



Welcome to
Para-educator Companion Assistant Training

*“We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet
we forget that he is someone today.”*

~ Stacia Tausher



Welcome to Los Angeles Valley College Para-educators Companion Assistant Training

This ten-week course is designed to offer basic training to begin your rewarding career working with special needs children age's two to five.

Week 1: Developing a language to talk about children
Read Chapter 1-6 in "How to be a Para Pro"

Week 2: Autism Spectrum Disorder
Understanding social language and language development
Read Chapter 7 in "How to be a Para Pro"

Week 3: Observing a child in a classroom setting
Introduction to the CALMS observation model

Week 4: Self-regulation and sensory integration

Week 5: Guest speaker and/or video tape of observation
First Observation of a child is due

Week 6: Executive function and attention disorders

Week 7: Understanding interventions
The Behavioral Model
Discreet trial training
Applied behavioral analysis
Social relationship models
Floor time
DIR

Week 8: Review of student observations
Second observation of a child is due

Week 9: Learning to work as part of a team
Understanding classroom goals and working with teachers
Taking your new knowledge out into the community

Week 10: Finish Observations. A review of what you've learned.

Welcome to Week One

Tonight's Agenda will be;

6:30 Introductions

This program is designed in a seminar format, which encourages class participation. Talking about yourself and your experiences with children will be part of the class curriculum.

7:00 Our topic tonight will be:

Developing a professional language to talk about children.

What is a Para-educator companion assistant teacher?

What is our role?

What population of children do we offer intervention too?

What is bad behavior?

List several childhood behaviors that you think are bad.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lets think about this scenario...

It's six in the evening and you are in the grocery store picking up a few things for dinner. The woman in front of you has two small children with her, a baby in the shopping cart and a three year old tugging at her hand. As she gets closer to the checkout the three year old starts crying and saying "gum, gum, gum" while grabbing for some candy. The mother replies "No gum tonight, first we need to have dinner." The child is persistent and begins to lie on the floor of the grocery store and have a tantrum. Should the mother give the child the gum?

Why or Why not?

As we explore these issues we begin to understand how our view of behavior can influence what we think about that behavior. Our worldview and our cultural background influences our perception of behavior.

Give an example of how your families culture influences or has influenced your view of children's behavior.

As a child development interventionist our mission is to understand behavior in the context of each child's development, relationships and environment.

To do this we must have the ability to step out of our lives for a moment and begin to investigate what is happening inside the unique world of the child we are looking at. We must become good detectives, investigating all the relevant information regarding children and behavior. Just like detectives in the movies we begin to ask questions such as:

- Where did the behavior occur?
- What time of day was it?
- Who was the child with?
- What happened right before the behavior occurred?
- What did the child say?
- What did other people say?

When we ask these questions we begin to take our assumptions and judgments out of the picture and we begin to look at behavior in the context that it occurred. Behavior is an attempt to communicate. Our job is to discover and clarify the message. Behavior happens in the context of relating. Our job is to help deliver the message in a way that can be better understood.

What was the message that the child in the grocery store was trying to communicate?

**BEHAVIOR IS AN ATTEMPT TO COMMUNICATE
BEHAVIOR OCCURS IN THE CONTEXT OF RELATING**

We are the behavior detective team!!!! Our job is to put meaning to behavior.

8:00 Ethical question of the day:

You are working in a typical preschool setting helping an autistic child integrate into the classroom. A parent of another child approaches you. That parent says to you, "Who are you helping in the classroom and what's wrong with that child?" How do you respond?

What if a child in the class asks you the same question?

Bonus question for next week

What is confidentiality and when does it apply to you?

Homework

Observe yourself over the week, come to class ready to describe a time when you felt judgmental about how someone handled a child.

Philosophy of Positive Behavior Support

Richard A. Mesaros, Ph.D.

When our belief system is such that a person's "behavior problems" are viewed as random, unpredictable events and simply "willful" on the learner's part, then it follows that the most we can do for a learner with "behavior problems" is react. We wait for the display of random "behavior problems" and, then do something, typically something punitive, to stop or suppress the behavior. However, when we view such behavior as predictable; as part of a pattern; as related to the environment; as purposeful; as meaningful for the learner; as goal-directed; as communicative and of import to the learner, a whole world of proactive, preventative and educational supports and strategies become available to assist the learner. Assessment of the meaning and purpose of the "behavior problem" and a more thorough understanding of the behavior is then possible.

