals in special education: A review of the literature. *Remedial and Special Education* 14 (1), 7 – 14.

Kuzel, A.J., and Like, R.C. (1991). *Standards of trustworthiness for qualitative studies in primary care.* In P.G. Norton, M. Stewart, F. Tudiver, M.J. Bass, and E.V. Dunn (eds).

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing.

Lindeman, D. P., & Beegle, G. B. (1988). Pre-service teacher training and use of the classroom paraprofessional: A national survey. Teacher Education and Special Education 11, 184-186.

Mackenzie, R. G., & Houk, C. S. (1986). Use of paraprofessionals in the resource room. *Exceptional Children*, 53, 41-45.

Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 13-17.

Mavropoulos, Y. (2005) Paraprofessional supervision: a survey of special education teachers and paraprofessionals. Dissertation presented to the faculty at The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

May, D.C., & Marozas, D.S. (1981). The role of paraprofessionals in educational programs for the severely handicapped. *Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded*, 228-231.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* SanFrancisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. M. & McLaughlin, J. A. (1995) *Research Methods in Special Education.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994) *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook.* Malabar, FL: Kreiger.

Minondo, S., Meyer, L., & Xin, J. (2001). The Role and Responsibilities of Teaching Assistants in Inclusive Education: What's Appropriate? *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (*JASH), v26 n2 p114-119.

Mueller, P.H. (2002). The paraeducator paradox. *Exceptional Parent Magazine*, 32 (9), 64-67.

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD). (1999). Learning disabilities: Use of paraprofessionals. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 22, 23-30.

No Child Left behind, Pub. L. 107-110,20 U.S.C. 6301 (2002). Retrieved October 4, 2008, from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf

Pickett, A. L. (1996). *A state of the art report on paraeducators in education and related services.* New York: The National Resource Center for paraprofessionals in education and related services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York.

Pickett, A.L.(1994). *Paraprofessionals in the education workforce.* Washinginton, DC: National Education Association.

Pickett, A.L. (1997) *Improving the performance of paraeducators in the workforce: A technical assistance manual for administrators and staff developers.* New York, NY: National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, City University of New York.

Pickett, A. L. (1999). *Strengthening and supporting teacher/provider-paraeducator teams: Guidelines for paraeducator roles, supervision, and preparation.* New York: National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education.

Pickett, A. L. & Gerlach, K. (1997). *Supervising paraeducators in school settings.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Pickett, A.L., & Gerlach, K. (2nd ed.). (2003). *Supervising paraeducators in educational settings: A team approach.* Autsin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Pickett, A.L., Linkins, M., & Wallace, T. (2003). *The employment of paraeducators: The state of the art.* New York: The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals.

Polit, D.F., Hungler, B.P., 1983. *Nursing Research Principles and Methods. Second edition.* Sydney : J.B. Lippincott Company.

Pyecha, J. (1988). *A case study of the application of non-categorical special education in two states.* Chapel Hill, NC: Research Triangle Institute.

Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (2004). One Hundred Eighth Congress of the United States of America at the second session.

Riggs, C. & Mueller, P. (2001) Employment and utilization of paraeducators in inclusive settings. *Journal of Special Education*, v35 n1 p54-62.

Salzburg, C.L., & Morgan, J. (1995). Preparing teachers to work with paraeducators. Teacher Education and Special Education, 18, 49-55.

Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/ inclusion 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 59-74.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Villegas, A.M., & Clewell, B.C. (1998). Increasing teacher diversity by tapping the paraprofessional poll. *Theory into Practice*, 121-130.

Wallace, T., Shin, J., Barholmay, T., Stahl, B.J. (2001). Knowledge and skills for teachers supervising the work of paraprofessionals. *Exceptional Children*, 67, 4, 520-533..

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Designs and methods.* Thousand Oaks, London: Sage.

Appendix A

Cover Letter Participants

October 1, 2008

Dear (Particpant's Name)

My name is Keelee Burtch and I am writing to request your voluntary participation in a study that will help understand the supervisory practices of paraprofessionals. I am a doctoral candidate doing my dissertation under the direction of Professor Jean Lehmann of the School of Education at the Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. I am also an Autism Specialist in Cherry Creek School District in Greenwood Village, CO.

The purpose of this study is to examine the supervision of paraprofessionals in elementary school center-based special education programs in Colorado and contribute to the knowledge base surrounding the present practices in supervising paraprofessionals in school settings. The five areas in the effective supervion of paraprofessionals that will be I will examine are planning work assignments, task delegating, role clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring.

This case study will provide information about how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision process in elementary schools classrooms. It is anticipated that this systematic inquiry will influence delivery of future in-service and pre-service training at the district and university levels. Due to the growing numbers of paraprofessionals in school environments today, and the limited amount of available research in the area of their supervision, this research will also make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge about supervisory practices.

