January 01, 2011

Paraprofessionals as educators: differing perceptions, responsibilities, and training

Jennifer Ann Boudreau
Northeastern University

Paraprofessionals as Educators:

Differing Perceptions, Responsibilities, and Training

A Dissertation Presented

by

Jennifer Ann Boudreau

To The College of Professional Studies
Department of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
November 28, 2011

Paraprofessionals as Educators:

Differing Perceptions, Responsibilities, and Training

by

Jennifer Ann Boudreau

Abstract of Dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, November 28, 2011

Abstract

As nationwide school enrollments are projected to increase slowly over the next decade, it is predicted that there will be a greater increase among students identified for special education services. As a result, the employment of paraprofessionals who aid these students is expected to grow by ten percent between 2008 and 2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010). The purpose of this qualitative descriptive case study was to determine the current responsibilities of paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative (TSEC) and to identify the supervision, training practices, and needs of these paraprofessionals. This was evaluated in regards to the differences and similarities that exist between current training opportunities and perceived training needs. The components of French's (2003) theoretical framework were used to frame the research protocols and analysis for this investigation.

As projected by the *Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-2011 Edition*, there was an increase in the number of paraprofessionals that were required to service students enrolled at TSEC. At the time of this study, TSEC employed seventy-one paraprofessionals and thirty-two special education teachers. The participants in this case study included nine paraprofessionals, four special education teachers, and one supervisor. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with all participants; conducted five hours of observation in each of the classrooms, totaling twenty hours; and reviewed fifteen different documents that TSEC currently has in place regarding the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals.

The overriding findings in this study revealed: (a) inconsistencies between French's (2003) framework and its application; (b) a lack of training for both paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers; (c) implementation of all of the elements of French's (2003) framework

were hindered by time constraints; (d) an expansion of French's (2003) framework is necessary; (e) attention must be given to each of the seven executive functions outlined in French's (2003) framework so that school districts can maximize the effectiveness of paraprofessionals in the classroom; and (f) inadequate role clarification, orientation, mentoring, training, and supervision compromise the scope and nature of paraprofessionals' work.

Keywords: paraprofessionals, paraeducators, special education, teacher aide, supervision, training, professional development

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, the researcher wishes to thank the faculty, staff, and administrators of The Special Education Collaborative. I am especially grateful to the paraprofessionals, teachers, and program director who graciously shared their time and insights with me; and truly appreciative to the teachers who welcomed me into their classrooms to share their knowledge and expertise willingly. Their participation made this study possible. A special thank you is extended to the Executive Director of TSEC who served as my supervisor, leader, mentor, and friend; for his encouraging words, open-door policy, and willingness to let me learn through his leadership.

I am forever grateful for the training, support, and knowledge I received at Northeastern University throughout my doctoral pursuit. I am truly blessed to have received the guidance and support from Dr. Jane Lohmann. As my advisor, Dr. Lohmann provided encouraging words, shared her wisdom, and motivated me to keep going. For further assisting me with interpretations and formulations of the study, I thank committee members Dr.Angela Bermudez and Dr. Nina Stracuzzi for challenging me to think critically throughout each phase.

My journey in education, in life in general, is credited to the support, generosity, and unconditional love I have received from my family. My parents, whose encouragement not only provided me with the motivation to complete the dissertation; it has inspired me to become the person I am as they never let me accept failure as an option. I thank my sister, Paula for all of her time, dedication, and energy to helping me complete my degree; without her editing skills and her dedicating her time to my project, and me I would not be at this stage without her. As a family we have grown strong and together have weathered many storms and shared many joys during this journey. I not only offer them my undying gratitude, but my undying love.

I am also thankful for Dr. Nicholas Twigg and Dr. Jeri Katz for their continued efforts to motivate me and to encourage me to continue going through this journey. They have both provided me with endless encouragement, motivation, time, energy, and efforts in helping me to edit and revise my project at every step of the way.

To Rob, who entered my life and shared not only his never-ending kindness and compassion but provided me with strength, energy, and support that was unselfish and caring, I am truly grateful. I could not have completed this journey without his love, encouragement, and unconditional support, he is not only the love of my life, but truly has become my best friend and was my support during this journey. He held me when times were tough and celebrated in times of accomplishments; we have journeyed down this winding road together side by side.

Last, but certainly not least, to my colleagues who served as my support groups. My critical friends group, Lisa and Dawn, My SPC group and so many others; who encouraged my efforts, provided me with stability, shared their compassion, and demonstrated genuine thoughtfulness to guide me through the dissertation process, I am truly grateful.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I

Introduction

This case study demonstrates how the study of paraprofessionals in Special Education relates to the problems of practice related to paraprofessionals and the gaps in the literature. The purpose of this research project was to develop a better understanding of the specific roles and responsibilities assigned to paraprofessionals in a Special Education setting. This information will ultimately assist school districts in creating more relevant job descriptions and providing appropriate training for paraprofessionals. Having a specific job description for paraprofessionals will facilitate and guide appropriate paraprofessional training. The current research on the supervisory role of the teacher and direct supervision of paraprofessionals was used to clarify the teachers' role in paraprofessional training, and was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The intention of this investigation is also to lay the groundwork for a case study that would contribute to the research concerning the roles, responsibilities, training and supervision of paraprofessionals. Additionally, this work sought to assist others in understanding and adequately addressing paraprofessionals' changing roles and training needs. The recognition of paraprofessionals as vital members of the school's educational team is of paramount importance to the success of the Special Education Team.

Problem of Practice

The organization represented in this doctoral project was The Special Education Collaborative (TSEC). At TSEC there was an increase in the number of paraprofessionals that were required to be able to service the students that were presently enrolled. TSEC employed seventy one paraprofessionals; there were more paraprofessionals than there were teachers. At the time of this research, TSEC had no internal orientation, mentoring or training for

paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals entered into the school setting with an unclear job description and were given limited direction relative to their roles and responsibilities. The roles varied from making copies and getting supplies to being academic assistants or substitute teachers. Paraprofessionals were hired as academic support staff, but their actual role was determined by the program to which they were assigned, the teacher, and that teacher's interpretation of the role. Neither the teachers nor the paraprofessionals received any formal training or support regarding how to interpret the role of the paraprofessional. The lack of alignment between the teachers and paraprofessionals' interpretations of these responsibilities can result in a negative impact on student learning (Carnahan, Williamson, Clarke, & Sorensen, 2009).

The researcher was employed by TSEC for eleven years in the role of teacher, program facilitator, and curriculum leader. From these experiences, this researcher learned that organizations that employ paraprofessionals in the classroom must systematically define the role of the paraprofessional, foster the necessary professional competencies, and design appropriate training programs for paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers. It is the researcher's belief that a systematic focus on the roles and responsibilities of classroom paraprofessionals will help to build a stronger educational environment for students by providing both paraprofessionals and lead teachers with the core knowledge, competencies, and skills required to collaboratively strengthen special education programs.

According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010-2011 Edition*, the number of students identified for special education services is increasing and the dependency on paraprofessionals continues to expand. This increasing demand pointed to the need for an in-depth analysis of current practices, existing competencies, and areas that

require improvement. The increasing demand for and incorporation of paraprofessionals also indicated a need for an investigation into the types of training that would help to support their development and facilitate their contributions to special education services (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; D'Aquanni, 1997; Milner, 1998; Pickett, 2002; Young 2006).

Within the current special education teacher-training curriculum, future teachers seldom received any information or instruction on the appropriate ways to include and supervise paraprofessionals in the day-to-day work of the classroom (Hilton & Gerlach, 1997; Scheuermann, Webber, Boutot, & Goodwin, 2003), and both paraprofessionals and teachers require further training regarding the most effective ways to incorporate paraprofessionals into the classroom (Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Scheuermann, et al., 2003). Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, and Doyle (2001) addressed school-wide practices that contributed to the inappropriate utilization of paraprofessionals in the classroom from the perspectives of paraprofessionals, teachers, and parents. They concluded that future research about the roles of paraprofessional's needs to be gathered and analyzed, as well as student outcome data, focus on role alignment, training, supervision, and exploration of best practices in the support of paraprofessionals. Similarly, French's (1998, 2001) work revealed that paraprofessionals have become vital contributors to service delivery in special education programs. Supervising teachers have had little preparation in selecting, hiring, training, or evaluating paraprofessionals (French, 1997, 2001; Mueller, 1997; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1998; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Radaszewski-Byrne, 1997).

Significance

School enrollments are projected to increase slowly over the next decade, with a slightly greater increase among students identified for special education services (Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010). As a result, the employment of paraprofessionals is expected to grow by ten percent between 2008 and 2018. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) also cited the increasing demand for paraprofessionals who were well trained, able to assist students, and teachers in core academic areas (Title 1, Sec.1119./b, Qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals). Such demands required that paraprofessionals and the teachers with whom they work receive more intensive and specific training prior to entering the classroom. With the passage of these laws, states and school districts are still trying to assess what personnel development systems they currently have in place, what remains to be developed to ensure their paraprofessional workforce is well-trained, qualified, and effectively supervised (Likins, 2002). This type of training needs to address the following: (a) the increasingly sophisticated roles that paraprofessionals play in every classroom; (b) the lack of clarity regarding classroom-based roles for teachers and paraprofessionals; (c) the need for effective collaboration between paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers; (d) the lack of explicit strategies to support teachers' supervision and training of paraprofessionals in their classrooms; and (e) the lack of administrative structures needed to support paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers (Giangreco, et al., 2001; Likins, 2002).

Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to identify (a) the current roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in four substantially separate special education classrooms as defined by the program supervisor, the special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (b) the current

training for paraprofessionals as reported by the program supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (c) the perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, as viewed by the program supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (d) the differences and similarities that exist between current training opportunities and perceived training needs of paraprofessionals; and (e) the differences and similarities that exists in the perceptions of the program supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. The data collected was utilized to develop recommendations for a training program that is based on a thorough review of best practices and the strengths and weaknesses of the current process as revealed by the case study. The research questions for this doctoral project were as followed:

1. How were the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, who work with special education students perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative?
2. How were the current training practices of paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals?
3. What were the training needs identified for paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative? How did the role of the supervisor, special education teacher, and paraprofessionals describe these needs?
4. What were the current structures that are in place for training paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative and to what degree did these structures align with the participants' experiences?

Theoretical Framework

French (2003) described the management role associated with paraprofessionals and how the seven executive functions that are associated with paraprofessional supervision may be shared among members of the educational team. The seven executive functions associated with paraprofessional supervision were used to analyze and frame the questions for this research study. Each element of the framework was presented in detail to provide a better understanding of how this framework would be utilized in this research study.

A single professional is often responsible for performing all of the functions associated with paraprofessional guidance, supervision, and support. These functions are often performed by the individual teacher that the paraprofessional is assigned to or to a team of teachers depending on the paraprofessional's role (French, 2003). Either way the executive functions remained the same: orientation, task delegation, scheduling, planning for the paraprofessional, on-the-job training, performance evaluation, and work environment management. Although these seven skill areas are general supervisory tasks, research indicated that schools are not currently providing this level of supervision to paraprofessionals (Frank, Keith & Steil, 1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). In addition, Young (2006) supported French's findings and also argued that adequate training needs to focus on decision making, delegation, planning, and teachers' supervisory effectiveness. The importance of administrators recognizing the need for regularly scheduled time for teachers and paraprofessionals to plan together is essential.

Orientation.

When people accept employment, they typically experience an initial orientation to the workplace and the specific job duties, as well as the introduction to their fellow employees

(Steele, 1994). Such an orientation has not been the case for many paraprofessionals (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). According to French (1998), many paraprofessionals enter their first day on the job with little adult contact and no information about the layout of the school building, the school rules, the emergency procedures, other faculty, appropriate materials, and instructions for the students with whom they will be working with.

French (2003), continued to explain that there are five components of paraprofessional orientation: introductions, written information review, getting acquainted interview, work style preference analysis, and needs versus skills analysis. First, the newly employed paraprofessional or the newly transferred paraprofessional should be introduced to the other people who work in the school and introduced to whomever they will be working with directly. Second, the paraprofessional should be provided with any and all written policies and procedures used in the school building (Gerlach, 2010). They should minimally include: (a) emergency and safety procedures; (b) school rules; (c) routines and standard procedures; (d) school calendar; (e) building schedule; (f) phone numbers of fellow employees; (g) protocols for reporting absences; and (h) information about emergency school closings (French, 2003). The school handbook, when available, should be provided to all staff, including paraprofessionals, at the beginning of the school year before the start of their first day on the job (Pickett & Gerlach, 2004). Ideally, French (2003) believed that there should be a meeting with a school administrator or designee to review all of the procedures and to clarify any questions that may arise.

The third component of paraprofessional orientation should include getting to know individuals and team members with whom the individual will work with through the use of a structured opportunity to interview one another. Alexander (1987) and Emery (1991) recommended that the teacher and paraprofessional engage in a systematic interview and that the

interviews be documented. The questions should be structured to help both the teachers and the paraprofessionals get to know one another well enough to establish a strong working relationship. This orientation interview is not meant to replace a hiring interview; rather, it is meant to take place at the beginning of employment to help newly employed paraprofessionals gain knowledge of the building, the classroom routines and provide the team members a chance to get to know one another.

The fourth component of paraprofessional orientation should include an introduction to the role of the paraprofessional, the schedule, and the specific job duties that will be required of them. The need for job descriptions for paraprofessionals is well-documented (Blalock, 1991; Chung, 2006; French, 1999; Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Pardee, 1992; Pickett, 1986; Pickett, Vasa, & Steckelberg, 1993; Stallings, 2000). Since some of the roles of the paraprofessional have the possibility of overlapping with others' professional responsibilities, it is important to ensure that their questions are answered and that it is clear what is expected of them. According to French (2003), defining the job of paraprofessionals involves five basic steps: (a) create a task list for paraprofessionals; (b) ask the paraprofessional to review the list; (c) analyze the list; (d) create a personalized job description; and (e) determine training needs of the paraprofessional (p. 80-88). This includes creating a list of tasks for which the paraprofessional requires additional training to develop the necessary skills and competencies to be able to be successful on the job.

French further went on to identify the fifth component of orientation as completing a work style preferences analysis. This will provide the teacher and the paraprofessional the opportunity to discuss and analyze both of their preferred work styles. The teacher reflects on his or her own preferences in order to communicate them to the newly employed paraprofessional. The paraprofessional then clarifies their own preferences in order to

communicate them. This exercise is intended to be a way for communication to occur about how they will work together. Knowing one another's preferences will enable the team to be able to work more effectively and efficiently with one another. It is important for both of them to realize that style preferences are not good or bad, but simply that they exist. The lack of initial recognition of differences often creates interpersonal problems between the paraprofessionals and the teachers. Tolerance and management of these differences begins with the recognition of work style preferences.

French also explained the need for the supervisor to analyze the program, the learners' needs, and then compare these needs to the paraprofessional's skill level. Depending on the grade, classroom, and program that the paraprofessional is working in, the expectations for each setting may be completely different from their last setting (D'Aquanni, 1997; Fletcher-Campbell, 1992; Pickett, 1999). It may be helpful to develop a needs inventory for the classroom that is shared with the paraprofessional. This way the paraprofessional can identify their own preparation and comfort levels regarding each needed area and task.

Task delegation.

According to French (2003), delegation is another executive function that is fundamentally important to the supervision of paraprofessionals. According to Pickett (1997), delegation is the process of getting things done through others who have been trained to handle them; it is the act of entrusting enough authority to another person to get the task done without giving up responsibility. As the classroom teacher, delegating tasks to paraprofessionals who are prepared to do the tasks requires the teacher to monitor the completion of the task because they remain ultimately responsible and accountable for the outcomes of the instruction and the outcomes of their students.

There are numerous reasons why teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals. First, delegation frees the teachers to do work that cannot be delegated to others. Second, it increases teachers' productivity; by delegating tasks to a paraprofessional it can double the amount of work that is accomplished by the teacher. Third, it provides the opportunity for others to develop new skills and initiatives (Pickett, 1997). Therefore, not only is delegation a way to achieve increased amounts of attention to students, it is also a way to help paraprofessionals grow and develop their own skill sets (French, 2003). Sullivan (1980) wrote that effective delegation requires that the professional "focus on results, not the methods, and allow for mistakes" (p.6). Thus delegation provides guidance without being overbearing. Pickett (1997) stated delegation "must specify the outcomes, the time frame and the level of authority, but should not demand that the paraprofessional perform the task in exactly the same manner as the professional, nor should it demand perfection" (p.105).

Effective delegation requires effective time management. Effective time management requires the examination of tasks in terms of two factors: the degree to which it is pressing and the consequences of completing the task or not completing the task (Pickett, 1997). A task is pressing if someone is urged to attend to it or to complete it immediately (French, 2003). The pressing nature of a task may be determined by assessing the consequences of not doing the task immediately, by the absences or presence of a demanding person, or by organizational expectations. There is a continuum of tasks given to paraprofessionals. Some are minor contributions and some are major contributions to the classroom setting. Each teacher and paraprofessional needs to judge the consequences of each task according to the contribution that the task has to their program goals and outcomes (French, 2003).