Positive behavior support programs emphasize respecting and valuing the learner. Enhancing the learner's overall lifestyle; building new behaviors and skills to replace "problem behavior"; "smoothing" the relationship between the learner's characteristics and the environment; highlighting what the learner is successful with and what he or she is doing well; and relying on non-violent crisis resolution strategies. It appears that an acknowledgement by professionals as to the meaningfulness and purposefulness of "behavior problems" is a critical first step to problem resolution and that proactive efforts in prevention, life-style enhancement and skill building are not only essential, but may be the only tools we have to support a learner with "behavior problems" that can lead to durable, long-term change. Such tools allow us to be educators. When the learner's "behavior problems" are viewed as unpredictable, meaningless and without purpose, all we can be are behavior managers ~ dispensing reactive consequences for random "behavior problems" to effect a hoped for, but elusive and temporary, suppression of the behavior.

"Behavior problems" are viewed here as one's current "language" for making sense of one's environment and for having one's needs met. One's current "language" is also important for having power, control, influence and autonomy in one's life. Our role is to, first, acknowledge the legitimacy of the individual's genuine, important and human goals that he or she is trying to achieve by the use of atypical behavioral "language" and second, to assist and support the individual to learn and use a different, more typical "language" to have goals met. To do the latter, we need to understand how and why an individual uses atypical behavioral "language" so that we may offer new "words" and "sentences". As an individual learns and uses a new behavioral "language" ~ and it is useful and efficient to do so ~ that individual will use their atypical behavioral "language" less and less. Old tools would be replaced by new ones.

From LAUSP Material
Paraeducators Behavior Support
Cadre

PBS Program Philosophies

- Behavior is learned and can be taught.
- Behavior has a purpose or function.
- Behavior is a choice; emotions are not.
- There are consequences for our behavioral choices.
- Natural consequences, although best, are often not meaningful enough.
- The best consequences are immediate, frequent, meaningful and consistent.
- Positive consequences occur more often than negative consequences.
- Making restitution is an important part of personal growth and self esteem.
- Learning why we behave the way we do is important for positive change.
- Family intervention is important to facilitate transfer of the student's learning.
- Self-evaluation is an important skill for personal growth.
- To be successful, new behaviors must generalize to all environments.
- Children deserve respect and the truth.
- Shame and guilt damage self esteem.
- People need frequent opportunities to demonstrate positive behavioral changes.
- When we live what we teach, we are better human beings.

From LAUSD Material
Paraprofessionals Behavior Support
Cadre

"People First" Language

... an attitude and a way of talking!

Because words and language can have such a strong impact on how we form our expectations, it is important to look at the terms, or words, we use when we talk about the students we are supporting... students with disabilities. Always keep in mind that the students we support are simply that -- students first and foremost. They have similar wants, needs, interests and pleasures as any other student. Remember that the student's disability is part of them, but it is not their defining characteristic. Therefore, we address the person as a "student who has a disability", rather than "disabled" or "handicapped".

Say...

child with autism

a person who has...

uses a wheelchair

student with a disability

Instead of...

autistic child

afflicted or suffers from...

confined to a wheelchair

disabled or handicapped

In addition, try not to label people as part of a disability group... say "people with disabilities", instead of "the disabled".

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

In speaking or writing, remember that children and adults with disabilities are like everyone else – except that they happen to have a disability. Here are a few tips for improving your language related to disabilities and handicaps.

1. Speak of the person first, then the disability.
2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
3. Do not label people as part of a disability group.
4. Don't give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don't patronize.
5. Choice and independence are important; let the person do or speak for himself/herself as much as possible.
6. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, imposed by society, the environment, or oneself.

SAY

Child with a disability
Person with cerebral palsy
Person who has...
Developmental delay
Emotional disorder, mental illness
Uses a wheelchair
Person with Down's syndrome
Has a physical disability
Condition
Seizures
Paralyzed
Chronic illness
Has paraplegia, hemiplegia

INSTEAD OF:

disabled or handicapped child
palsied, CP, or spastic person
Afflicted, suffers from, victim
slow
crazy, insane
confined to a wheelchair
mongoloid
crippled
disease (unless it is a disease)
fits
invalid
sickly
paraplegic, hemiplegic

Source: "It's the Person First – Then the Disability", Pacesetter (September 1989), p.13

Communicating with Students

Why is this important?