The research involves a half-hour, face-to-face interview with you to address the following questions:

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 interview will take place either at your school or at another location of your choice. The interview will be tape recorded and the transcripts will be analyzed and information presented.

At each school site observations will be held two hours a week for four weeks in each classroom. This is to see first-hand the supervision of paraprofessionals in the areas of planning work assignments, task delegating, role clarifying, daily performance monitoring, and providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring.

If you agree to participate, I will have a consent form for you to sign when I come to meet with you. I can make the transcript available to you upon your request from the interview.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary but important for helping us understand how to better work with paraprofessionals. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from this study at any, there will be no penalty. While it is not possible to identify all potential risks to you in this research, the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to avoid possible detriment to you. Your confidentiality is important and is assured. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. The tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed but the transcripts will be kept in a secure location at the Colorado State University.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at (720) 470-0578 or by email at keeleed@lamar.colostate.edu or my major advisor, Professor Jean Lehmann at 970-491-6317 or by email at lehmann@cahs.colostate.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jean P. Lehmann, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
Colorado State University

Keelee Burtch
Co-Investigator

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: *Supervision of Paraprofessionals in Special Education Programs*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Jean Lehmann, Colorado State University 970-491-0799*

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: *Keelee Burtch*

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? *You are being asked to be a part of this study because you are, special education teachers, or administrator in an elementary special education program who is responsible for supervising paraprofessionals.*

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? *Keelee Burtch is a candidate for her PhD in Education Leadership and Human Resources. This study fulfills the doctoral requirements.*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? *This purpose of this study is to examine paraprofessional supervision in elementary special education programs to add to the knowledge about the present practices.*

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? *The initial part of the study is interviews. The interview takes 30 minutes and can be completed in your office or at a location of your choice. I will then be scheduling observations to l take place in your classroom and at your school site. Observations will be conducted for four weeks with 4 hours of observation per week.*

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? *You are asked to participate in a confidential interview to share your ideas, understandings and perspectives on the supervision of paraprofessionals. I am also asking that you allow me to observe your interactions with paraprofessionals for four hours a week over the course of a month.*

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in the study is voluntary. There are no reasons that you should not take part in the study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

Though there are no known risks involved with this study, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures. The researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks. If at any time you are uncomfortable with a question, you may refuse to answer.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? *This study will provide information about how teachers and paraprofessionals view the supervision process in elementary school special education programs. One benefit of this study may involve training implications, especially in the area of staff development. Further, this research will make a contribution to the body of knowledge of existing practices in supervising paraprofessionals in public schools, as well as the retention of paraprofessionals.*

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? *Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.*
WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE? *The only cost is the time taken for a face-to-face interview .*

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep you name and other identifying information private.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? *The only way for your part in the study to end early would be if you did not want to continue.*

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? *No.*

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? *The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.*
WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Keelee Burtch at 720-470-0578. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____

Name of person providing information to participant Date

_____

Signature of Research Staff

Appendix C
Interview Protocol

Time of interview: Date:
Place: Interviewer:
Interviewee: Position of Interviewee:

(Describe project to participant)
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.

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:**	**Other**

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:**	**Other**

Appendix F

Documents Collected

Both School A and School B
Paraprofessional schedule
Master schedule- school
Web page (school)
Paraeducator evaluation form
Philosophy/mission statement and school beliefs
Staff development plan
Faculty/staff handbook
Instructional assistant/paraprofessional job description

Central Office
Instructional assistant/paraprofessional handbook
Web page (district)
Paraprofessional evaluation forms
Paraprofessional in-service notebooks

Appendix G1

Themes surrounding Planning Work Assignments

Themes	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Perceptions of planning	X		
Characteristics of planning	X	X	
Barriers to planning	X	X	X

Appendix G2

Themes Surrounding Task Delegating

Themes	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Tasks Are Not Delegated	X	X	
Tasks Are Delegated Verbally and in Writing	X	X	
Tasks Are Delegated Verbally to Paraprofessionals from other Paraprofessionals	X	X	

Appendix G3

Themes Surrounding Role Clarifying

Themes	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Teachers and Paraprofessionals Do Not Understand Their Roles	X	X	
Role Negotiation	X	X	

Appendix G4

Themes Surrounding Daily Performance Monitoring

Themes	Interviews	Observations	Documents
How Monitoring Occurs	X	X	X
Feedback	X	X	
The Formal Evaluation Process	X	X	X

Appendix G5

Themes Surrounding Systematic On-The-Job Training and Mentoring

Themes	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Paraprofessional Training	X	X	X
Teacher Preparation	X	X	