Many school professionals fail to delegate specific tasks to paraprofessionals, except in limited ways (Drawbaugh, 1984). Although responsible delegation can assist paraprofessionals in gaining new skills and initiatives, research indicated that teachers are not prepared or comfortable delegating tasks to them (Cramer, 1997; French, 1998, 2001). One of the main reasons why teachers do not necessarily delegate tasks is because when they enter into the profession they are unprepared to supervise other adults (Vasa, Steckelberg, & Ulrich-Ronning, 1982). Many university programs have not prepared teachers to think of themselves as managers who are required to fulfill these executive functions (French, 1998; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Many teachers began their careers under the inaccurate assumption that they alone would have to do everything needed to provide instruction for their students. Delegation is a process that consists of a series of six steps, which can be learned by school professionals even if they entered the profession not believing that paraprofessional supervision was part of their job (French, 2003). These six steps are much like the steps identified by Douglas (1979) who worked with corporate executives on similar issues. These steps include analyzing the task, deciding what to delegate, creating a plan, selecting the right person, directing the task, and monitoring the performance of the task. The effective manager will provide ongoing coaching and feedback about the task rather than removing the task from the paraprofessional (French, 2003).

Managing schedules.

Schedules indicate when tasks should be completed, who should do them, and where people are during the day or the week. They are often developed simultaneously with lessons or work plans by the classroom teacher, provide a display that accompanies specific information contained in the lesson, and the work plan. The plan answers the question, “What does the

paraprofessional do?" The schedule answers the questions "When?" and "Where?" (French, 2003). It is most helpful to have the schedules include information about all team members and be displayed in an area in the classroom where all team members can see it and refer to it. The features of the schedule should include times, locations, and activities of all team members.

Planning.

The slogan "No Child Left Behind" and recent legislative actions focused the nation's attention on accountability for student learning and outcomes (Section 1119 (2)). Planning is essential if we intend to achieve excellent student outcomes for typical students. It is even more critical to plan effective curriculum, instruction, modifications, and adaptations if we intend to achieve acceptable outcomes for students whose learning does not come easy or who are at risk for educational failure (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Giangreco, et al., 2001; Haller, 2007; Wiener & Tardif, 2004).

It is the teacher's, or other school professional's, responsibility to provide plans for the paraprofessional to follow (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Devlin, 2008). However, when no one plans the lessons that the paraprofessional is supposed to deliver, it means that the paraprofessionals, who are unprepared to plan lessons, are on their own to design the instruction and the adaptations and modifications for the students (Devlin, 2008). It is not legal or ethical for a special education paraprofessional to create or plan modifications or adaptations of lessons that have been designed by general educators (Council for Exceptional Children, 2003; Devlin, 2008; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). It is the classroom teacher's duty to plan the lessons, the modifications, and the adaptations according to the students Individualized Education Plan, with consultation from other appropriate professionals (Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). The paraprofessional is then able to apply the general modification plan to the

specific instructional activity or task on a day-to-day basis (Ashbaker, Young & Morgan, 2001; Blacher & Rodriguez, 2007; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007).

Plans do not necessarily have to adhere to a predetermined format or outline. Most professional teams use their creative talents to design forms and formats for responding to the unique characteristics of their own students, classrooms, and needs (French, 2003; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). The factors that should be considered include the skills and preferences of the individual students involved, as well as the needs of the program, and the classroom as a whole. However, the more consistent and the more user friendly the planning tool is the more likely it will be utilized and followed through with (Cramer, 1997; Devlin, 2008; French, 2003). The user friendliness of the form and format is best judged by the paraprofessionals themselves because they are the ones that have to follow them. The teacher also needs to ensure that the use of terminology and reading level on these forms is consistent with the paraprofessional's knowledge and literacy level (Council For Exceptional Children, 2003; French, 2003; French 1998). Any newly created forms should be pilot tested for a period of time to allow for feedback, to work out the kinks, and to correct omissions (French 2003; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). Since there are many variations in programs and service delivery options that these students receive, it is almost impossible to create just a few standard forms that would work for every team member and student (Blacher & Rodriguez, 2007). The teacher may have to develop forms for each paraprofessional and student, depending on the paraprofessionals' and students' schedule, demands, and job duties (French 2003; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). These planning forms may vary in content and style according to the unique needs of the team members and students, but they should always include the goal and purpose of the activity/lesson and should meet the dual tests of ease of use and user friendliness (French, 2003).

A good plan is brief, easy to read at a glance, and relatively easy to write. They also contain certain key components. A good plan specifies how to do the task, the purpose of the task or lesson, the specific student needs to be addressed or strengths on which to capitalize, the materials to use, and the type of data needed to determine whether the student achievement is satisfactory, moving in the right direction or unsatisfactory (French, 2003; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). It is also important for the paraprofessional to understand how the task fits into the broader goals and outcomes for the student.

The paraprofessional holds the ethical responsibility to follow written plans and oral directions provided by any or all school professionals assigned to the student with disabilities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2003, 2010; French, 2003). The written plans do not need to be complex, but they must be developed by the professionals who assessed the student and developed the IEP (Council for Exceptional Children, 2003; French, 2003).

The tasks that paraprofessionals perform vary substantially in complexity and risk; therefore, the type and level of planning will also need to vary depending on the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessional. Too often, no one plans for paraprofessionals (French, 2001). When this happens, paraprofessionals are left alone to design and deliver instruction. French (2003) identified planning variables that teachers should take into consideration when planning the tasks of paraprofessionals: (a) paraprofessional experience, skills and training; (b) complexity of the task; and (c) the risks involved.

On-the-job training/mentoring.

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) cited the increasing demand for paraprofessionals who are well trained and able to assist students and teachers in core academic areas (Title 1, Sec.1119./b, Qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals). Such demands require that

paraprofessionals and the teachers with whom they work receive more intensive and specific training prior to entering the classroom. With the passage of these laws, states and school districts are "scrambling to assess what personnel development systems they currently have in place, and…what remains to be developed to ensure their paraprofessional workforce is well-trained, qualified, and effectively supervised" (Likins, 2002, p. 6).

Giangreco and Broer (2005) stated that paraprofessionals who work with students with special needs do not have the same training as certified or licensed teachers. However, these individuals are usually assigned to work one-on-one with students with significant learning difficulties, emotional or behavior disorders, developmental cognitive delays, or autism. Additional training opportunities and in-services for paraprofessionals throughout the school year with topics on how to support students with special needs are suggested by multiple researchers (Blacher & Rodriguez, 2007; Broer, Doyle, & Giangreco, 2005; Devlin, 2008; Etscheidt, 2005; Giangreco & Broer, 2005, 2007; Hammeken, 2009; Hebdon, 2008; Hughes & Valle-Riestra, 2008; Malmgren, Causton-Theoharis, & Trezek, 2005; Szwed, 2007).

Training activities may be provided in numerous ways. Some training may occur on the job, incidentally throughout the day or week, or during team meetings. Other knowledge and skills demand a more formal setting, perhaps a workshop, course, or seminar held either outside of the school day or away from the school setting. To be most effective, training should include theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching for application (Joyce & Showers, 1980). According to Joyce and Showers (1980), theory means that the skills, strategies, and components are clearly explained or described; demonstration describes or shows how the skill, strategy, or concept is applied in realistic situations; practice means that the paraprofessional actually tries out the skill or applies the concept; and feedback then is provided to the

paraprofessional regarding their performance so that, in this safe situation, the paraprofessional can continue to practice until the skill is developed well enough to use on the job. Coaching occurs on the job while the paraprofessional is working with the students.

Coaching is the most significant of all training practices; it allows for fine tuning of newly acquired skills, so that these skills can become part of the paraprofessional's repertoire of skills (Joyce & Showers, 1980). Without coaching, newly acquired skills may not be applied correctly or consistently. When teachers take on the role of coaching, they must be sure to separate the coaching function from the evaluative aspect of their job. Paraprofessionals will not thrive in situations where the teachers' coaching actions make them feel as though they are being evaluated. Teachers need to be sure to provide feedback so that the coaching does not feel like a threat to the paraprofessional (Joyce & Showers, 1980).

A need assessment is the most commonly used tool for identifying the preferences and desires of paraprofessionals and provides information about where to start a training program for paraprofessionals (French, 2003). While needs assessments do provide some sense of preference and give insight into what paraprofessionals already know about their training needs, they cannot possibly identify all the training needs of paraprofessionals in regards to all the possible knowledge or skills they may need. This will help the planning process for developing professional development activities that are appropriate for paraprofessionals.

When planning professional development for paraprofessionals it is important to recognize that formal classroom, style training is a preferred mode for numerous aspects of instructional knowledge and skills (Carroll, 2001; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001; Frank, et al., 1988). Many research findings on staff development for teachers also apply to training for paraprofessionals (Carroll, 2001; Emery, 1991; Frank, et al., 1988; French, 2001, 2003; Frith &

Lindsey, 1982; Gerlach, 2010). When planning paraprofessional training, there are several concepts to keep in mind regarding the delivery of the training. The training must include: (a) adult learning principles; (b) the content of curriculum for paraprofessional training; and (c) the cost and needs of paraprofessional training materials (Carroll, 2001; Emery, 1991; Frank, Keith, & Steil, 1988; French, 2001, 2003; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Gerlach, 2010). There are several sources of training materials currently available for paraprofessionals. The materials, however, are not of equal quality. Some materials provide inappropriate instruction, unnecessary instruction, incorrect information, or advocate a particular point of view (French, 2003).

Along with training paraprofessionals comes the need to document their efforts. Each paraprofessional should have a paraprofessional growth and development plan (French, 2003). The teachers who supervise the paraprofessionals should lead the work of creating a growth and development plan that specifies: (a) the training that is needed or desired; (b) the person responsible for securing or arranging the training; (c) the date by which it will be accomplished; and (d) the accountability measures that will assure application of the training to the job duties (French, 2003). Documenting paraprofessionals' training is important. First, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) cited the increasing demand for paraprofessionals who are well trained, able to assist students and teachers in core academic areas, and it demanded that this training be documented by the paraprofessional and the school department (Title 1, Sec.1119./b, Qualifications for teachers and paraprofessionals). Second, paraprofessionals are more valuable to the school or program when they acquire more skills. Third, paraprofessionals deserve to be recognized and honored for increasing their skill levels. Fourth, by documenting paraprofessionals' training and skill acquisition it helps to establish the importance of the training in the culture of the team and the school. It also provides safeguards in two situations:

(a) working with paraprofessionals who do not meet the employment standards and (b) protecting the safety and wellbeing of the students that they service (French, 2003).

Monitoring performance.

Another facet of supervising paraprofessionals is monitoring performance. Pickett (1997) states "evaluation of paraeducators' job performance requires judgment and should be based on fair performance standards, first hand observations, written data, and appropriate documentation of performance" (p. 129). Performance monitoring adds an extra burden to a teacher's already full schedule of duties, but it is essential to insure that the paraprofessional is performing his/her duties responsibly. Monitoring a paraprofessional's performance of assigned tasks ensures that the task will be done correctly and in a timely fashion. The word monitoring means "observation". Observation of a paraprofessional's task performance and behavior is essential to performance monitoring, to feedback, and the evaluation process (French, 2003, p. 145).

Often there are times that teachers play a substantial role in the evaluation of paraprofessional performance. Even when their professional contracts prohibit direct evaluative responsibilities, teachers are often asked to contribute information that will assist in summative evaluation processes that are required by the district or organization. The teachers' input into this process should go beyond the district's or organization's formal evaluation procedure and be used to help promote paraprofessional growth and development (Pickett et al., 1993). Evaluating paraprofessional performance can highlight the need for additional training or coaching or may identify high quality work. However, support for teachers in this role requires that administrators hold teachers responsible, accountable for their programs, and the production of

their teams. The administrators also need to support teachers' on-the-job training, coaching, and provide teachers feedback on their supervisory skills (Pickett & Gerlach 2003).

The supervisory function of monitoring performance is best accomplished through first hand observations of task performance. Observations can be focused or unfocused depending on the data and the anticipated outcomes that one expects from it or the specific target behavior. The skill or task that needs to be observed dictates the type of data to be collected. An unfocused observation is used when the observer is prepared to look for any of the skills or tasks that have already been assigned to the paraprofessional. Focused observations, on the other hand, are used when there has been specific on-the-job training, conversations, or coaching on particular skills and tasks. Different levels of development are expected at different stages of the paraprofessional's employment (Hilton & Gerlach, 1997, p. 12). Performance monitoring can be used to determine where the next area of focus should be for a paraprofessional to continue to grow as a professional in the field of special education.

Managing the work environment.

Managing the work environment is the last of the executive functions of paraprofessional supervision (French, 2003). With all of the team members working together, there is an ongoing need for effective communication, problem solving, and conflict management (Pickett & Gerlach, 2004). These components compromise the executive function referred to as workplace management. School professionals must plan to accomplish each workplace management component.

Communication is a fundamental team skill (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Friend & Cook, 1996; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). Effective communication requires skill, but even highly skilled team members cannot consistently share information if there is no system in place. The

best communication systems allow for two way communication to occur (Friend & Cook, 1996). Written communication is just one form that is often used between teachers and paraprofessionals. However, other communication systems that are used are quite successful as well (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). For example, back and forth notebooks, notes on bulletin boards, email, voice messages, and in some cases walkie-talkies, or cell phones are utilized when they are working in separate parts of the building. No matter what means of communication is established, it is just as important to have meetings and face-to-face communication as needed (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Friend & Cook, 1996; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). Regularly scheduled meetings are a necessary part of communication, problem solving, and conflict management. When planning meetings, there are six considerations for planning to have regularly scheduled, productive meetings with paraprofessionals: time, group norms, meeting location, agendas, documenting decisions, and reviewing effectiveness of the meetings (Pickett & Gerlach, 2004).

A problem solving sequence is the second plan that needs to be developed and maintained (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Friend & Cook, 1996; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). Sometimes paraprofessionals and teachers need to jointly solve problems that have to do with students, schedules, materials use, space, and instruction. This can be done most efficiently and effectively when team members agree on a problem-solving process. A problem solving process should include deciding whether to solve the problem, deciding the criteria for a successful solution, generating possible alternative solutions, comparing each alternative solution to the criteria, selecting one or more alternatives to implement, planning how to monitor, and evaluate the solution (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Friend & Cook, 1996; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001).

The third plan should include how to deal with work place conflict (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Friend & Cook, 1996; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001). First, all parties must agree that there is a need to resolve the conflict; second the group must consider what will happen if the conflict goes on without intervention; third, the group must clarify what the conflict is about; fourth, they need to generate options as to how to solve the problem; and fifth, the involved parties must select a solution and agree to adhere to it (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). The teams need to be certain that they have created a solution that will work, make up implementation plans, and specify who is doing what, where, when, and how. Finally, the group members will know that the problem has been resolved when the conflict is no longer consuming the energy of the group or of individual team members.

The success of conflict resolution and conflict management lies in the skills of the parties in the conflict. Good communication skills, such as good listening habits, phrasing of confrontational statements, and the ability to positively reframe and restate the problem increase the likelihood of the team being able to achieve a resolution (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). Well-functioning workplaces are based on effective teamwork. Many effective team members and leaders have learned how to establish communication, how to problem solve, and how to manage and resolve conflicts (French, 2003).

Implications for the investigation.

For the purpose of this study, the seven executive functions associated with paraprofessional supervision were utilized to analyze the literature and frame the questions. Each element of the framework is presented in detail to provide a better understanding of how this framework was utilized in this research study.

The executive functions are orientation, delegating tasks, scheduling, planning for the paraprofessional, on-the-job training, performance evaluation, and managing the work environment. Although these seven skills areas are general supervisory tasks, research indicated that schools are not currently providing this level of supervision to paraprofessionals (Frank, et al., 1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

Each one of these seven executive functions as outlined above was the foundation for the interview protocols that were written for the program supervisor, teachers, and paraprofessionals in this research study. Three interview protocols were developed for use in individual interviews: one for the program supervisor, one for the special education teachers, and one for the paraprofessionals (Appendices B, C, and D). Wording was modified to reflect the role differences among interviewees. Each interview question was based on the seven executive functions that French (2003) identified as functions that are often performed by the individual teacher or to a team of teachers that the paraprofessional is assigned to, depending on the paraprofessionals' role (French, 2003). The Observational Documentation Protocol (Appendix E) and the Document Analysis Protocol (Appendix F) also follow the same seven executive functions. Having all of the interviews, observations, and document analysis protocols follow the same patterns assisted the researcher in organizing and triangulating the data that was collected. This also provided a systematic way to present the results of the study.

Research Design

Research Questions

Employing, developing, and directing paraprofessionals is a multi-faceted endeavor and involves every level of a school district. The specific work of paraprofessionals is affected not only by individual student needs, but also by the ways in which teachers, administrators,

organizational structures, and functions interact with the work of paraprofessionals. The purpose of this case study was to determine: (a) the current roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in substantially separate special education classroom as defined by their supervisor, the special education teachers and paraprofessionals; (b) the training practices for paraprofessionals as perceived by their supervisors, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals in substantially separate special education programs; (c) the perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, as viewed by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (d) the differences and similarities that exist between current training opportunities and perceived training needs of paraprofessionals; and (e) the differences and similarities that exists in perceptions of the supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. The analysis and findings of this study will be utilized to help initiate and eventually develop a tailored paraprofessional training program that will address the identified gaps between the current practices, the perceived practices, and the current training needs of paraprofessionals. The research questions for this doctoral project are as follows:

1. How were the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, who work with special education students perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative?
2. How were the current training practices of paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals?
3. What were the training needs identified for paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative? How did the role of the supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals describe these needs?

4. What were the current structures that are in place for training paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative and to what degree did these structures align with the participants' experiences?