- **Other students in the general education classrooms will model your behavior and are learning from you.**
- **If you hear students talking down to students, gently correct them in private.**

DO

- 1) **Address the student by name**
- 2) **Speak to students with special needs as you do to students without special needs**
- 3) **Use same tone of voice**
- 4) **Use language/phrases that are age appropriate.**
- 5) **Shorten the length of your sentences**
- 6) **Provide directions one at a time**

DON'T

- 1) **Use terms such as honey, dear, sport.**
- 2) **Don't talk down to the student**
- 3) **Don't change your tone of voice when talking to student**
- 4) **Don't use language or phrases that are not age appropriate.**

What's So Important about Good Relationships?

Relationships are important throughout the life span. For very young children, they are critical to survival itself. Infants depend on adult caregivers to meet their physical as well as their emotional needs. As babies get older and become more self-sufficient, they continue to need physical care and to depend on the emotional nurturance of the important adults in their lives.

All children are born wired to form relationships. Establishing a close, nurturing bond with a primary caregiver is a major developmental task for infants and toddlers. The process of relationship building begins in pregnancy, continuing throughout the infants' first 12 months and beyond.

Research shows that supportive relationships have a tangible, long-term influence on children's healthy development, contributing to optimal social, emotional, and cognitive development for infants and toddlers (Zeanah & Doyle Zeanah, 2001). As a child grows, supportive relationships with parents and caregivers shape his or her self-image and provide the child with the resilience needed to face new challenges.

Nurturing, sensitive adult-child interactions are crucial for the development of trust, empathy, compassion, generosity, and conscience. These relationships are far-reaching; research has shown that they provide a context for supporting the development of curiosity, self-direction, persistence, cooperation, caring and conflict resolution skills (Greenough, et. al., 2001). Healthy maternal-child relationships are a precursor of school readiness for older children (Kaplan-Sanoff, 2000). Throughout the life span, nurturing and supportive relationship experiences provide a model for loving relationships.

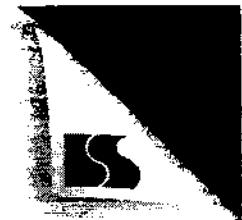
Adapted from Parlakian, P. and Seibel, N.L. (2002). *Building Strong Foundations, Practical Guidance for Promoting the Social-Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers*. Washington: ZERO TO THREE Press. Available through the [Bookstore](#).

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Language and Theory of Mind: You Can't Think of One Without the Other

Students with language impairment are frequently on the fringe of social interaction because they may be unable to take the perspective of another person. In other words, they may have a social-cognitive disorder or Theory of Mind (ToM) difficulty. ToM is the ability to attribute mental states (beliefs, desires, emotions, and intentions) to self and others in order to predict behavior (Lantz, 2002; Berndsen, 2005). The term "perspective taking" (PT) is another way to describe Theory of Mind.

Current research shows the interdependence of language and ToM:

- Children with language impairments may have trouble taking the perspective of others since language is extricably linked to ToM. Language reflects the "activity in the mind." Research is showing that language competence can predict ToM ability (Berndsen, 2005).
- ToM can influence pragmatic language skills and social interactions (Berndsen, 2005). It might also impact a child's ability to make inferences and understand social language, including understanding lies, surprises, secrets, mistakes, and tricks.
- Students with deficits in PT often demonstrate difficulty with interpreting abstract meanings and understanding what is being discussed or read. Children with severe deficits in PT may not be able to develop skills beyond the ability to focus on their own thoughts (Winner, 2004).
- PT is a social executive function task that requires processing and responding to multiple levels of information simultaneously within a limited time frame (1-2 seconds). PT requires a child to consider his own thoughts as well as the person he is communicating with (Winner, 2004).
- It is through the experience of communication within close relationships that children gain entry into the "community of mind" (Astington & Baird, 2005).
- The relationship quality between the child and his communicative partner is systematically related to the frequency with which they interact in context-rich discourse about mental states (Astington & Baird, 2005).

LinguSystems' Social Language Development Test Elementary (see page 6) measures those language skills that might be an outward sign of a ToM problem. The four subtests require students to take the perspective of another person: Making Inferences, Multiple Interpretations, Interpersonal Negotiations, and Supporting Peers.

The more research that's done on the link between language development and ToM, the better we will be able to document how language affects thinking socially. To this end, we will improve our treatment of children with social deficits so they will be better integrated into our culture and become healthy, happy, contributing citizens.

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