



The Big Picture – Summary

In this segment we talked about the core concepts and strategies referenced throughout the Parasharp series.

Understanding Your Role

Having a clear definition of your professional role is critical to your effectiveness. This includes knowing as specifically as possible what activities you're going to perform, as well as what is specifically outside your role. In general your job as a paraeducator is likely to include:

- Helping students increase their independence.
- Supporting students to access the general education environment.
- Assisting students in building social connections with others.
- Helping students improve academic, social and/or emotional skills.

Finding Useful Explanations Of Challenging Behavior

One thing you have to do when working with a student who exhibits challenging behavior is be able to find useful explanations for that behavior. There are three important ways to understand behavior:

- Function: The function of a student's behavior is their attempt to meet an important need such as avoiding frustration, communicating something, or being liked by others.

- Skill Deficit: Students behaviors are often the result of underdeveloped skills. Students may misbehave because they lack skills (not the desire or motivation) to succeed.
- Environment: Students behaviors are often a response to things that are happening to and around them in the school environment.

Developing Your Skills In Responding to Challenging Behavior

Students with behavior issues often require a different approach. This approach includes:

- Being more proactive and less reactive
- Developing a toolkit of interventions you can use
- Staying out of battles and finding ways to work collaboratively
- Checking yourself; controlling your emotional reactions to keep you from reacting in ways that don't work.



Developing Effective Working Relationships with Students & Team Members

- Getting to know the students you work with.
- Building collaborative, professional relationships with students.
- Maintaining healthy professional boundaries
- Being flexible, matching your expectations to the student while still holding high expectations.
- Developing common language and effective dialogue with your team members.

Mythbuster

MYTH: Paraeducators are just there to help a teacher. They should not be asked to do anything complicated.

TRUTH: Everyday, in everything a paraeducator does with a student they are teachers, role models, skill-builders, and much more – whether they are explicitly cast in that role or not. Everything you do matters.

Go Do It !

After viewing *Parasharp: The Big Picture*, find something that resonated with you. Maybe it was a way of supporting students you hadn't thought of, or a new way of looking at and or handling behavior. Or, perhaps, it was something about building relationships with your students and team. For the next week, start every morning off with that as your focus for the day and see how your skills expand with some attention to this aspect of your job!