Approach

The research questions called for a qualitative approach, because the researcher sought to examine the experience of a group of individuals exploring a particular educational problem at TSEC (Creswell, 2009). The primary unit of analysis for this case study was TSEC and how it offered support and services to the paraprofessionals that were employed. The embedded case study included the individual participants, their roles within the organization, and the classroom. The researcher selected a descriptive case study methodology to capture the rich and complex details of the problem of practice. Yin (2009) explained that a case study approach is appropriate when: "a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 9). The project met each of these conditions. The case study approach was also appropriate because the researcher was studying a phenomenon that was inseparable from the context in which it occurs and included many more variables than data points (Yin, 2009). The phenomenon that was being investigated was a complex organizational issue with a large number of interconnected variables. For example, there are many different classrooms, types of students, and student needs that have to be addressed and the paraprofessionals need to be trained to deal with many of these different variables. However, the researcher studied how these different variables functioned within a small group of middle school supervisor, teachers, and paraprofessionals. If a quantitative study was completed there would not be enough data points to be able to include all these variables with such a small number of participants. This case study is primarily descriptive in nature (Yin,

2009). The description, however, is not a simple enumeration of facts, but a "thick" description of the contextual experiences of individual paraprofessionals, teachers, and their supervisor (Merriam, 2009).

This case study served to systematize, document and disseminate the perceptions of the special education supervisor, special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals themselves. The diversity of responses and the shared principles emerging from the results and analysis of the research questions demonstrates the complexity of this practice. The focus on the experiences of individual paraprofessionals, their supervising teachers, and their special education supervisor working at TSEC in the middle school self-contained classrooms helped the researcher achieve the data that was needed to eventually guide, develop, and establish an effective training program for paraprofessionals that is transferrable to other school districts and possibly more broadly to the State Department of Education. This research has also been presented at The 29th National Paraprofessional Conference that was held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on May12-14, 2011. This presentation helped others to realize that there continues to be a need to develop policies, trainings, and guidelines that will more effectively tap into resources for the paraprofessional workforce.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations of this study that must be noted. It was conducted in two suburban middle schools located in southeastern New England. These four classrooms are part of The Special Education Collaborative (TSEC). While this setting may limit the applicability of this study to other settings, it can also encourage others to conduct studies that add to the researcher's findings. In addition, the experiences of the participants interviewed and observed in this study may not reflect others working in other classrooms or school settings. The

researcher has thoroughly explain and documented the context of the study including information about the organization and each participating school so that readers may determine if this study will be easily transferable to other settings.

Due to time and financial constraints, this research study was designed for and conducted by only one researcher, who was responsible for all data collections, analyses, and interpretation of results. An additional researcher or two working on this study would have allowed an additional level of validity and reliability, as collection and analysis could have been verified by them.

The researcher guarded against her own personal biases by thoroughly documenting each step of the research process in a researcher's journal so that the researcher could double-check her perceptions and ideas throughout the phases of data collection and analysis. The researcher is currently employed by TSEC as a Curriculum Leader 49% of the time and a Lead Teacher 51% of the time. The researcher oversees and mentors three teachers who have just advanced their degree and certification to an Initial License. These three staff were all paraprofessionals at TSEC before taking on their role as a classroom teacher. As a former Special Education Teacher, the researcher has had the opportunity to work closely with paraprofessionals for over twelve years. The researcher worked at the Vocational Training Center, the Pre-Vocational Middle School Classrooms, and the Bridge program, which are all located at TSEC. At times, there were as many as six paraprofessionals in these classrooms with as many as eleven students. This was very difficult to manage; there were too many adults and too many students. In the role as a curriculum developer, the researcher has assisted with various training efforts for both paraprofessionals and supervising teachers. As a practitioner, the researcher has spent an abundant amount of time reviewing books and articles regarding the roles and responsibilities of

paraprofessionals as well as the role of the supervising teacher prior to the role of a researcher. Therefore, the researchers own experiences had to be guarded by ensuring the documentation of each step of the process in a researcher's journal to ensure that the researchers own perceptions and ideas were not skewed but are true to the findings in the research. The researchers SPC group was also used as a peer interpretative community to help guard against research biases. The SPC members were asked to challenge the researcher's thoughts and findings in the research to ensure that the researchers own biases did not skew the results. The SPC group also helped to keep the findings specific to the research study.

Protection of Human Subjects

The participants in this study were all adults and full time employees of The Special Education Collaborative. They included the following: one program supervisor who serviced the middle school substantially separate population; four special education teachers; and nine paraprofessionals. All participants were assured of confidentiality and signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study. The consent form was submitted to the University's Institutional Review Board for approval (see Appendix A). In addition, throughout the document analysis, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants in the study. Once the data analysis and the project is approved by the Doctoral Committee, all digitally recorded material will be deleted.

Participation in this study did not present obvious risks to the participants. The project documented the interviews using pseudonyms and it did not impose any treatment or interventions that may have had consequences on faculty or students. Therefore, participation in this project did not put the well-being or rights of any of the staff at risk. Participants may actually benefit from involvement in the project by being provided the opportunity to speak

openly about the types of trainings that they would like to receive. This opportunity may result in additional professional development for them to participate in and to grow as professionals. Participants may experience empowerment through contributing to the systematization and distribution of their practices, which will offer recognition of their viewpoints, knowledge, and experiences.

Participation in this study was voluntary and the selection process was fair and nondiscriminatory. It was also made clear that the researchers commitment to and support of this project is part of her professional role and the participants' willingness or unwillingness to participate in this research project would not affect them in any way. The participants were assured that the data collected would be held in the strictest confidence and would have no effect on their employment at TSEC. The data that was collected was not used for evaluative purposes.

An agreement was obtained from the Executive Director of TSEC stating that any data revealed during this research project would not be used for faculty evaluation purposes and would not have any effect on their employment at TSEC. The participants were also told of this and reminded that their evaluation process was outlined in their Union Contract so their participation in this study would not affect any evaluation on their performance as an employee at The Special Education Collaborative. The research results were reported without revealing the identity of the participants; however, because this organization is small and the work is known throughout the Collaborative, guaranteed anonymity at the local level was not entirely possible. However, participants were not named in any reports and their identities were concealed to the greatest degree possible.

A participant could fear embarrassment over revealing how unsuccessful the current practices are in their classrooms and in the organization as a whole. These participants' well-

being was safeguarded by ensuring a critical analysis of challenges and obstacles that are faced by the organization as a whole and not framed as individual failures. Though this threat seems unlikely, the participants' well-being was safeguarded through respondent validation techniques and ensured participants of their right to approve or request removal of any aspect in the results that they may have felt were damaging in any way.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The various titles attached to paraprofessionals, like teachers' aides, educational assistants, and paraeducators, reflect the variety of roles and responsibilities assigned to this subgroup of the special education team (California Department of Education, 2008; French, 2003; Moody, 1967; Pickett, 2002; Pickett, Gerlach, Morgan, Likins & Wallace, 2007; Shadgett, 1967; Young, 2006). A paraprofessional is a school employee who works under the supervision of a certified or licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instruction and other services to children and their families (Pickett, 1999). In other words, paraprofessionals are employees, who after having appropriate training, perform tasks as prescribed and supervised by a licensed/certified professional/practitioner (Trautman, 2004). Today's paraprofessionals may be found in a pre-kindergarten class for children with special needs, out in the community serving as job coaches for students with developmental disabilities, in a resource room for adolescents with learning disabilities, in a substantially separate classroom, or in a heterogeneous classroom (French, 1998). Despite these varied settings and responsibilities, paraprofessionals' skills are often not effectively or efficiently developed or supported (D'Aquanni, 1997; Fletcher-Campbell, 1992; Pickett, 1999). Poorly defined roles, responsibilities, and lack of direction decrease the effectiveness of paraprofessionals in classrooms and may contribute to a decrease in achievement of student receiving assistance from the paraprofessionals (French, 2003; McKenzie, 2008; Pickett, et al., 2007; York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, & Montie, 2006). The intent of this literature review was to collect, present, and critique what prior research has said about educational paraprofessionals' roles, responsibilities, and the training needed to support their contributions. This literature review was guided by the following questions:

1. What does prior research reveal about the changing roles of educational paraprofessionals?
2. What roles and responsibilities have been identified as appropriate for educational paraprofessionals to engage in?
3. What does prior research reveal about current practices for training paraprofessionals?
4. What does existing research conclude are the essential skills and competencies needed for paraprofessionals to provide services effectively to the students with whom they work?
5. What does existing research identify as training needs for teachers to be able to effectively supervise paraprofessionals?

Evolving Roles

Paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities have changed dramatically since they were first introduced into the classroom more than six decades ago (French, 2001; Gerber, Finn, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001; Giangreco, et al., 2001; Pickett, 1999; Trautman, 2004). Many new responsibilities and mandatory assessment requirements have been added to U.S. classrooms over the last 40 years, and the use of paraprofessionals to support students, teachers and classrooms in meeting these increasing demands has grown proportionately (French, 2003; Pickett, 1997). With the beginning of Title I, Head Start, and other compensatory programs in the 1960s and 1970s and the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 (PL 94-142), an evolution in paraprofessionals' roles began to take place (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002). In the early 1960s, there were approximately 10,000 paraprofessionals working in schools, primarily in non-instructional, clerical capacities. By the mid-1990s, the number of

paraprofessionals had grown to between 500,000 and 700,000 nationwide (Pickett, 1999). This significant increase reflects the changing responsibilities of paraprofessionals, as reported by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998): "the intent of using paraprofessionals is to supplement the work of the teacher/service provider" (p. 1). The provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which required schools to serve students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, has also contributed to the rising use of paraprofessionals in schools today.

By the 1980's, however, a strong parent-driven push was started to educate children with disabilities in general education settings alongside students without disabilities. At this time, the regular education initiative began, and parents began to learn about the idea of inclusion (Will, 1986). The role of the paraprofessionals accordingly shifted as students with disabilities began participating in general education classrooms (Bush, 2004; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001; National Education Association, 2008). At this time, paraprofessionals began to provide greater academic support to students (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

Students with more severe disabilities receive most of their education in a self-contained classroom with other students who have similar needs (Chen, 2009). Unlike standard classrooms with a large number of students, most self-contained classrooms are typically smaller settings with fewer students and are created to foster enhanced supports for students with more severe special needs or specific difficulties. A team of educators, the placement team, determines the primary service delivery model for each student. The placement team must consider a variety of documented information for each individual student (United States Department of Education, Student Placement in Elementary and Secondary Schools, Section 504, and Title II of the

Americans with Disabilities Act). As noted previously, current practices have shifted toward the inclusion of all special education students in the general education setting; therefore, the majority of students who might have been assigned to a self-contained classroom are mainstreamed or included in resource rooms. The research available regarding students and paraprofessionals in the self-contained classroom model centers on students' social and emotional needs and successes as compared to their peers in inclusive settings (Brinker, 1985; Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Kennedy, Shukla & Fryxell, 1997; Wiener & Tardif, 2004). Paraprofessionals play a significant role in the support and teaching of students in these classrooms. No specific research could be found about the work that paraprofessionals do in such a specialized setting; therefore, existing research regarding the inclusion of special education students, the roles that paraprofessionals play in these environments and the types of training provided to these educators was used as a guide to help determine appropriate roles and training for paraprofessionals in self-contained classrooms.

Passed in 2002, another landmark education bill attempted to address the preparation of paraprofessionals. The Elementary Secondary Education Act (more commonly known as No Child Left Behind) required paraprofessionals to meet certain educational requirements or obtain state approved certification. Section 1119 Qualifications for Teachers and Paraprofessionals Subsections (1)(c), (1)(d), and (1)(g) require that paraprofessionals must complete an associate degree or 2 years of full-time study at an accredited college. Depending upon an individual states' definition of "full-time study," a college's full year may mean 12 hours per semester (requiring a total of 48 credit hours), or it may mean 15 hours per semester (requiring a total of 60 credit hours) (Causton-Theoharis, 2009). Via state or local assessment, paraprofessionals already hired and working as paraprofessionals need to demonstrate specific knowledge of

reading, writing, math, and reading readiness as well as an ability to assist in the instruction of these core academic areas (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

Paraprofessionals perform multiple tasks to meet the diverse learning needs of students (Aldridge & Goldman, 2002; Carpenter & Dyal, 2007; French & Cabell, 1993; Milner, 1998; Young, 2006). In today's schools and other educational provider agencies, paraprofessional roles include: (a) instructing individual and small groups of learners, (b) documenting data about learner behaviors, performance, and participation in other learner assessment activities, (c) implementing teacher/provider developed behavior management procedures, (d) preparing learner materials, (e) maintaining learning centers, and (f) assisting teachers/providers in efforts to involve families in their child's learning experiences (Mueller, 1997).

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the paraprofessional is no longer limited to clerical responsibilities such as recordkeeping, copying, lunchroom monitor, and bus duty; the paraprofessionals support the instruction, supervision, and classroom management as a member of the school team. Paraprofessional must have the ability to serve effectively as IEP team members responsible for providing educational services to students with disabilities (French, 2003; Haller, 2007; Hawkins, 2008; McKenzie, 2008; Perkins, 2007; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Trautman, 2004).

The American Federation of Teachers (1998) defined the role of an instructional paraprofessional as a noncertified "school employee whose position is either 1) instructional in nature or 2) who provides other direct or indirect services to students and/or their parents" (p. 7). Seventeen years earlier, Pickett (1981) offered a quite similar definition of a paraprofessional:

> A paraprofessional is a person: (1) whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers direct services to students and/or their parents; and (2) who serves in a position

for which a teacher or another professional has ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of individual education programs and other services (p. 2).

Paraprofessionals are members of an instructional team where the certified teacher has the ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of the educational program (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2001; Gerlach, 2010; Milkuleky & Baber, 2005; Milner, 1998; Pickett, 1994, 2002; Young, 2006). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) stipulated that paraprofessionals may perform the following duties:

1. Tutoring outside normal class time.
2. Assisting with classroom management.
3. Assisting in a computer laboratory, library, or media center.
4. Translating.
5. Providing instruction under the direct supervision of a teacher.
6. Conducting parental involvement activities.

(Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965)

The definition that the American Federation of Teachers (1998) uses for paraprofessional responsibilities is to enrich the learning experience for students by assisting in the classroom, performing both administrative and instructional duties that complement and support the instructional plan, and educational goals for particular students.

For many years, educational researchers have been trying to determine the skills required of paraprofessionals (Chung, 2006; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Giangreco et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 2001; Lamont & Hill, 1991; Pickett, 1981, 1986; Stallings, 2000). In summary, they have all found that a great deal of higher level thinking and working skills are required compared to the time when instructional assistants did simple clerical tasks for teachers. They found the

following skills and knowledge necessary for assisting in the classroom: (a) content knowledge (reading, writing, mathematical computation and reasoning), (b) thinking skills (creative thinking, decision making and problem solving, etc.), (c) interpersonal relations (leadership, communication, teamwork, etc.), (d) personal qualities (responsibilities, integrity, self-management, etc.), and (e) competencies that require very specific and advanced training (human growth and development, behavior management, laws, etc.).

Downing, Ryndak, and Clark (2000) reported that paraprofessionals' perceptions regarding these roles and responsibilities were the same (p. 175). Additionally, they found that at times educational paraprofessionals engage in some tasks that are beyond the roles and responsibilities they thought they were being hired to perform (Chung, 2006; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Giangreco et al., 1997; Giangreco et al., 2001; Lamont & Hill, 1991; Pickett, 1981, 1986; Stallings, 2000). These responsibilities include creating lesson plans, providing initial instruction, or being solely responsible for students if a teacher is absent (Etscheidt, 2005; Hammeken, 2009). One of the major findings from Chung's (2006) work with paraprofessionals and their supervisors was a "serious disconnect between tasks that paraeducators reported performing and what teachers (supervisors) think paraeducators are doing" (p. 81). Further, she found that paraprofessionals were doing many more tasks than what the teaching supervisors reported they were doing. Chung also found from the interviews that she conducted that the paraprofessionals perceived that their job roles and responsibilities had changed since they were first hired. This confusion surrounding the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals is evident and needs to be remedied (Blalock, 1991; Chung, 2006; French, 1999; Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Pardee, 1992; Pickett, 1986; Pickett et al., 1993; Stallings, 2000).

A meta-analysis of the roles and responsibilities assigned to paraprofessionals working with special education students in a general education setting was conducted by Giangreco et al. (2002). They reported:

> In today's more inclusive schools, a glance into a general education classroom often presents a different image. The student population is more diverse…It has become increasingly more common to find paraprofessionals assigned to support students with and without disabilities in general education classrooms (p. 47-48).

Their study goes on to request clarification of "agreed-on roles for paraprofessionals" (p. 63). Shortly thereafter, Giangreco and Broer (2005) conducted another study and presented descriptive quantitative data from 737 school personnel and parents who supported the education of students with a full range of disabilities in general education classes. The study addressed how special education teachers and paraprofessionals spend their time and included paraprofessionals', professionals', and parent perspectives about certain paraprofessional practices and about school wide practices that may contribute to reducing inappropriate utilization of special education paraprofessionals.

Similarly, Marks, Schrader, and Levine (1999) examined the perspectives and experiences of 20 paraprofessionals working with inclusion students with significant behavioral challenges. Findings from this study indicated that paraprofessionals tend to assume high levels of responsibility for managing the academic and behavioral needs for special education students in inclusive settings. They found through their interviews that paraprofessionals believed that their job responsibilities included: (a) keeping students with disabilities from "bothering" general education teachers, (b) creating all modifications and adaptations for the students, (c) maintaining responsibility for all aspects of the child's education, and (d) maintaining a sense of

control with managing behaviors (p. 3-5). These findings make it clear that paraprofessionals are charged with a variety of different roles and responsibilities.