Appendix H
Vita

Keelee K. Burtch

6462 S. Xanadu Way
Centennial, Co 80111
keeleed@lamar.colostate.edu

Educational Background

2009 **University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO**
Colorado Principal/Administration License

2009 **Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO**
Doctor of Philosophy in Education and Human Resources, Emphasis in Educational Leadership, Concentration in Special Education, dissertation defense March 30, 2009

2005 **University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO**
Master of Arts in Special Education, Early Childhood Emphasis

2003 **California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, CA**
Education Specialist Credential in Moderate/Severe Needs

2003 **Chapman University, Santa Maria, CA**
Single Subject Secondary Social Science Credential

2003 **Chapman University, Santa Maria, CA**
Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development Credential

2003 **Chapman University, Santa Maria, CA**
California Technology Assistance Project Level 1 Credential

2000 **California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA**
Bachelors of Arts in Social Science

1996 **Cabrillo High School, Lompoc, CA**
High School Diploma

Work Experience

Full Time

2008-2009 **Autism Specialist, Aurora, CO; Cherry Creek School District**
Supported colleagues and administration in facilitating each child's social and individual growth by creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, positive behavior support, and community-based instruction to promote independence and quality of life. Provided direct instructional service to students with disabilities according to their IEP; Provided consultation services concerning students with disabilities to teachers and parents; Maintained student records necessary for continuous evaluation concerning the IEP; Assisted in curriculum development for students with disabilities

2003-2007 **Autism Specialist, Cheyenne, WY; Laramie County School District #1**
Support IEP teams in addressing interfering behavior and assist in developing research-based interventions; Provide resources to IEP teams in educating their students with autism; Assist IEP teams in Functional Behavioral Assessments and Positive Behavioral Support; Support IEP teams by collaborating in designing practical strategies to assist students with autism; Provide trainings in practical strategies for working with students with autism; Provide IEP teams information regarding current and upcoming regional training opportunities; Provide IEP teams support with special education students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

2003-2006 **Assistive Technology Consultant; Cheyenne, WY**
Train and support district teams in the selection, acquisition, and use of assistive technology devices. Other responsibilities included: observations of and consultations regarding students, assistance with the team assessment process, recommendations regarding appropriate strategies and/or technologies for use in regular or special education settings, guided practice and support in implementing technologies, training and staff development for school district personnel , and dissemination of information regarding available resources.

2000-2003 **Education Specialist Moderate/Severe Needs, Lompoc, CA**
Supported colleagues and administration in facilitating each child's social and individual growth by creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, positive behavior support, and community-based instruction to promote independence and quality of life. Provided direct instructional service to students with disabilities according to their IEP; Provided consultation services concerning students with disabilities to teachers and parents; Maintained student records necessary for continuous evaluation concerning the IEP; Assisted in curriculum development for students with disabilities as well as English Language Learners.

Trainings Attended

2003 Applied Behavior Analysis, Casper, Wyoming
2003 Intellikeys, Cheyenne, Wyoming
2004 TEACCH two week intensive training, Charlotte, North Carolina
2004 Linda Mood Bell Seeing Stars and LIPS, Cheyenne, Wyoming
2004 Future Horizons Autism Symposium Chicago, Illinois
2005 Picture Exchange Communication System, Denver, Colorado
2006 Don Johnston SOLO Cheyenne, Wyoming
2006 Collaboration of the Rockies Assistive Technology Denver, Colorado
2006 Closing the Gap, Minneapolis, Minnesota
2006 International Autism Conference, Park City, Utah
2007 Assistive Technology Industry Association, Orlando, Florida
2007 Professional Learning Communities, Cheyenne, Wyoming
2007 Handwriting With-out Tears, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Certificates and Hours

Colorado Teacher License in Special Education and Social Science #0389660 exp. 08/12
Positive Behavioral Support 64hour training completed 3/12/03
Supervised Autism Behavioral Therapies 2,000 hours completed 6/6/05

Memberships in Professional Associations

Council for Exceptional Children- current
National Association of Special Education Teachers- current
California Teachers Association- 2000-2003
American Teachers Association- 2000-2003
Honorary Rotary Member- 2002

Creative Products

Trainings I have Presented

Working with Students with Autism; Cheyenne, WY years presented 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006

Working with Students with Aspergers Syndrome; Cheyenne, WY presented 2003, 2004, 2005

Paraprofessional Training; Working with Students with Disabilities; Cheyenne, WY presented 2005

Expectations Conference; Autism Spectrum Disorders; Cheyenne, WY, presented April 2006

New Heights in Autism; Lander, WY, presented August 7-8 2006

Dissertation

Supervision of Paraprofessionals in Elementary Classrooms: A Descriptive Case Study