

## **How to keep consistency in the classroom when SPED teachers are absent.**

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### **Essential Question:**

#### **How Can We Keep Consistency in SPED classrooms when the teacher is absent?**

As we know all students need structure and stability in their lives. They work better when they are in low risk environments. Most SPED students do not handle change well. Their success in Education is what we strive to maintain. The best way to accomplish this is by minimizing distractions in the classroom. It will help students to be more successful in their lessons. Follow through and consistency in lessons and discipline in the classroom are a must. Especially for those students who have a tough time staying focused.

Thus, when a substitute they do not know enters the classroom they tend to act out. The student's behavior changes. They can become either more hostile or reserved. Some students will display behaviors they normally would not show, such as being rude, being loud, flat out disruptive, or getting out of seats often. Students have been known for making jokes or poking fun at others for attention when a substitute is in the classroom. When the Paraeducator of the classroom is covering the class, these behaviors are very minimal or non-existent.

### **Summary of Background Research/Reading**

#### **Why is it important to have the EA/Paraeducator help keep consistency in the classroom?**

If the assigned paraeducator/EA is present in the classroom, it causes less stress for everyone, teachers and students alike:

Our students are important to us!

#### **How can the classroom Paraeducator help the Teacher accomplish this?**

- The students are familiar with the EA.
- Trust and comfortability between Teacher, EA and Student is established.
- EA is familiar with the classroom management and how the teacher structures the room.
- EA follows the teachers plans and curriculum daily.
- EAs clean up after each class period so that the teacher does not come back to a messy classroom.
- The students see the EA outside of class in other areas of the school, such as bus duty, lunch duty, hall duty and more.

#### **What a Paraeducator/EA does on a regular day:**

- Primarily, reinstructing the teacher's lessons to students who were unable to absorb the information the first time.
- Making sure students stay on tasks and maintaining appropriate student behavior.
- Escorting student to and from classrooms, assemblies, the office, bathroom, library, and the lunchroom , etc.
- De-escalating students when necessary.
- Maintain cleanliness and organization of classroom.
- Working with students one on one or in small groups.

- Substitute for classes when the teacher is absent or away from the classrooms for IEPs and other meetings.
- Cover In-School Suspension. Cover Lunch Detention. Cover Lunch duty.
- Work with other EAs in classes when they are covering a class that requires multiple Educational Assistants.
- Filling in for Staff who are running late in emergency meetings, conflicting situations, and as a back up when students are being unruly.

Paraeducators have great classroom management and instructional skills. They are the ideal candidate to take the teachers place because of all they do already!

### **Why are Paraeducators important in the classroom?**

If the assigned paraeducator/EA is present in the classroom, it causes less stress for everyone, teachers and students alike:

For many years Paraeducators were often over- looked because they are referred to as the “helpers” of the classrooms. However, teachers they work with refer to them as, “The eyes and ears if the classroom.” The majority of paraeducators work in SPED programs and are usually assigned to students who are in constant need of instruction discipline and redirection. Which I turn helps keep minimal distractions in the classroom

### **Recommendations**

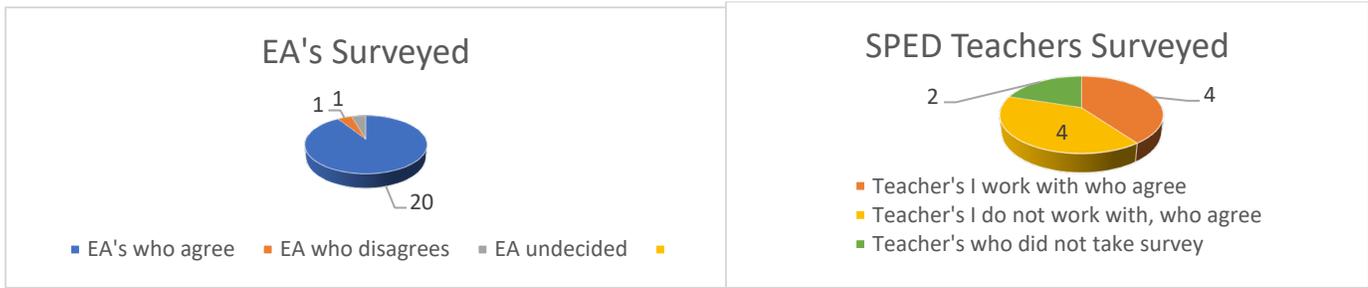
#### **Why I chose to do my research on this topic:**

Having worked in the middle school classroom for 20 years, I have always noticed there was never a change in how classroom coverage was dealt with when As an EA/Paraeducator myself, I have covered many classes for absent teachers. The majority of paraeducators want to cover classes. Especially the classes they are normally assigned to. I felt this was a great opportunity to speak not only on my behalf, but the behalf of others about this topic, we all strongly agree on.

**We will adapt to any setting to help our students be successful in school.** Some programs are avoided by outside substitutes. Many are not physically or mentally able to handle the specific types of classroom. If this is ok than the other SPED classes should be considered the same. For instance, SES1 and SES2 are programs that contain students who have behavior or emotional problems. Most of the time substitutes will not pick up these jobs, especially if they have covered before. This happens often. So, classroom EA ends up covering the class due to lack of coverage. On the rare occasion, when there is an outside substitute, the students in these programs cannot adapt and will often-times act out worse than they normally would with the teacher or Paraeducators. It causes more work for the classroom EA. In most cases, the Paraeducator helps with the discipline in the classroom. This helps them with the classroom management when the teacher is absent or away from the classroom. So, regardless if there is a sub or not, Paraeducators will be doing most, if not all, of the discipline.

**It is the only way to make extra much needed wages!** This is the only opportunity they have, to make extra money. They are not asked to work in afterschool activities or trainings that offer compensation. Anything they do is all volunteer. The only way to make extra money is to cover classes. Especially in a middle school setting. Most afterschool activities are offered to Certified Staff/ Teachers. Such as Homework Club, Sports/Games, Strategic Games, and or any other club. They also get stipend’s for PDPs that are held after contracted work hours. Things like recruiting others to the union, teachers get \$25 for each person they recruit. EA’s don’t get any kind of incentives. Which is why there are 60+ open positions for Ea’s in APS alone! Did you know that most Ea’s take come less than \$500 a paycheck? That’s not a livable wage at all, especially for those with kids or a family to provide for.

#### **Feedback from Surveys**



**How does it make Paraeducators feel about not being asked to cover the classroom they regularly work in.**

- They stated they feel as though they are not looked at as being competent enough to cover.
- They stated they feel like they don't have enough classroom management.
- They stated they feel "demoted" to the sub, meaning that they are assisting someone who is not fully qualified for the position and the EA ends up fully responsible in the long run either way.
- They stated they feel like they are missing out on differential due to the responsibility being on them, since the substitute is not qualified or working with the students.
- They stated they feel like they do most of the work, and the sub just sits there, often, doing nothing for the students.

I have interviewed many different substitutes, most of them state they will only take temporary positions because they do not want long term responsibility. They do not want the responsibility of making sure the kids do their work. They do not clean the room after the end of the day. They take jobs for a day or two and then they move on to something new or fresh. They can refuse to cover classes they want to. They are not responsible for the students' behaviors. Teachers are lucky if the substitute writes a note for that day or class period.

In conclusion, having interviewed and question many different educators. Many agreed with my idea of a policy. Many who are SPED teachers and majority who are EAs. Most important is the goal we wish to keep and that is Keeping a classroom of consistent instruction direction and discipline of the same kind. This is a great way to be able to do so.

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