The importance of a clearly defined job description cannot be over emphasized and has been well documented in the literature (French, 2003; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). According to French (2003), a personalized job description creates a common basis of understanding the paraprofessional's duties and the circumstances of the work environment. A well-defined job description also clarifies competencies and the necessary training to perform designated tasks. When a formalized job description is absent, and expectations remain vague, resentment may surface when teachers' requests are declined by paraprofessionals. On the other hand, paraprofessionals' skills may be underutilized or misdirected. While commenting on the issue of paraprofessional preparedness, French (1998) wrote:

> Often, authors make no distinction among the training topics desired by people who hold different job titles, who performs specific tasks or duties, or who have different characteristics. Sometimes there is no distinction among the types of training needed to work in different placements (e.g., self-contained vs. resource, elementary vs. secondary), locations (e.g. rural, urban, district, intermediate units), or working conditions (e.g., number of hours worked per week, unique combinations of programmatic duties). Additional training in behavior management and interpersonal communication skills are the most commonly reported need (p. 358).

Thus, it is important to focus on providing a clearly defined job description, support, and training for teachers and paraprofessionals through ongoing collaborative meetings and increasing research efforts in order to identify the best ways to meet these needs.

Training Needs

Not far behind the call for documented roles and responsibilities for educational paraprofessionals is the call for appropriate and timely training (Carroll, 2001; Giangreco, et al., 2001; Riggs, 2001); however, the required training elements have not been defined (Chung, 2006; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002; Griffin-Shirley & Matlock, 2004; Stallings, 2000). For example, in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendment of 1997, which required that paraprofessionals be appropriately trained and supervised (34 CFR §300.136 (f)), the Amendment did not specify the type or amount of training required. Similarly, while the NCLB legislation outlined paraprofessionals' qualifications and duties that they may perform, it did not specify what an appropriate training program should entail (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer and Doyle, 2001).

Paraprofessionals in special education have a high level of responsibility but a low level of training and support to help them do their jobs effectively (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000; Goessling, 1998). Paraprofessionals are often utilized in schools to aid with direct student instruction, and serve as “learner supports” in the delivery of special education and related services for children and youths with disabilities. Although they are hired to work directly with the most challenging students in the school, they often come unprepared for the task. It has become increasingly popular in schools to assign a paraprofessional to work one-on-one with a student or to work with groups of students with significant disabilities. This kind of assignment almost always occurs with no prior training and no ongoing supervision (Frank, Keith, & Steil, 1988; French, 1997, 2003; Hawkins, 2008; Hoover, 1999; McKenzie, 2008; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Riggs, 2001; Young, 2006). There are often no prerequisite skills required for paraprofessionals and training opportunities are limited (Pickett, 1997). Giangreco et al. (1998)

highlighted the problem: “What constitutes an appropriate level of training to be an effective paraeducator is currently a topic of national debate, though there seems to be widespread consensus that some level of training and orientation is required to be effective paraeducators” (p. 16). Although this is an issue of national debate, this is not a new issue.

Riggs (2001) conducted a study that identified the training needs as perceived by paraprofessionals themselves. The following areas were perceived to be of highest priority for training (beginning with the top priority): knowledge of specific disabilities, behavior management, communication, learning styles, and understanding inclusion. Riggs (2001) came to the conclusion that knowledge of specific disabilities, behavior management, working with other adults, and inclusive practices were the most strongly perceived needs for training. Paraprofessionals need and want training. They are able to articulate and delineate the specific areas in which they need training. Additionally, they are consistent with one another in their perceived needs.

Ashbaker, Young and Morgan (2001) completed a literature review and found that educational paraprofessionals perceived their own professionalism and confidence increasing with training, adding to the value they brought to the work they do. Additionally, they were highly motivated to receive training when it was readily available to them. Paraprofessionals also reported that depending on the student population that paraprofessionals are working with, specific training is required to meet the needs of individual students. However, the training was not always readily available or offered at all. These findings are consistent with the research of Riggs (2001), who surveyed 32 paraprofessionals from one of Connecticut’s largest school districts. Riggs discovered that none of the participants had received any introductory training prior to beginning work. The lack of training is a common theme in the reviewed literature.

Research findings presented by Downing et al. (2000) substantiate this lack of training claim. Surveyed paraprofessionals reported that they had received little to no training when they were first hired. The majority of the surveyed paraprofessionals reported that they trained themselves by reading, observing others, and remembering their school experiences as a child. After being paraprofessionals for a few months, the participants responded that they received in-service sessions ranging from 1 hour to 8.5 days per year. When participants were asked what type of training they needed most, the overwhelming majority responded they needed training related to behavioral interventions, specific disabilities, needs of the specific students they worked with, strategies to interact with and teach students, adaptations of curricula, and materials to meet specific students' needs. These skills require high levels of understanding and ability, far from the skills of clerical duties that were once required of paraprofessionals.

Another survey that explored the training perceptions of paraprofessionals was conducted by Wadsworth and Knight (1996). Informal interviews were conducted with six paraprofessionals who worked in secondary, middle, and elementary schools. Perceptions from these individuals further highlighted the differences between what is asked of paraprofessionals and the training they have received. Wadsworth and Knight categorized the data from the survey results into five basic suggestions for required practices, with one overarching suggestion: the implementation of pre-service training through a centralized training team. The training should be systematic and include "on-the-job coaching" as follow-up. More specific follow-up training would depend on individual student needs.

An investigation into the importance of follow-up training was conducted by Love and Levine (1992). They researched the effect stemming from initial training and follow-up training on kindergarten and first grade educational paraprofessionals. Love and Levine's (1992)

findings showed that (a) paraprofessionals had received training in reinforcing reading skills and utilizing motivational strategies and (b) district office administrators judged those paraprofessionals who received this type of training to be more effective at utilizing new strategies. Moreover, the paraprofessionals who received follow-up sessions were rated as being more effective than the paraprofessionals who received only the initial training. The review of literature demonstrated that initial and follow-up training are both beneficial and necessary for educational paraprofessionals.

It is clear that paraprofessionals want training. They want training that is provided in multiple contexts (on-the-job coaching, district in-service, and trainings with teachers and other paraprofessionals they work alongside of). They also want training content (e.g. information regarding specific disabilities, instructional strategies, and behavior management) that is pertinent to the current students and classrooms that they are working in (Pickett, Gerlach, Morgan, Likins & Wallace, 2007). Many previous studies supported the paraprofessionals' request for gaining working knowledge of their role within the classroom as vital to ensuring an optimal learning environment for students and an effective instructional environment for instructors (Haller, 2007; Hawkins, 2008; Milner, 1998; Young, 2006).

Essential Skills and Competencies

Professional organizations, such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, Inc. have all advocated for the development of comprehensive standards and competencies for paraprofessionals (Council for Exceptional Children, 2003; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Moody, 1967). AFT (1998) defined paraprofessional standards as "set criteria for basic skills required for entry into the profession" and the "appropriate pre and in-service

training to identify advanced skills for permanent certification" (p. 5). With the underlying concept that paraprofessionals serve to enrich the learning experiences for students, by assisting in the classroom and performing both administrative and instructional duties that complement and support the instructional plan and education goals of the teacher and the students; the AFT identified four competencies for paraprofessionals: (a) Content Knowledge, (b) Thinking Skills, (C) Interpersonal Relations/Human Relations, and (d) Personal Qualities. These competencies were the first to go beyond the misconception that the only skill required is a desire to work with children (Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999; Moody, 1967).

To ensure that paraprofessional have the required skills for their expanded roles, the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC's) Professional Standards and Practice Standing Committee approved the first set of national standards for the preparation of paraprofessionals of students with disabilities. These standards include the knowledge and skills paraprofessionals need to deliver instruction to students with disabilities, as well as the skills they need to work effectively with an instructional team. In addition, the committee approved standards for the preparation of special educators to supervise and support paraprofessionals. These standards have been incorporated into the Common Core Standards for All Special Educators and reflect the central role that paraprofessionals play on the instructional team (Council for Exceptional Children, 2003).

CEC's Knowledge and Skills Subcommittee worked closely with the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services (NRCPERS) to develop the new standards. The standards were validated by paraprofessionals themselves along with special educators from CEC. The validation survey included samples drawn from paraprofessional members of CEC, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers.

Meanwhile, CEC continues working closely with the NRCPERS task force to identify standards for all instructional paraprofessionals.

As educators rely more frequently on paraprofessionals to help fulfill their professional responsibilities, standards to ensure these individuals are qualified to meet their role are crucial (Causton-Theoharis, 2009). With the growth in the use of paraprofessionals, educators have realized their potential to be strong members of the educational team. From personal management tasks to administering accommodations on tests, paraprofessionals are extending the eyes and hands of special education professionals (Fletcher-Campbell, 1992; Hawkins, 2008). As an essential member of the instructional team, paraprofessionals have to have the knowledge and skills for the responsibilities that they are given.

Like the standards for professional special educators, the paraprofessionals' standards address multiple aspects of education and instruction and provide guidelines for the skills paraprofessionals should have mastered in each domain, including: (a) foundations of special education, (b) characteristics of learners, (c) assessment and evaluation, (d) instruction content and practice, (e) planning and management, (f) student behavior and social interaction, (g) communication and collaboration, and (h) professionalism and ethical practices (Council for Exceptional Children, 2003, 2010). These new standards for professional educators include skills in determining the appropriate roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in relation to instruction, intervention, and direct services, as well as supervising and evaluating paraprofessionals (Council for Exceptional Children, 2010).

Training of Teachers Who Supervise Paraprofessionals

The federal and state mandates as well as the growing number of support personnel in schools, all argue the importance of understanding how teachers and paraprofessionals view the

supervisory process. The restructuring of schools with more children with special needs has also increased the roles and responsibilities of the classroom teacher. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 both have regulations regarding paraprofessionals and their supervision. Section 34 CFR&1119(g)(3)(A) of IDEA 2004, states "paraprofessionals who provide instructional support must work under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher." Section 200.59(c)(2) of NCLB 20001 states "a paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of a teacher if: (1) the teacher prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities the paraprofessional carries out and evaluated the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working; and (2) the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher." The teacher's role now includes the supervision of paraprofessionals and other support staff. Most special education and general education teachers have not had training to supervise another individual.

With the increased numbers and changing responsibilities of paraprofessionals it has forced teachers into assuming supervisory roles. According to French (1998), teachers often feel unqualified to supervise paraprofessionals and are reluctant to provide supervision to paraprofessionals. With the increasing demand and changing responsibilities these misperceptions of roles complicates the supervisory issue even more. Teachers often feel as though 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 increasing need to prepare teachers for the supervisory role they must assume with the growing number of paraprofessionals (Pickett, 1993). As Pickett, Vasa and Steckelberg (1993) pointed out, "in far too many cases, teachers are not prepared to direct paraeducators, to evaluate their performance, to provide feedback and training, or to assess

the potential for greater use of paraeducators in order to free teachers to provide increased instructional services" (p. 31). As well as being the primary educators in the classroom, teachers have evolved into supervisors in relation to working with paraprofessionals (Pickett, 1997). It is often the classroom teacher, who bears the responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of paraprofessionals. A review of several studies (French, 2003; Giangreco, 2007; Haller, 2007; Hawkins, 2008; McKenzie, 2008; Mikulecky & Baber, 2005: Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Trautman, 2004; Young 2006) concluded that many teachers do not feel prepared from their instructional preparation programs and that they did not include concentrated lessons on dealing with students with disabilities or managing paraprofessionals.

In addition to the problematic lack of supervisory preparation, teachers and paraprofessionals often have differing perceptions of what this supervisory role for teachers entails (D'Aquanni, 1997; Milner, 1998; Mueller, 1997). In order to address this confusion, French (2003) developed a framework comprising seven executive functions of paraprofessional supervision that include: orientation, planning work assignments, scheduling, task delegating, on-the-job training and mentoring, daily performance monitoring, and managing the workplace. 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 mandate the appropriate supervision of paraprofessionals. The need to study how paraprofessionals are supervised has become more apparent since the changing numbers of paraprofessionals has increased dramatically.

Literature Review Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to develop a better understanding of the specific roles and responsibilities assigned to paraprofessionals who work in substantially separate

classrooms. This information has led to a research project that will ultimately assist school districts in creating more relevant job descriptions and providing appropriate trainings for paraprofessionals. Having a specific job description for paraprofessionals will facilitate and guide appropriate paraprofessional training. The current research on the supervisory role of the teacher and direct supervision of paraprofessionals will be used to clarify the teacher's role in paraprofessional training. The intention of this investigation was also to lay the groundwork for this study that will contribute to the research concerning the roles, responsibilities, training, and supervision of paraprofessionals. Additionally, this work seeks to assist others in understanding and adequately addressing paraprofessionals' changing roles and training needs. To this end, the recognition of paraprofessionals as vital members of a school's educational team will be a priority.

Chapter III

Research Design

Research Questions

Employing, developing, and directing paraprofessionals is a multi-faceted endeavor and involves every level of a school district. The specific work of paraprofessionals is affected not only by individual student needs, but also by the ways in which teachers, administrators, organizational structures and functions interact with the work of paraprofessionals. The purpose of this case study is to determine (a) the current roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals as defined by their supervisor, the special education teachers and paraprofessionals, (b) the training practices for paraprofessionals as perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals, (c) the perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, as viewed by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals, (d) the differences and similarities that exist between current training opportunities and perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, and (e) the differences and similarities that exist in the perceptions of the supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. The analysis and findings of this study will be utilized to help develop a tailored paraprofessional training program that will address the identified gaps between the current practices, the perceived practices, and the current training needs of paraprofessionals. The research questions for this doctoral project are as follows:

1. How were the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, who work with special education students perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers and paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative?

2. How were the current training practices of paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers and paraprofessionals?
3. What were the training needs identified for paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative? How did the role of the supervisor, special education teachers and paraprofessionals describe these needs?
4. What were the current structures that are in place for training paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative and to what degree do these structures align with the participants' experiences?

Methodology

Context

The research site for this doctoral project was The Special Education Collaborative (TSEC). Four middle school classrooms within TSEC were utilized as the site and the participants for this case study. TSEC's current practices and needs in regards to training paraprofessionals will be included in the document review section of the case study. Educational Collaboratives are formed through an agreement among two or more school committees to provide educational programs or services for their member districts or their member school systems. Collaboratives in southeastern New England are approved by the Commissioner of Education under the provision of Chapter 40, Section E of the General Laws (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008). Collaboratives are managed by a Board representative from each of the member school committees, and are funded through local school committee budgets to serve public school students. Educational collaboratives offer special education services that would be difficult to provide locally. Many collaboratives also offer vocational education

programs and provide professional development programming (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008).

TSEC is located in the town of Seaswan, in southeastern New England and is comprised of six member districts. TSEC is managed and operated by a Board of Directors comprised of the six Superintendents of the member districts. However, the Collaborative services forty-four districts located in southeastern New England. The mission of TSEC is to provide all of its districts' families, educators, school districts and agencies with cost effective, value-added educational programs, professional development, technical assistance and services, which are grounded in core values, research-based content, and best practices (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008). Among the core values there are two that specifically address professional development: 1) The focus of the TSEC community is on teaching and learning with continuous improvement and 2) Staff productivity, especially team productivity, means exceeding expectations for student learning, increasing team efficiency, and enhancing individual team members' professional growth. In keeping with these core values, TSEC has developed professional development goals (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008). The Special Education Collaborative recognizes that professional development is a purposeful process and the goals encompass ongoing education, training, support, and assessment.

Education: The education component of professional development at TSEC is devoted to building a shared foundation of knowledge and understanding about regular education, special education, and improving student learning. This component includes providing undergraduate and graduate courses in conjunction with institutions of higher learning. Education activities also include professional readings, research, discussion, and visits to exemplary programs (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008).

Training: The training component develops skills in a wide variety of teaching, learning, and administrative environments. Training includes, but is not limited to, workshops, conferences, seminars, peer coaching, and mentoring. Training is provided for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, and related service providers (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008).

Support: The Special Education Collaborative is committed to supporting the pursuit of professional development by: (a) developing and offering quality courses, workshops and in-service training on a regular basis; (b) providing financial support for staff professional development; (c) providing access to technology; (d) providing adequate time and space for staff to pursue professional development; (e) providing choices for individual professional development that accommodate a variety of learning styles and preferences; and (f) supporting all staff through their professional development plans and activities (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008).

Assessment: Pre-testing/needs assessment and follow-up assessment are integral parts of each professional development activity. Pre-testing is utilized to determine participants' learning needs, interest, and professional goals. Follow-up assessment seeks to measure change in a participant's knowledge, skill level, and opinions; change in the quality of student learning opportunities; and ultimately, improvement in student learning. Types of assessments utilized include Likert scales, questionnaires, presentations, written documents, and review of student work and tests (The Special Education Collaborative, 2008).

TSEC's professional development plan, as outlined above, was examined during the document analysis. Components of TSEC's professional development plan were utilized to help to organize the participants' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, training needs, and

supervision. The goals that are outlined in the TSEC professional development plan also helped to identify the perceptions of each participant at each level of the organization around the reality of these goals and how they are implemented.

At TSEC there has been an increase in the number of paraprofessionals that are required to service the students that are presently enrolled (The Special Education Collaborative, 2010). TSEC employs seventy-one paraprofessionals; there are more paraprofessionals than teachers. As the need for paraprofessional increases, there is going to be a greater demand for these educators to have proper, timely and valuable training before they enter the classroom. A formal internal training program to complement the training that takes place prior to entering the classroom, is needed to maximize the contributions the paraprofessionals make in the classroom, and in order to develop an effective training program, this research project has helped to answer some of the fundamental questions that will allow the administration at TSEC to start to develop this type of effective training program.

Participants

A purposive sampling selection strategy (Maxwell, 2005) was used to identify the participating paraprofessionals, teachers, and supervisor for this study. Within TSEC, teachers and paraprofessionals who currently work in the middle school substantially separate classrooms were invited to participate in this study, because according to Maxwell (2005) “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88). The researcher chose to focus on the middle school level programs because these programs are self-contained classrooms within two public school settings in the towns of Winterset and Seaswan. Both towns are located in southeastern New England. All of the other TSEC middle school classrooms are in

substantially separate buildings and are not included into the regular public school settings so the researcher did not deem them as appropriate for this study. If saturation for this study was not reached after gathering the data from these four classrooms, then the researcher planned to expand the study into similar elementary classrooms at The Special Education Collaborative until themes within the data could be identified. However, this was not needed. The researcher was able to reach saturation of the data from the four classrooms that participated in the study.

Merriam (2009), stated "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 77). This is the reason why these four middle school substantially separate classrooms were chosen. These classrooms provided the researcher with a great deal of information regarding the issues and concerns of the teachers, paraprofessionals, and their supervisor. This group of participants provided the researcher with a range of employees that have been employed at TSEC for as long as 15 years to as short as 1 year. This gap helped the researcher capture some of the history and some of the improvements that have been achieved over the years. According to Maxwell (2005), selecting the individuals that can provide the researcher with the information that is needed in order to answer the research questions is one of the most important considerations in qualitative selection decisions.

Within TSEC, a middle school program supervisor, four teachers, and nine paraprofessionals who work in the four middle school substantially separate classrooms located in two public school settings were asked to participate in this study. Participants were advised of the research, informed about the research practices, and asked to sign an informed consent form that fully outlined the project and what would be expected of them as participants in the study (Appendix A). The researcher was responsible for distributing, explaining, and collecting the

informed consent forms. These forms were handed out to all staff members in these four classrooms on the second Thursday of the month, after the conclusion of the weekly staff meeting. This took place on February 10, 2011 at 3:00 p.m., located in Classroom One at the Winterset Middle School in the town of Winterset. The informed consent forms were distributed after the researcher explained the project to the participants and answered all of their questions. The participants that were recruited to participate in this study were all over the age of eighteen and employed by TSEC. All participants were required to sign an informed consent form that outlines the study, research, and requirements (Appendix A). The individuals invited to participate could opt out of the study without penalty and could withdraw from the study at any point, for any reason. However, all participants that were asked to participate in the study were willing to participate and all of the participants completed all of the requirements that were outlined in the informed consent form. None of the participants opted out of the study during any time of the research.

Participant Expectations

Participants were asked to participate in interviews, observations, and member checking. All of the participants were interviewed once using a semi-structured interview guided by an interview protocol that organized a set of open-ended questions. The interview protocol that the researcher utilized is outlined by Rubin and Rubin (2004). The Rubins' based their recommendations, including practical strategies, in a qualitative research philosophy that meshes nicely with Seidman's (2006). Moving beyond the craft of structuring interviews, Rubin and Rubin (2004), proposed that making sense of interview data requires a paradigm of learning and understanding: "Qualitative interviewing is more than a set of skills; it is also a philosophy, an approach to learning" (p. 2).

Rubin and Rubin (2004) outlined three components of what they term a qualitative "philosophy, an approach to learning" (p. 2): first, "understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms;" second, "interviewing involves a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee that imposes obligations on both sides;" and finally, "the philosophy helps define what is interesting and what is ethical, as well as, provide standards to judge the quality of the research, the humanity of the interviewing relationship, and the completeness and accuracy of the write-up" (p. 2). Qualitative Interviewing is an informative, philosophically grounded text that clearly conveys the complexities of how qualitative senses or meanings are made from particular data of words and actions.

Three interview protocols were developed for use in the individual interviews: one for the program supervisor, one for the special education teachers, and one for the paraprofessionals (Appendices B, C, and D). Wording was modified to reflect the role differences among interviewees; according to Merriam (2009), “The way in which questions are worded is a crucial consideration in extracting the type of information desired” (p. 95). The researcher herself developed these protocols; however, the areas that were being explored were adapted from the seven executive functions associated with paraprofessional supervision that were developed by Nancy French (French, 2003). The interviews were expected to last no more than 1 hour and none of them lasted longer than this time frame. All interviews were conducted in Conference Room B at the Winterset Middle School. These interviews were conducted in privacy during the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. for the convenience of the participants. Participant interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, upon which the digital recordings will be deleted once the project is completed and passed by the dissertation committee. The benefits of digitally recording the interviews allowed the researcher the ability to have access to the original

data. If something was not clear in a transcript or if the researcher had a question about a transcript, the researcher could then return to the source and check for accuracy (Seidman, 2006).

Informal observations were conducted in all four TSEC classrooms in the towns of Winterset and Seaswan, which are located in southeastern New England. According to Merriam (2009), "observations can be distinguished from interviews in two ways. First, observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; second observational data represents a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview" (p. 117).

Documentation of these observations were placed on the protocol form that was developed and is labeled Observational Documentation Protocol Form (Appendix E). Observations were conducted during the months of February, March, April and May 2011. Each classroom was observed on five different occasions for one hour each. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to observe each classroom on a variety of different occasions, days and times, allowed for different topics to be covered, and different dynamics to be observed. The researcher documented whether or not the seven areas of French's (2003) framework were being implemented in the classrooms, though some areas were not identifiable during these observations. These results are documented in the final report. The seven strategies that the researcher observed included staff orientation, planning, scheduling, delegating, performance monitoring, on-the-job training or mentoring, and managing the workplace (French, 2003).

The participants were also asked to participate in "Member Checking," in order to solicit their views of the final findings and interpretations. "Member Checking", which Lincoln and

Guba (1985) point to as "the most critical technique for establishing credibility," (p. 314) was utilized in this study to solicit participants views of the findings and interpretations. Participants were given a preliminary draft and summary of the data to review which allowed the researcher to check for accuracy of the interpretations and conclusions. The participants were given one week to submit comments so they could be reviewed and incorporated into the study results.

Approach

The research questions called for a qualitative approach, because the researcher sought to examine the experience of a group of individuals exploring a particular educational problem at TSEC (Creswell, 2009). The primary unit of analysis for this case study was TSEC and how it offered support and services to the paraprofessionals that were employed. This embedded case study included the individual participants, their roles within the organization, and the classroom environment. The researcher selected a descriptive case study methodology to capture the rich and complex details of the problem of practice. Yin (2009) explained that a case study approach is appropriate when: "a 'how' or 'why' question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (p. 9). The project met each of these conditions. The case study approach was also appropriate because the researcher was studying a phenomenon that was inseparable from the context in which it occurs and included many more variables than data points (Yin, 2009). The phenomenon that was being investigated was a complex organizational issue with a large number of interconnected variables. For example, there are many different classrooms, types of students, and student needs that have to be addressed and the paraprofessionals need to be trained to deal with many of these different variables. However, the researcher studied how these different variables functioned within a small group of middle school supervisor, teachers, and paraprofessionals. If a quantitative study

was completed there would not be enough data points to be able to include all these variables with such a small number of participants. This case study is primarily descriptive in nature (Yin, 2009). The description, however, is not a simple enumeration of facts, but a "thick" description of the contextual experiences of individual paraprofessionals, teachers, and their supervisor (Merriam, 2009). This case study served to systematize, document, and disseminate the perceptions of the special education supervisor, special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals themselves. The diversity of responses and the shared principles emerging from the results and analysis of the research questions demonstrates the complexity of this practice. The focus on the experiences of individual paraprofessionals, their supervising teachers, and a special education supervisor working at TSEC in the middle school self-contained classrooms helped the researcher achieve the data that was needed to eventually guide, develop, and establish an effective training program for paraprofessionals that maybe transferrable to other school districts and possibly more broadly to the State Department of Education. This research has also been presented at The 29th National Paraprofessional Conference that was held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on May12-14, 2011. This presentation helped others to realize that there continues to be a need to develop policies, trainings, and guidelines that will more effectively tap into resources for the paraprofessional workforce.

Data Collection

Case study research relies on multiple sources of data to assure a complete picture of the issue being examined. Yin (2009) stated, "case study inquiry [should] rely on multiple sources of data and investigate a contemporary phenomenon within the real-life context" (p. 13). Merriam (2009) stated, "Qualitative data consists of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge obtained through interviews; detailed descriptions of people's

activities, behaviors, actions are recorded in observations; and excerpts, quotations, or entire passages are extracted from various types of documents" (p. 84).

The researcher utilized interviews, observations, documentation reviews, (Appendices B, C, D, E, and F) and maintained a research journal in order to shed light on the problems and issues that arose during this endeavor. Multiple sources of data not only increased the study's dependability, it also provided for analysis that involved systematic decoding in order to identify themes and categories within the data (Maxwell, 2005).

Interviewing was the primary selection that was used as a means of collecting data to address the research questions in this study. As Merriam (2009) stated, "Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them; it is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate" (p. 88). All of the participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol, asking a set of open-ended questions. The interviews started with open-ended questions and were followed by probe questions which were employed to help the researcher focus the participants to share information about their experience as opposed to opinions or ideas that they thought the researcher wanted to hear (Merriam, 2009). A semi-structured interview protocol was selected for this study to ensure that the researcher could focus the participants on describing their perceptions and thoughts in relation to the problem of practice being researched (Merriam, 2009). Three interview protocols were developed for use in the individual interviews: one for the program supervisor, one for the special education teachers, and one for the paraprofessionals. All three protocols were designed to solicit similar content and all are parallel in structure. Wording was modified to reflect the role differences among interviewees. The content of the protocols was developed based on the research questions and on areas identified in

the literature as relevant to the topic. The interview protocols are located in Appendicies B, C, and D. Seidman (2006) believes that the purpose of interviewing is to have the participants reconstruct their experiences, provide the context of the situation, and reflect on its meaning, anything shorter than 90 minutes for each interview would be considered too short. Based on Seidman's philosophy (2006), the researcher for this project determined that the interviews were expected to last no more than 1.5 hours or 90 minutes.

In addition to interviews, the researcher conducted informal observations to gain a more thorough understanding of the organization, its climate, and its day-to-day operations, as Maxwell (2005) stated, observations "can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data" (p. 94). Informal observations were conducted in all four TSEC classrooms in the towns of Winterset and Seaswan. According to Creswell (2009), before the researcher enters the field, the researcher should have planned their approach and developed the use of a protocol for recording observational data. Documentation of these observations was written onto the protocol form that was developed by the researcher and is labeled Observational Documentation Protocol Form (Appendix E). Observations were conducted during the months of February, March, April, and May 2011. Creswell (2009) stated the importance of engaging in multiple observations during the course of the study. With this in mind, the researcher decided that each classroom would be observed on five different occasions for one hour each. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to observe each classroom on a variety of different occasions, days and times, allowed for different topics to be covered, and different dynamics to be observed (Creswell, 2009). A case study should take place in the natural setting of the "case," so that the researcher can create opportunities for direct observations (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), this serves as

another source of evidence in a case study design. The researcher documented whether or not the following areas of French's (2003) framework were being implemented in the classrooms; some areas were not identifiable during these observations and these results are documented in the final report. The researcher observed for signs of staff orientation, planning, delegating, scheduling, performance monitoring, on-the-job training or mentoring and managing the workplace. After each observation was completed, detailed notes about the observations were written and typed as soon as the researcher was able to (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) described this as an imperative part of the observation process because the more time that passes between observations and recording the notes, the poorer the recall will be and the less likely the researcher will ever get to recording the data.

According to Merriam (2009), documents are a third major source of data collection in qualitative research (p. 162). The researcher reviewed numerous documents related to the role of the paraprofessional, any references to their preparation, and development at the organization that was selected for this study. Documents included, TSEC program handbook, employee handbook; policies and procedures, middle school program handbook for students and parents, staff vacancies/paraprofessional job postings, paraprofessional job descriptions, TSEC checklist for hire and documentation that is required to be filled out when hired as a paraprofessional, TSEC's strategic plan from 2006-2012, TSEC's professional development plan, TSEC's vision and mission statements, TSEC core values, TSEC's safe schools program plan, paraprofessional Unit "B" union contract, TSEC's staff evaluation for program aides, and TSEC's professional teacher evaluation. Documentation of these was recorded on the Document Analysis Protocol found in Appendix F. Yin (2009), cautioned the researcher about being careful when using documents and that the documents should not be accepted as literal recording of events that have

taken place. Inferences can be made from such documents; however the researcher should treat these inferences as clues that are worthy of further investigation rather than definitive findings because the inferences could later turn out to be false leads.

The documentation plan consisted of the researcher keeping an electronic research journal to document every activity that occurred throughout the project. This journal was updated weekly and included the following information: daily activities related to the project, details of weekly correspondence, questions that were raised and/or resolved during the week, a list of completed tasks, and a list of tasks that needed to be forwarded to the following day or week. The researcher maintained ongoing field notes in the research journal and during each interview and observation (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). After each session, the researcher reviewed and reorganized the notes as soon as possible. These field notes were highly descriptive and reflective in nature (Merriam, 2009). Initial analysis of themes, important events, key quotations, processes, unique strategies, strengths, and challenges were also recorded (Maxwell, 2005). Particular attention was placed on identifying gaps in the data, as well as similarities and discrepancies across interviews, which were used to probe these areas in the subsequent observations and document reviews (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). The researcher's journal was separated into three different sections; one for interviews, one for observations, and one for documentation review. Within each section two columns were incorporated by dividing the page in half with a line down the middle to separate the descriptive notes from the reflective notes (Creswell, 2009). The descriptive notes included a reconstruction of dialogue, direct quotes, a description of the physical setting, and accounts of particular events or activities (Creswell, 2009). The reflective notes included the researcher's personal thoughts, speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, impressions, and hunches (Creswell, 2009). This type of

organization provided the researcher with an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study (Creswell, 2009). This also aided in the organizing and writing of the final report.

In addition to the field notes and the research journal, the researcher also wrote analytical memos containing preliminary analysis and interpretations during each stage of the data collection (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). Throughout the process of data collection memoing was used as a way for the researcher to write regularly and systematically about the research and allowed the researcher to keep a file of these writings (Maxwell, 2005). According to Maxwell (2005), "memos are an extremely versatile tool that can be used for many different purposes; this term refers to any writing that a researcher does in relationship to the research other than actual field notes transcription, or coding" (p. 12). The memos ranged from a brief marginal comment, an idea in the researchers journal all the way to a complete analytical essay by the completion of each section of the study. This provided the researcher with a way to gather her ideas and thoughts onto paper and to use this writing as a way to facilitate reflection and analytic insight during the entire data collection process. They were also referred to in order to help develop the researcher's ideas further. According to Maxwell (2005), "memos are one of the most important techniques you have for developing your own ideas. You should therefore think of memos as a way to help you understand your topic, setting, or study, not just as a way of recording or presenting an understanding you've already reached" (p. 12).

Data Analysis

This research study generated a significant amount of data in multiple forms that required immediate and continuous data management in order for the researcher to perform systematic analysis of all of the data that was collected. Data analysis began immediately after the

completion of the first interview and continued to be analyzed as the research progressed (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). According to Maxwell (2005), one of the most common problems in qualitative studies is letting the unanalyzed field notes and transcriptions pile up, making the task of final analysis much more difficult to complete.

The data was analyzed in three stages using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Goetz and LeCompte (1981), this process undergoes continuous refinement throughout the data collection and analysis process, continuously feeding back into the process of category coding. Goetz and LeCompte (1981) state, "As events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered" (p. 58).

After each interview, the researcher read and summarized the field notes to highlight key findings, record initial thoughts, emerging questions, and identify areas that needed further clarification. The individual interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. After each interview was completed, the researcher analyzed the data within each interview to develop a complete picture of the events, processes, and relationships between factors from each level of the organization.

The first step in analyzing the data was to read and review the interview transcriptions, observational notes, researcher memos, and documents that were being analyzed (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995, p. 142-143). Transcription took place by the researcher herself. The researcher transcribed every interview by hand onto the Interview Protocol Forms. Each interview took anywhere from four to six hours to transcribe. The researcher had each interview digitally recorded and was able to slow down the speech to accommodate her typing speed. This was one of the most time consuming parts of the project. Listening and reviewing the transcriptions were

completed by the researcher and provided the researcher with an opportunity to analyze the data for the first time around. During this listening, writing, reading, and typing process, the researcher had the opportunity to rewrite and reorganize her rough observation notes, create additional notes, write memos about what she saw or heard in the data, and the researcher started to develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships in the data.

The second stage of data analysis included categorizing and coding the data that was collected. In qualitative research, the goal of coding is to "fracture" (Strauss, 1987, p. 29) the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparisons between things in the same categories that aid in the development of the theoretical concepts. To begin the coding process all interview data was placed onto color coded card stock so that the researcher could easily rearrange the data in order to help identify themes or categories within the data. The color-coded card stock was first sorted into the seven categories identified in French's (2003) framework, which include staff orientation, planning, delegating, scheduling, performance monitoring, on-the-job training or mentoring and managing the workplace. Each of the seven categories was color coded by theme to assist the researcher with the retrieval of the data. Any data that did not initially fit into any of the categories was placed into a miscellaneous pile and reviewed periodically as the data collection process continued to see if any other themes or categories emerged from the data. Additional categories included professional development and on-going training. When no new or relevant information could be uncovered, then the data collection and analysis processes were ceased (Merriam, 2009; Seidman, 2006).

The third stage of data analysis, Huberman and Miles (2002) defines as data management: "a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval that serves three purposes: ensuring high quality, accessible data; documentation of just what analyses have

been carried out; and retention of data and associated analyses" (p. 180). With this in mind, the researcher utilized several strategies to manage the large amounts of data that was collected. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed within two days of the interview. The transcriptions and memoing notes were stored in a Word File on the researcher's computer and backed up on an external hard drive. Observation notes and documentation reviews were also transcribed as soon as possible after the completion of each one. This aided the researcher in remembering key concepts, themes, and ideas that emerged during these stages of data collection. These transcriptions and the memo notes written during these times were also stored on a Word File on the researcher's computer and backed up on an external hard drive. The external hard drive is kept in a locked fire proof and water proof safe in the researcher's home office. All field notes, research journals, and memos were organized and maintained in a locked standard file cabinet for easy access.

Validity and Credibility

In general, for a qualitative study to be considered valid, the quality of the data must be trustworthy and the information transferable (Yin, 2009). This can only occur when the study employs a number of research strategies to enhance the credibility and dependability of the data. Strategies to control and enhance credibility, transferability, and dependability follow.

Mertens and McLaughlin (1995) explained "the credibility test" with the following example: "In qualitative research, the credibility test asks if there is a correspondence between the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way the research portrays their viewpoints" (p. 53). This study established credibility through prolonged engagement and persistent observation, as well as triangulation of the data, which Creswell (1998) explained as a "process [that] involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme

or perspective" (p. 202). In this study, triangulation of data was made possible by utilizing several data collection methods including interviews, observations, document reviews, and by carefully maintaining a researcher's journal in order to provide an adequate audit trail. According to Maxwell (2005), "this strategy or triangulation reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the uses you are investigating" (p. 94).

"Member checking," which Lincoln and Guba point to as "the most critical technique for establishing credibility," (p. 314) was utilized in the study to solicit participants' views of the researcher's findings and interpretations. Participants were given a preliminary draft and summary of the data to review which allowed the researcher to check the accuracy of the interpretations and conclusions. A summary of the case study was also shared with the participants to verify the conclusions. Comments received from the member checking process were reviewed and incorporated into the study results.

Three informed readers were also utilized for peer review, debriefing, and for verification of themes identified in the study. Explained by Creswell (1998), this person is "someone who keeps the research honest; ask hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provided the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (p. 202). These informed readers were utilized after the themes had been established and all notes had been sorted and categorized. The researcher met with them on separate occasions to gain insight about the data, review the data, and verify themes that have been generated. The use of the researcher's SPC group was used as informed readers as well.

Once all of this information was collected it was documented in the researcher's journal and the results from the informed readers' sessions were also included in the study results.

Transferability and dependability were also important for validating the trustworthiness of this research. Mertens and McLaughlin (1995) explained that 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" (p. 55). The researcher made every attempt to provide the reader with an ample description of the time, place, context, and culture throughout this study. Also any changes that occurred during the study were thoroughly documented to ensure dependability; maintaining a researcher's journal continued to aid the researcher throughout this piece of the process.

Chapter IV

Report of Research Findings

The purpose of this case study is to determine the following: (a) the current roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals as defined by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (b) the training practices for paraprofessionals as perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (c) the perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, as viewed by their supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals; (d) the differences and similarities that exist between current training opportunities and perceived training needs of paraprofessionals; and (e) the differences and similarities that exist in perceptions of supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative. The analysis and findings of this study will address the identified gaps between the current practices, the perceived practices, and the current training needs of paraprofessionals. The research questions for this doctoral project are as follows:

1. How are the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative?
2. How are the current training practices of paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals?
3. What training needs are identified as essential by the supervisor, the special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative?

4. What are the current structures that are in place for training paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative and to what degree do these structures align with the participants' experiences?

This inquiry uses a descriptive case study methodology to address the research questions that were derived from the existing literature and to address the gaps in the literature. French's (2003) framework informed the interview, observation and documentation protocols used in this case study (Appendices B, C, D, E, and F). Nine paraprofessionals, four teachers and one supervisor were interviewed; five hours of observation in each of the classrooms were conducted, totaling twenty hours; and fifteen different types of documents that TSEC currently has in place regarding paraprofessionals were reviewed. The researcher also kept a research journal in order to shed light on the problems and issues that arose during the execution of this study. The research journal was also used to record the researcher's impressions, thoughts, and other information that helped to shape this analysis.

The Conceptual Framework

French (2003) described the management role associated with paraprofessionals and the ways in which seven executive functions of paraprofessional supervision are shared among the members of the educational team. These functions are: orientation, task delegation, scheduling, planning work assignments, managing the work environment, monitoring performance, providing on-the-job training and mentoring, and managing the workplace. The researcher used these seven executive functions to analyze and frame the questions for this research study. Each element of the framework was presented in detail in chapter 1, describing how it would be utilized in this research study.

Each area of the seven functions is presented in three different ways. First, a general description of the themes that emerged from the data will be presented because according to Merriam (2009), "a general description is needed to tell the reader whether the vignettes and quotes are typical of the data as a whole" (p. 255). Following the general description, more specific descriptions illustrating the themes are offered, consisting of quotations from people interviewed, quotations from observational notes, and information gathered during the documentation reviews. Finally, interpretive commentary is used, because it "provides a framework for understanding the particular and general descriptions just discussed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 255). The following section will describe the participants' characteristics.

Participant Characteristics

Interviews and observations for this study were conducted in four classrooms within two suburban middle schools located in southeastern New England: three were in the town of Winterset (Program A) and one was in the town of Seaswan (Program B). All four classrooms are associated with The Special Educational Collaborative, an independent organization that supervises and supports these classrooms. Information about the organization and the participants provided will allow readers to determine if this study will be easily transferable to their own setting. Please note that all schools and individual names have been changed throughout this analysis in order to maintain confidentiality of all participants in the study.

This study was conducted in both site schools over a three-month period; interview sessions averaged 40-50 minutes and total observation time was 20 hours. The researcher used a purposeful sampling selection strategy (Maxwell, 2005) to identify the participating paraprofessionals, teachers, and supervisor. All participants were advised of the research, informed about the research practices, and asked to sign an informed consent form that fully

outlined the project, their rights, and what would be asked of them as participants in the study (Appendix A). All participants were informed that they could opt out of the study without penalty and could withdraw from the study at any point, for any reason. However, none of the participants opted out of the study and they completed all of the activities that were asked of them.

Fourteen individuals, of varied backgrounds (Table 1) participated in the study. Throughout the study, the researcher refers to the supervisor, teachers, and paraprofessionals using Mr. and Ms. and a pseudonym that was a first name only. This reflects how the participants were most often addressed in their programs. The supervisor that participated in this study was Teacher-Leader Mr. Nicholas who managed both Programs A and B. In this position, he was required to spend 51% of his time teaching in a substantially separate special education classroom and 49% of his time supervising the programs. For the purpose of this study, the researcher only interviewed him as a supervisor and not as a teacher.

From Program A, three special education teachers certified in the area of moderate disabilities Pre-K to grade 8, were included: Ms. Nancy, Ms. Lynn, and Ms. Kate (classrooms one, two and three respectively). Paraprofessionals from each classroom also participated: from classroom one, Ms. Maya, Ms. Carrie, and Ms. Elizabeth; from classroom two, Ms. Kerri and Ms. Ann; and from classroom three, Ms. Jenny and Ms. Julia. At Program B there was one classroom taught by Ms. Katelyn, and she was also certified in moderate disabilities Pre-K to grade 8. Two paraprofessionals from this classroom participated in this study: Ms. Danielle and Ms. Lisa.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Participant/Title	**Gender**	**General Information**
Supervisor/Teacher Leader Mr. Nicholas*	Male	• Certified Special Education Teacher in Moderate Disabilities Pre-K to Grade 8. • Master's Degree in Special Education • 14 years of experience working at TSEC • 5 months in current position
PROGRAM A		
CLASSROOM 1		
Special Education Teacher Ms. Nancy*	Female	• Certified Special Education Teacher in Moderate Disabilities Pre-K to Grade 8. • Master's Degree in Special Education • 4 years of experience working at TSEC • 7 months in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Maya*	Female	• Master's Degree in Special Education • 15 years as a paraprofessional at TSEC • 5 years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Carrie*	Female	• Obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education • 10 years as a paraprofessional at TSEC • 10 years in current position

Paraprofessional Ms. Elizabeth*	Female	• Obtaining an Associate's Degree in Elementary Education • 12 years as a paraprofessional at TSEC • 4 years in current position
CLASSROOM 2		
Special Education Teacher Ms. Lynn*	Female	• Certified Special Education Teacher in Moderate Disabilities Pre-K to Grade 8. • Master's Degree in Special Education • 4 ½ years of experience working at TSEC • 2 years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Kerri*	Female	• Bachelor's Degree in General Studies • 6 ½ years of experience working at TSEC • 5 ½ years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Ann*	Female	• Obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education • 9 years as a paraprofessional at TSEC • 5 years in current position
CLASSROOM 3		
Special Education Teacher Ms. Kate*	Female	• Certified Special Education Teacher in Moderate Disabilities Pre-K to Grade 8. • Master's Degree in Special Education • 6 years as a teacher at TSEC

		• 6 years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Julia*	Female	• Bachelor's Degree in Social Work • 14 years as a paraprofessional at TSEC • 10 years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Jenny*	Female	• Associate's Degree in Child Care • 9 years as a paraprofessional at TSEC • 4 years in current position
PROGRAM B **CLASSROOM 1**		
Special Education Teacher Ms. Katelyn*	Female	• Certified Special Education Teacher in Moderate Disabilities Pre-K to Grade 8. • Master's Degree in Special Education • 4 ½ years of experience working at TSEC • 3 years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Danielle*	Female	• Obtaining a Master's Degree in Special Education • 7 years of substitute experience working at TSEC • 3 years of full time experience working at TSEC • 3 years in current position
Paraprofessional Ms. Lisa*	Female	• Obtaining a Master's Degree in Special Education • 4 years of experience working at TSEC

	• 1 year in current position

*Pseudonyms used to protect the identity and to maintain confidentiality of all participants in the study.

Reporting the Results

As evidenced by the results of this study, all participants, supervisors, teachers, and paraprofessionals, had difficulty with defining the roles and responsibilities regarding paraprofessionals in the classroom setting. In addition, defining training needs and supervision protocols to support paraprofessional development were also cited as areas that require clarity. Although the programs differ in size, culture, staffing, and available services, all participants described similar experiences regarding the needs and training for paraprofessionals. For this reason, data gathered from the two programs will not be presented separately.

French's (2003) framework was used to organize the results. Appendices G1-G7 highlight the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used. General and particular descriptions and interpretive commentary were used to report the results. Supporting quotations from the transcripts are found throughout the narrative and give particular descriptions of the participants' experiences. When transferring quotes from the original transcriptions to the final paper, the researcher made minor changes for the purpose of clarity. These changes included deleting filler words, such as um or uh, and omitting excessive repetition of words. If the filler words or word repetition approach was meaningful to the context, then they were included verbatim. The researcher only omitted words when she felt certain that the final quote maintained the same meaning without them and when omission lead to greater clarity and ease of reading. The researcher added words to clarify meaning as needed, putting these additions into brackets. The researcher also omitted full sentences at times when

sentences were irrelevant to the particular analyses, showing sentence omissions with ellipses between sentences.

Orientation

The first specific executive function documented in French's (2003) framework was orientation. According to French (1998), many paraprofessionals enter their first day on the job with little adult contact and no information about the layout of the school building, the school rules, the emergency procedures, other faculty, appropriate materials, or instruction for the students with whom they will be working. Three major themes emerged from the data analysis regarding paraprofessional orientation: (a) there is no formal orientation process in place at the organizational level which results in no formal orientation at the program level; (b) the responsibility of orienting new paraprofessionals falls on the classroom staff and teacher; and (c) a "learn as you go" type of model is often followed. The "learn as you go" model of training was also a theme that emerged under the executive function described as providing on-the-job training. Appendix G1 and G6 highlights these themes, including the data sources in which the information was identified.

There is no formal orientation process.

The analysis suggests that there are no structures in place at TSEC to support, implement, or participate in an orientation process for paraprofessionals. The lack of an orientation program or process was not only evident by the responses provided during the interviews but was also evident during the documentation analysis. None of the 15 documents reviewed mentioned anything about an orientation process or program provided by TSEC to the paraprofessionals (Appendices G1 & H1).

Mr. Nicholas, the supervisor for both programs, stated that "there is not a lot of formal training; actually there is not any formal training for new paraprofessionals." He did also note that paraprofessionals are supposed to receive mandated trainings such as CPI, CPR, Universal Precautions, and Confidentiality Training during the first thirty days of hire, but that usually occurs later than this period. Ms. Kate, one of the primary teachers, reported that she "has not seen or heard of any official orientation process." Ms. Danielle responded with, "…there was not really an official orientation, it was more of me asking questions to the teacher and what she wanted from me and she would let me know; it was not an official orientation to the organization or the classroom."

As demonstrated from the documentation reviews and interviews, TSEC does not have an official orientation process for the supervisor, teachers, or paraprofessionals to be able to participate in or an orientation process to follow as an outline or a guide. As summed up by Ms. Katelyn, the special education teacher in Program B,

> It would be nice if they [paraprofessionals] had training on the policies and procedures before they entered the classroom. That way they [paraprofessionals] would have some sort of an idea…some sort of informational session about what they are coming into so that when they get here it is not so overwhelming. There is so much to know and to learn, that to have some of this information beforehand would not only be beneficial to the paraprofessionals but it would also be beneficial to us [teachers] and to the students.

Responsibility falls on the classroom staff/teacher.

Data obtained in this study from the supervisor, teachers, and paraprofessionals indicated that the responsibility of orienting new staff to the Collaborative, program, and classroom falls on the special education teacher and other paraprofessionals during the first weeks on the job.

Mr. Nicholas reported, "It is pretty much left up to the classroom teacher and the staff in the classroom." Ms. Katelyn, a special education teacher, supported the supervisor's response by stating, "…I go through the policies and procedures of the Collaborative and the classroom myself with them, so that I am sure that they know what they are doing." When asked if the paraprofessionals received any orientation before entering the classroom, she responded, "Not that I am aware of. I think that it mostly falls on the classroom teacher and other staff that work in the program."

Many of the paraprofessional responses echoed that of the supervisor and the teachers' responses, Ms. Carrie stated, "I would have to say that I got most of my information from the teacher" and Ms. Ann reported, "The teacher introduced me to the kids, gave me a brief overview of what the class did and that was pretty much it." Ms. Lisa, a paraprofessional in Program B reported, "The teacher gave me a tour of the classroom, an introduction to the students and then paired me up with other paraprofessionals in the classroom so that I could learn from them." As evidenced by these responses, the teachers and the staff in the classroom are left to complete trainings and discuss topics with the new paraprofessionals that are usually covered in an orientation process.

"Learn as you go" model.

Throughout the interviews, a common theme that was identified by the majority of the teachers and the paraprofessionals was that the orientation process is a "learn as you go" or "learn as things come up" in the classroom model. Seven paraprofessionals and three teachers reported that the "learn as you go" model was the only orientation process that was provided to them. When first starting a new job or a new position within the school setting there are so many different things to learn within each classroom, program, and school that the paraprofessionals

felt as though they were expected to observe and learn "on the fly" as to what was expected to be completed or done in each classroom.

The teachers also described it as a "learn as you go" model because there is just too much to learn when a paraprofessional first starts in the classroom, and the teachers' main focus needs to be on teaching the students. This does not leave much time for the teacher to familiarize the new paraprofessional with the organization, the school, or the program itself. Ms. Lynn, a teacher in Program A, has one paraprofessional in her classroom and one paraprofessional that floats or goes between all three classrooms in the program. She described the orientation process by saying, "I do a throughout the day kind of thing, I basically give them [paraprofessionals] the run down in the morning and then throughout the day I continue to prompt and guide them." She also stated that "It basically happens in the moment, especially when it is a new staff."

Ms. Kate, also a teacher in Program A, has two paraprofessionals in her room and they both stated, "I suppose it is situational, as things come up in the classroom." Ms. Kate also reported, "I hate to admit this but it is a "learn as you go" model because I do not have time to do this during the school day. It is kind of like a 'watch and learn,' take in as much as you can and ask questions later." Ms. Kate also explained the "learn as you go" model this way,

> I think that it is all on the job training, the whole thing. It is even for me too, every place that you go is different and you need to just live it, experience it and do your best. Then you just get it. You learn over time.

The interviews with the paraprofessionals produced similar responses to those of the teachers. Ms. Maya, a paraprofessional in Program A, stated, "I pretty much just followed her [teacher] lead and that is pretty much how I learned." When Ms. Maya was asked specifically about the orientation process, her response was, "No, nope. None at all, it was just come on

board." Both paraprofessionals Ms. Elizabeth and Ms. Jenny, stated, "Basically, I just learned as I went along." Ms. Jenny went further on to explain, "…I learned as I went along and observed through staff interaction." Ms. Jenny also referenced how she utilized the other staff in the classroom to figure out what she had to do, "I learned as I went along and asked staff what needed to be done and where I could help."

Task Delegation

The second element in French's (2003) framework was task delegation, delegating means assigning simple tasks to others, allowing the teacher time to focus on more critical tasks. As noted in the teacher interviews and the classroom observations, teachers are uncomfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals and are unsure about how to do it in a productive manner. Two major themes emerged in the data regarding task delegation: (a) there was limited delegation and (b) teachers assumed that paraprofessionals "know" what to do and what is expected. Delegation occurred in similar ways in both Program A and Program B as evidenced by the parallel interview data and responses among the participants in both programs. Appendix G2 illustrates these themes related to delegating tasks to paraprofessionals in both programs.

Limited delegation occurs.

Although French (2003) identified task delegation as an important factor in effective supervision and overseeing of paraprofessionals, it was evident from the interview data and the classroom observations that teachers are often not comfortable delegating tasks to paraprofessionals or they simply do not delegate tasks to them at all. Ms. Katelyn commented, "I am going to be completely honest with you, I like to do everything myself so that I know that it is done the way that I want it done." Mr. Nicholas also agreed that teachers are not comfortable with delegating tasks to paraprofessionals,

> When training teachers, I feel like I have to be more straight forward with telling them when they need to delegate certain things, hopefully they see me delegating things and they realize what they can and cannot do but they [teachers] tend to do a lot instead of delegating.

Even during the classroom observations, it was clear that not a lot of delegation occurred between the teacher and the paraprofessionals. The researcher observed teachers doing the majority of the work in the classroom, when they had paraprofessionals that were not participating in the lesson or activity (March 10, 2011; March 28, 2011; April 26, 2011; April 27, 2011; April 28, 2011; May 6, 2011; and May 13, 2011). At times, it was difficult for the researcher to sit back, observe, and not delegate tasks to paraprofessionals that were not engaged or interacting with the students.

Most delegation was spontaneous and primarily verbal, posed as either a request or a directive when the need arose in the classroom. The researcher observed this through direct observations and the results supported the answers that the paraprofessionals provided during their interviews. Ms. Danielle described verbal delegation this way, “It is spontaneous. Nothing is pre-planned. It is whatever the teacher needs completed in that moment or at that time.” Ms. Nancy, the special education teacher in Classroom One, explained how she gives verbal directives, “I delegate tasks usually in more of an open kind of conversation, so that the paraprofessionals can have a say in what they do and so that we can come up with a suitable arrangement for all parties involved.”

Ms. Elizabeth described task delegation as teachers simply asking her to do tasks, “They [teachers] say, ‘would you mind doing this?’” Some teachers verbally assigned tasks, yet others were uncomfortable delegating work to the paraprofessionals. Ms. Lisa explained,

> When I first start in the classroom, the teacher would state 'You know I hate to ask you this, but would you mind making me 10 copies of this for me?' When I first started, that is what I thought that I would be doing. I thought that I would be copying papers and correcting papers. I did not realize how much responsibility I would actually have. The teachers seem to feel bad when they ask me to do things, but I do not mind. I like to keep myself busy and moving at all times.

When Mr. Nicholas was asked, "how do teachers delegate tasks to paraprofessionals?" he responded,

> There are a lot of ways that teachers can do it. They can do it on the run, walking down the hallway, meetings in the morning before the students arrive, or meetings in the afternoon after the students leave for the day. The teachers can post a written schedule on the board so that the paraprofessionals, the teachers and the students know what the day will consist of. When there is a definite routine, it makes it easier to delegate tasks. It is hard because there is so much communication all day long that it may not be a formal meeting but it does take place each day. The key to effective delegation is continuous and ongoing communication.

The teachers that were not comfortable delegating tasks verbally stated that they often chose to write down tasks for paraprofessionals to complete. Ms. Maya stated,

> The teacher often stays after school later than I do and when I come in there will be sticky notes asking me to do certain things, I think she [teacher] does this so that she does not forget by the morning what it was that she wanted me to complete.

Ms. Lynn, special education teacher in Program A, also referred to leaving list of things when working with more than one paraprofessional in the classroom,

> I would leave a list that stated, we need to get all of these accomplished by the end of the day. Decide which ones you would like to work on and put your initials next to it and once it is completed cross out the item. I would also make sure that my initials were somewhere on the list to so that it appeared that we were completing this list together as a team.

There was limited delegation provided to the paraprofessionals. When there was delegation, it was either through short verbal requests or written lists. The paraprofessionals felt as though a written list provided them with an idea of what the teacher wanted them to do and what was expected of them.

Paraprofessionals "know" what to do.

Among the special education teachers, it was a common theme that the paraprofessionals "just know" what to do. Ms. Kate stated, "They [paraprofessionals] just follow the routine and the classroom schedule; they already know what is expected of them because they have been in the classroom longer than I have." Ms. Lynn commented, "They [paraprofessionals] just follow the classroom schedule and know what to do."

As stated earlier, failure to delegate tasks was at times justified by the assumption that paraprofessionals "just know" what to do and therefore the teachers did not deem it necessary to delegate tasks to them. Ms. Nancy noted during her interview,

> I am very fortunate in that regard, so I have not really had to or had an opportunity to really delegate tasks to them because they are both self-starters… I can definitely say, in my short time here, that I have been most fortunate because I did come into a classroom that was very established and the paraprofessionals in my room take initiative with various aspects of our curriculum and day-to-day responsibilities.

Some of the paraprofessionals though, seemed to be uncomfortable with the "they just know" approach and would like to have tasks delegated to them. Ms. Danielle, a paraprofessional, commented,

> Because I have subbed before in other Collaborative programs and being familiar with the Collaborative, it was kind of seen as though I already knew what was going on and expected. But I did not; working full time was different from what I had done before. But it was still seen as though I knew what was going on but I did not know anything in regards to how this particular classroom ran.

Scheduling and Planning Work Assignments

The third and fourth specific skills documented in French's (2003) framework were scheduling and planning work assignments, an important and often overlooked task of teacher/paraprofessional teams. Scheduling indicates when tasks should be completed, who should do them, and where people are in the school building during the day or the week. The schedules for the paraprofessionals need to be developed simultaneously with lessons or work plans by the classroom teacher. The schedules need to provide a display that accompanies specific information contained in the lesson. The schedule answers "When?" and "Where?"; the plan answers the question, "What does the paraprofessional do?" (French, 2003)

The analysis suggests that formal and informal planning was not done adequately and was insufficient between the teachers and the paraprofessionals. Two major themes emerged from the data analysis regarding scheduling and planning for the paraprofessionals in these middle school classrooms: (a) every classroom has a schedule and it was written on the board for the students and paraprofessionals to be able to see and follow; and (b) a lack of time resulted in

limited planning. Appendix G3 highlights the themes and the data sources that these results derived from.

Schedules are written on the board.

The researcher reported and noted this as an area of strength across both programs. Program A had three classrooms and every classroom had a written schedule on the board when the researcher went to complete the observations. In Program B's classroom, there was a written schedule on the board based on the day of the week, the school schedule, and the classroom schedule.

The interview results coincided with the researchers observations. The participants described this as an area of strength as well. According to Mr. Nicholas, "there is a rotating schedule but we post a written schedule each day. The routine is there but the sequence might change a little bit each day…." Ms. Lynn responded with "…the day is outlined the same every day so they [paraprofessionals] know what is coming, what to expect, and what to do at different times of the day." The paraprofessional responses echoed the responses of the teachers and the supervisor. Ms. Ann stated, "Pretty much we would follow a routine schedule for each day." Even though there were set schedules to follow, the planning piece was the missing link between the teacher/paraprofessional teams.

Lack of time.

Time constraints played a major role in the amount of planning time teachers and paraprofessionals had together. All of the teachers indicated that they do not have any preparation periods or planning time built into their workday. The researcher found no documents that stated that teachers and paraprofessional were granted time during the school day to plan together. The paraprofessional Union B Contract does not reference planning time.

When asked if the teacher/paraprofessional teams had common planning time, Ms. Maya, a paraprofessional replied,

> I wish that we had time during the day to be able to meet but we have to go to lunch with the students and we have to go to Adaptive Physical Education as well. Our students have too many needs to be able to have common planning time during the school day. There is consistent communication that happens during the day but there is no set time to plan, share ideas or discuss issues during the scheduled school day. This is an area that has been a problem for years.

Ms. Lisa echoed Ms. Maya, by saying,

> There is no opportunity during the day to have planning time; it is just done on the fly. Can you do this? or Can you do that? The teacher will often state, "Next we are going to work on such and such, Ms. Lisa can you please look this up online for me?" So that is what I do. I often feel unprepared to take the students to some of the inclusion classes as well because we never get a chance to meet or share any information before I enter the classroom with the student. This makes it difficult especially when a student is having a tough day.

The teachers and paraprofessionals noted that they have planning time once the students leave the building for a half hour, from 2:30-3:00. However, both the teachers and paraprofessionals identified that this was not an effective time to get any planning done. Ms. Katelyn, put it this way, "By the time the end of the day rolls around, we are using this time to fill out student behavioral reports or processing out an issue that occurred during the day, which leaves us no time to plan." Ms. Carrie, a paraprofessional, reiterated this statement by saying,

"At the end of the day we have too much paper work and phone calls that have to be made that we do not have enough time for planning lessons or assignments."

Time constraints were also evident during the observations that took place during this study. The researcher noted that in each classroom, teachers and paraprofessionals had very little time together before or after the lesson began to be able to plan or process results. When the teacher was giving the directions to the students, the paraprofessionals were often observed asking questions about how to complete the activity as well (March 10, 2011; March 28, 2011; April 26, 2011; April 27, 2011; April 28, 2011; May 6, 2011; and May 13, 2011). Time constraints appear to be a major obstacle for effective planning between the teachers and the paraprofessionals. These time constraints hinder the effectiveness of the role that the paraprofessional have in the classroom from week to week and even day to day.

Although planning is an important component of effective teacher/paraprofessional teams (D'Aquanni, 1997; Pickett, 1999; Prigge, 1996), data obtained and analyzed in this study indicated that planning work assignments is minimal in these middle school programs. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals seemed to recognize the importance of planning but also noted that it was lacking in general. As evidenced by these responses, planning between teachers and paraprofessionals was often nonexistent, with the exception of simply sharing the classroom schedule and routine, which many teachers considered an adequate planning tool. While the paraprofessionals would have preferred instruction that was more direct and planning time with the teachers, this was not the case.

Providing On-the-Job Training and Mentoring

The fifth facet of French's (2003) framework was providing systematic on-the-job training and mentoring. The paraprofessionals and the teachers reported that the majority of

trainings provided by TSEC were geared toward the classroom teacher's role and not the role of the paraprofessional. Instead, the paraprofessionals reported that unscheduled and unplanned on-the-job training was the only form of training that they received regarding their roles and responsibilities as paraprofessionals. All fourteen participants that were interviewed also stated that there was no formal mentoring program or systematic on-the-job training provided to new paraprofessionals. Two major themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) there is currently no mentoring program for paraprofessionals; and (b) most of the training that the paraprofessionals receive was completed through the "learn as you go" model, which was also a theme identified under the Orientation element in French's (2003) framework. Appendix G1 and G4 highlights these themes and the data sources where this information can be located.

No mentoring program for paraprofessionals.

After the completion of the interviews, observations, and the documentation review, it was evident that mentoring remains an area of training that is still lacking for paraprofessionals. Ms. Kate reported, "She has not seen or heard of any mentoring offered to the paraprofessionals at TSEC." Ms. Katelyn, the special education teacher in Program B reported, "No, not formally, very informal conversations take the place of mentoring the paraprofessional directly." The paraprofessionals' responses echoed those of the teachers. Ms. Ann stated, "No, mentoring was not provided when I started working in the collaborative." When Mr. Nicholas was asked, "Does TSEC provide any mentoring or orientation to the paraprofessionals before they start working in the classroom?" His response was a simple "No". Ms. Maya's response summed up the responses from all of the paraprofessionals and teachers into one quote; "No, Nope. There was no mentoring; it was just come on board…" As the interviews continued, it was very clear that

TSEC did not offer any mentoring program for paraprofessionals; every response from the supervisor, to the teachers, to the paraprofessionals all responded with “no, none was provided.”

Offering a mentoring program to paraprofessionals was not as clearly defined when the researcher conducted the documentation review (D/12). In the document titled “Staff Vacancies/Paraprofessional Job Postings”, under “Job Responsibilities” it stated that paraprofessionals must “participate in a mentor program that focuses on PBS & SCERTS approaches” (D/12). However, during the interviews, no paraprofessionals, teachers, or supervisor ever mentioned participating in such a program or discussed the development of one. Another contradiction that emerged between the interviews and the documentation review was on the TSEC Professional Development Plan, under the section titled “Employment Conditions”. It stated that paraprofessionals must participate in “mentoring/training sessions across Collaborative programs” (D/1). However, there was no follow-up evidence through the interviews, observations, or the documentation review that this was occurring at TSEC. There were no documents that outlined a mentoring program for paraprofessionals or that stated when or where such training was provided. Even though the supervisor, the special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals recognized that there was currently not a mentoring program in place, they did note the importance of having one.

Most of the training is on-the-job.

The review of the interview data revealed that all of the trainings that paraprofessionals initially received were through hands-on-experiences in the classroom environment and that there was no systematic training provided. Further explanation of this theme is located under the element of “Orientation”.

Monitoring Performance

The sixth element of French's (2003) framework was that of monitoring the performance of paraprofessionals. The interviews, observations, and the documentation review revealed that teachers do not have a formal way to monitor paraprofessional performance, and as a result, the paraprofessionals felt they were not supervised on a day-to-day basis or provided with enough direction or support. Two major themes emerged during the data analysis stage regarding the daily performance monitoring of paraprofessionals. These included the following: (a) monitoring takes the form of informal discussion and observation between the paraprofessional and the teacher; and (b) there is no outline, form, or document that explains what the teachers should be observing, the benchmarks that need to be accomplished, or the expectations of the observations. Appendix G5 identifies these themes and the data sources in which the information was gathered.

It was evident from the interviews and observational data analysis that effective paraprofessional performance monitoring is not taking place in these two middle schools. Table 2 outlines these responses.

Table 2

Responses Regarding Who Evaluates, Supervises and Observes Paraprofessionals

Evidence of Varied Participant Responses	
Who Evaluates Paraprofessionals?	**Number of Responses:**
Supervisor	2
Special Education Teacher	2
No One	10
Who Supervises Paraprofessionals?	**Number of Responses:**

Supervisor	6
Special Education Teacher	2
Unsure	6
Who Observes Paraprofessionals?	**Number of Responses:**
Supervisor	1
Special Education Teacher	6
No One	7

Ten participants identified that no one evaluates the paraprofessionals, six identified that they are unsure of who supervises the paraprofessionals, and seven participants stated that no one observes the paraprofessionals completing their daily routines.

Monitoring is informal.

Monitoring performance was most often limited to brief informal discussions between teachers and paraprofessionals. Ms. Lynn stated, "I give suggestions and have a nonchalant conversation with the paraprofessional." When asked about her approach to performance monitoring, Ms. Nancy, a first year teacher, replied, "I tend to more of observe what they are doing given that they know what their objectives are for the day. I tend to observe them as I am in the classroom working with the kids." Ms. Kate, stated,

> I am in the classroom with them all the time, so I am observing them. If I am not in the classroom, then I check in with the other teachers in the other classrooms to find out how things went and to see if there is anything that I need to aware of and follow up with.

Ms. Kate also explained the process of performance monitoring as, “We just talk. The paraprofessionals in my room stay after school so we can have time to communicate with one another.” The vagueness of this description indicates that this teacher is unclear as to how to monitor performance and provide constructive feedback. The researcher also observed this during the classroom observations. In four different one-hour sessions, there were paraprofessionals who were not completing their assignment, not monitored, and not redirected by the teacher.

When paraprofessionals were asked during the interview, “Do teachers provide feedback on your performance?” Ms. Kerri responded, “I think that she just deals with it whenever there is an issue, it is not a weekly, daily, or monthly meeting.” Ms. Jenny, responded with, “I do not think my day to day performance is monitored, unless it is and they never expressed it to me.” These comments echoed the teachers’ when they stated during their interviews that they did not have an observation tool, form, or any idea as to what they are supposed to be monitoring.

Ms. Julia, a paraprofessional, noted the importance of ongoing performance monitoring by stating, “If the teacher does not tell me what I am doing right or what I am doing wrong then I am just going to continue to do what I am doing because that is all I know how to do.” Monitoring was valued and deemed essential to the performance of the paraprofessionals. However, as the responses of both teachers and paraprofessionals and the observations conducted by the researcher indicated, performance monitoring was conducted by informal discussions, was random, ineffective, not beneficial to the paraprofessionals or the teachers because there were no formal guidelines or processes to follow.

Informal observations were the accepted method of performance monitoring. The supervisor explained,

> Because of my new role, I am not around as much, so I have to get feedback from the teacher's observations of the paraprofessionals. I am sure that the teachers do not sit down and complete formal observations of the paraprofessionals but they pay attention to what they are doing.

Even though the teachers all identified informal observation as the primary way of monitoring the paraprofessionals' day to day performance, the teachers had difficulty describing what they were looking for or how they would approach the paraprofessional about the observations that were made. None of the teachers used any sort of document to track observations or any data regarding paraprofessional performance. Performance monitoring does add an extra burden to a teacher's already full schedule of duties, but it is essential to insure that the paraprofessionals are performing his/her duties responsibly. Monitoring the paraprofessional's performance of assigned tasks ensures that the tasks completed by the paraprofessionals are correct and completed in a timely fashion.

Teachers are not provided with an outline, form or document.

Formal performance monitoring of paraprofessionals does not currently exist at these two middle school programs. In general, the interviews revealed that most paraprofessionals did not know what kind of monitoring systems were in place, what type of documents were used to monitor their performance, or who was doing the monitoring. When asked, Ms. Jenny responded, "I guess the classroom teacher just watches me working with the students and monitors my performance that way." Ms. Carrie reported,

> If anybody is keeping records or documentations, I am unaware of that. I know that there is an evaluation form that is filled out by the program supervisor but since I have been employed here in the past ten years, it has only been done once to my knowledge.

Through the researcher's twenty hours of observations, there was no evidence that teachers used any forms for observing or monitoring the performance of paraprofessionals. There was also no evidence observed that the teachers felt comfortable with this role, as during a few of the observations some paraprofessionals were observed doing nothing and were not redirected or asked to do anything (March 10, 2011; March 31, 2011; May 9, 2011 and May 13, 2011). The comments of both teachers and paraprofessionals and the observations made by the researcher, makes it clear that formal processes are not in place for the day to day performance monitoring of paraprofessionals.

During the documentation review, the researcher did come across one document that was titled "Staff Evaluation: Program Aide" (D/13). The title of the document alone shows that this form has not been updated in many years, as the term "Program Aide" is no longer used to describe the paraprofessional position, and all other documents reviewed referred to them as paraprofessionals and not program aides. When the teachers and paraprofessionals were questioned about the form, they responded in general that they have never been shown the form and that they were unfamiliar with it and its contents. The researcher was unable to identify when this form was originated or anyone who was currently using this form. The researcher has been a teacher at TSEC for eleven years and has never seen the document before either. The only reason the researcher found out about the form was that she had asked the office staff to provide her with any documentation that they thought would be helpful to the research on paraprofessionals; this was one of the forms that they provided. No one reported that this form is currently in use or mentioned a newer version of this form that is available to teachers or supervisors.

The comments of both teachers and paraprofessionals make it clear that formal processes are not in place for the day to day monitoring of paraprofessionals. Even though monitoring is valued and deemed essential to the performance of the paraprofessional, there are no guidelines in place to help the teachers at TSEC complete this task. Without any guidelines or expectations to follow, each teacher and each paraprofessional has a different understanding of what is expected and what they are to perform each day.

Managing the Work Environment

The seventh executive function based on French's (2003) framework was that of managing the work environment. According to French (2003), effective communication is a process that involves at least two parties and both of these parties need to be active participants in the action. The sharing of information among paraprofessionals, teachers, and other educational team members is essential for problem solving, preventing conflict, and working together as a team. A teacher with unique preferences and needs leads each classroom; however, they often have little time to communicate about the issues or concerns regarding their classroom or student needs and this can result in many opportunities for problems to arise and conflict to occur. French (2003) identified that communication is the most fundamental skill of all teams and that merely sharing information is not necessarily communication; just like sharing, a schedule is not considered planning. Communication between the teachers, paraprofessionals, and educational team members needs to be built into their daily and weekly schedules to ensure that these opportunities to communicate are provided to and among educational team members.

The teachers and paraprofessionals in both Program A and B reported that communication happens throughout the school day or as things arise. When reviewing the interview data and the observational notes taken regarding the management of the work

environment it was noted that, there was limited structured or planned communication between the teachers and the paraprofessionals. Appendix G6 highlights this theme and the data sources in which the information was gathered.

Communication is haphazard.

Teachers and paraprofessionals in this study identified that along with a lack of planning time there was a limited amount of communication between the paraprofessionals and the teachers, which has resulted in communication happening "on the run". Ms. Kate, a special education teacher, in Program A reported, "Since they [paraprofessionals] have been in my classroom for so long, I would have to say that we meet and communicate on an as needed basis." Ms. Katelyn, the teacher from Program B, identified that she communicates information to her staff "verbally and I just fill them in on what they need to know, if I see them [paraprofessionals] before they enter into the classroom then I will try to communicate any issues or concerns then, it is a throughout the day kind of thing." Ms. Lynn reported, "We [teachers and paraprofessionals] rarely have time at the end of the day to meet so we usually communicate as things come up, it is just a conversation that takes place and it is not a set meeting date, day, or time."

The paraprofessional's comments about communication were consistent with what the teachers had reported. Ms. Jenny described communication between herself and the teacher as "it [communication] happens as the day goes along and as things come up." Ms. Carrie, another paraprofessional, stated, "We [the teacher and myself] would discuss issues and questions during the students break time or snack time because we did not have time during the school day to meet."

The supervisor echoed the teachers and the paraprofessional responses regarding the communication between staff members, "we communicate day to day, class to class and on the go." The supervisor reported during the interview,

> We [the teachers, paraprofessionals and I] have staff meetings once a week after school, but it is hard because there is so much communication all day long that it may not be a formal meeting but communication does take place each and every day. The communication is ongoing.

Moreover, the researcher observed many conversations that took place between the teachers and the paraprofessionals during the twenty hours of observation. The researcher noted, during the observations that, "There was constant communication between the teachers and the paraprofessionals, they were always filling each other in on what was going on and what had happened…."

This type of communication seems to be an effective and supported type of communication according to the participants in this study. However, this type of communication can also compromise the effectiveness and the confidentiality that these professionals are required to maintain (Giangreco et al., 1997; Stahl & Lorenz, 1995). The lack of planning time and limited formal communication has resulted in teacher and paraprofessionals exchanging student related issues in the hallways, classrooms, lunchrooms, and during inappropriate times throughout the school day. Communication is not supposed to be a one-way street; it is supposed to facilitate the team working together to solve problems in a systematic manner.

Professional Development

Professional development is not identified as one of French's (2003) executive functions in her framework. However, this was a reoccurring theme throughout the interviews so the

researcher deemed it necessary to include these results section. Four major themes emerged from the data analysis about professional development in both Program A and Program B: (a) professional development days that are offered through TSEC are geared more towards teachers than paraprofessionals; (b) TSEC currently does not provide training regarding the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals; (c) once topics are discussed at the professional development days there is a lack of follow through into the classrooms; and (d) a "one-day/one-size fits all" approach to professional development is not the most effective way to provide professional development to all staff. Appendix G7 highlights the themes and the data sources that helped to guide the researcher to these conclusions.

Trainings are geared more towards teachers than paraprofessionals.

Throughout the interviews and documentation review, it was evident to the researcher that training and professional development is a priority at TSEC. The supervisor, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals all agreed that TSEC offers four professional development days a year to all professionals that work at TSEC. The researcher confirmed this through the documentation review. The documents titled "Paraprofessional Job Postings" and TSEC's "Employee Handbook; Policies and Procedures" (D/2; D/9) both supported and stated that there are four mandatory professional days throughout the year. However, all of the respondents in this study identified that the trainings provided by TSEC are geared more towards teachers and not necessarily towards the role or responsibilities of the paraprofessionals.

Mr. Nicholas described the situation that occurs at TSEC professional development days as "when we get into bigger Collaborative wide types of professional days, it is too generalized and it is more teacher related training than paraprofessional related." From the paraprofessional perspective, Ms. Jenny described it as, "I think they [TSEC] do it as such a whole and they do

give good information but it is more geared towards teachers and IEP development than what I can do in the classroom to help out." Ms. Carrie and Ms. May reported that the professional development days focus more on "the teacher's role, MCAS portfolios, and the IEP process."

The participants reported that the training opportunities that have been offered have included information related to confidentiality, IEP development, differentiated instruction, a review of federal and state regulations, and positive behavioral supports. When interviewed, the teachers and the paraprofessionals identified that they would like to receive more training regarding dealing with conflict resolution, team building, and the paraprofessional's role and responsibilities. This critical piece is an area of training that was identified as missing from the TSEC professional development days.

Lack of training for teachers.

Teachers as well as paraprofessionals require training regarding the roles and responsibilities that paraprofessionals can and cannot hold in the classroom environment. Although much of the discussion revolves around the paraprofessional needing training, the issue of teacher training is equally important. Teachers need to learn how to direct, train, and supervise the paraprofessionals in their classrooms.

Ms. Lynn commented, "I never did receive any training. I do not think there is any or at least I have never received any pamphlets or seen any advertisements for any but it would be helpful." Ms. Kate commented, "I did not receive any training to supervise paraprofessionals not ever in my six years of teaching." Ms. Nancy, another special education teacher, simply said, "No" when asked if she had received any training as to how to work with paraprofessionals in the classroom environment. Ms. Katelyn shared that one of her college classes addressed the paraprofessional and their roles,

> They [my classmates] discussed paraprofessionals in one class over the course of a couple of seminars. We were able to share our own experiences that we have had during our student teaching and solicit advice from others as to how to handle or deal with the situation.

Ms. Lynn reported that during one of her classes in college, the teacher handed them a packet of information about paraprofessionals, but the college professor never reviewed it with them. Although providing future teachers with a packet of information is helpful, it is not truly useful unless the teacher reads and absorbs the contents of the packet and is then provided with the opportunity to implement some of the suggested ideas and techniques in the classroom.

Ms. Nancy, a former paraprofessional, identified that "from an organizational perspective the organization itself has not really provided a whole lot of specific training in the aspect of the paraprofessionals or teachers responsibilities." Throughout the documentation review, the researcher noted that there was no specific job explanation, job description, or clarification provided regarding the differences or similarities in the teacher's and the paraprofessional's roles and responsibilities. Not only was there limited training provided but there was also nothing provided in writing to help identify, understand, or clarify each of the roles that these professionals play in the classroom.

Lack of follow through.

The special education teachers and paraprofessionals identified that there was a lack of follow through regarding the information presented and what actually happens when they return to the classroom. Ms. Lynn stated,

> When we return to our classroom full of students, we do not have the time to implement the suggested strategies that are recommended at the professional days because our

> students still need to be taught at that moment. There is not enough time to process through all of the information and implement it effectively or within a timely manner.

The paraprofessionals and the teachers stated that time constraints in their daily schedules hinder training opportunities and the ability to implement the information that has been learned. Ms. Nancy pointed out, "We [the special education teachers] do not have prep periods like regular education teachers, so we do not have any time during the day to review or implement the new strategies that are taught." Ms. Danielle expressed concerns around time constraints as well, "…more time to plan would be beneficial; there are only so many hours in the day. More planning time and more professional development would be beneficial to everyone and in return beneficial for the students, which is the most important thing."

"A one-size/one-day fits all" approach is not effective.

Professional development is an opportunity for existing teachers and paraprofessionals who are already in schools to learn new teaching methods thus making them and their programs more effective. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals who participated in this study expressed concerns about having "A One-Size/One-Day Fits All" approach to the professional development days and in-service trainings that are offered at TSEC.

The day after a professional day, the teachers are expected to implement the new strategies into their classrooms. This type of format does not allow follow-up training to occur and does not provide the teachers or paraprofessionals the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Ms. Jenny expressed,

> It would be nice if the professional development days all connected to one another. If they [TSEC] started off with a review of the last day and asked questions at the beginning of the day, they then could make sure that everyone's questions get answered. Often

times we get back to the classroom and try to implement things and then realize that we have more questions than answers and we are unsure of how to obtain those answers that we need.

Follow-up trainings, questions, and answer sessions are also a necessity to ensure that the teachers and paraprofessionals understand the information and are able to implement the strategies successfully into their classrooms. Professional development is more successful if follow-up activities are part of the design of the program and the process. Providing professional development for both teachers and paraprofessionals is an important way for all of the professionals to keep current with the best practices in the field of education however, it is just as important to have a plan in place to allow for follow-up, clarifying questions, carry-over and implementation into the classroom environments. The one-day, one-size fits all in-service structure that is common to school systems today is an ineffective way to provide professional development to teachers and paraprofessionals. It does not allow for the carry-over or follow-through of the skills into the classroom environment.

Summary

The findings from this study informed all of the research questions that were posed at the beginning. The findings informed Research Question 1 in multiple ways. From the 14 interviews that were conducted, none of the participants were able to state the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, describe, or outline their roles in a systematic manner. The participants were able to discuss specific tasks that paraprofessionals complete each day but were unsure and unaware if these tasks were the responsibility of the teacher or the paraprofessionals in the classroom. During the documentation review, the researcher was unable to identify any resources that outlined, described, or explained the roles and responsibilities of the

paraprofessionals. This has resulted in confusion between the teachers and the paraprofessionals roles in the classroom.

The findings from this study informed Research Question 2 and 3 by the participants identifying that there is no formal orientation or mentoring process for new paraprofessionals at TSEC, which has resulted in the participants relying on "the learn as you go" model of training paraprofessionals. The participants described a lack of systematic planned training for paraprofessionals and teachers regarding the paraprofessional's roles and responsibilities.

In regards to Research Question 4, the participants did identify that TSEC offers four professional development days a year to all Collaborative employees but that the training is limited in content areas, only reflects the teacher's roles and responsibilities, and lacks follow through into the classroom environment. This has resulted in the participants identifying that a "one-day/one-size fits all" approach to professional development is not the most effective way to provide professional development to all staff. The participants have identified the importance of professional development and the need for a more systematic approach to applying it to all Collaborative employees. All participants were able to identify that the current structures that are in place at TSEC regarding training paraprofessionals are limited in structure, scope, and sequence.

When looking at the data analysis regarding the four main research questions and the theoretical framework that was used to develop the protocols for this study, it has become evident that TSEC does not adequately address all of the functions outlined in French's (2003) framework and that there are areas that can be added to French's (2003) framework that would help to move this initiative forward. Therefore, it is concluded that the seven executive functions

outlined in French's (2003) framework need additional attention from TSEC administration in order to maximize the effectiveness of paraprofessionals.

Chapter V

Discussion of Research Findings

This research project has given the researcher the ability to take a step back from her current role as an educator and a leader in order to investigate a problem of practice through an action research project. The researcher was able to frame the problem of practice by extensively reviewing the relevant literature and applying an appropriate theoretical lens to guide the analysis and findings of this study. The researcher has been entrenched in this problem of practice for over eleven years at TSEC. The researcher has served as a special education teacher, a union representative, a curriculum leader, an MCAS Alternative Assessment Specialist, as well as a teacher/leader. Each of these roles offered the researcher a different perspective and view on the training and supervision of paraprofessionals. The researcher knew that there were areas that needed improvement within TSEC's paraprofessional training and supervision programs but was unable to specifically identify these areas or where to start the improvement process. This case study allowed the researcher to look at the problem of practice from a new vantage point, giving the researcher the ability to bracket her personal connections to the problem of practice. The researcher was able to examine the current practices through French's (2003) theoretical framework on paraprofessional supervision. By applying a theoretical framework, the researcher was able to identify the current gaps in the literature, areas where the organization is missing the mark, ways to help other organizations and school systems use these findings as a guide to an investigation into their own programs and practices for paraprofessionals.

Purpose of the Case Study

As discussed in earlier chapters, the number of paraprofessionals working in school systems has increased dramatically due to many factors, one being the growing number of students identified as requiring special education services. School enrollments are projected to

increase slowly over the next decade, with a slightly greater increase among students identified for special education services (Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010). As a result, the employment of paraprofessionals is expected to grow by ten percent between 2008 and 2018 (Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010). This increasing demand points to the need for an in-depth analysis of current practices, training opportunities, and supervision of paraprofessionals. This case study answered the following four research questions:

1. How are the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative?
2. How are the current training practices of paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative perceived by their supervisor, special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals?
3. What are the training needs identified for paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative? How does the role of the supervisor, the special education teachers, and the paraprofessionals describe these needs?
4. What are the current structures that are in place for training paraprofessionals at The Special Education Collaborative and to what degree do these structures align with the participants' experiences?

These four research questions were largely addressed by the findings presented in chapter four. The findings in this study revealed that French's (2003) seven principles of effective paraprofessional training were being applied inconsistently and that the framework itself is incomplete. The paraprofessionals and teachers experienced a lack of available time, systematic

training, common planning, and evaluation. This issue was compounded by the lack of clear job descriptions for paraprofessionals. With not enough time in the teachers' day, limited planning, no evaluation, and unclear job descriptions, teachers are being left with little guidance and support as to how to train or supervise paraprofessionals. However, paraprofessionals rely on the classroom teacher to provide them with the necessary training, but often received only "on the fly" training and no systematic planned training. With limited structured training and no clear job descriptions, the training of paraprofessionals was limited in scope and sequence.

Discussion of Research Findings

Many areas of French's (2003) framework were not being adequately addressed at TSEC. French's seven elements associated with paraprofessional supervision include orientation, task delegation, scheduling, planning work assignments, on-the-job training and mentoring, monitoring performance and managing the work environment. Although these seven skill areas are general supervisory tasks, the research in this study and the relevant literature indicated that schools are currently not providing this level of support to paraprofessionals (Frank, Keith & Steil, 1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

The overriding findings in this study provided the researcher with two main areas that require further discussion: (a) identifying inconsistencies between the executive functions and the application of them; and (b) identifying the additional components that need to be incorporated into French's (2003) framework. Both of these areas need to be addressed before school systems can apply the theoretical framework in an effective and systematic manner.

Inconsistencies with the Theoretical Framework

Eight years ago, French developed a great framework on how to supervise, oversee the work of paraprofessionals, and guide paraprofessional trainings, but educators today are still not

employing these strategies. This research found evidence that there is a great disconnect between this theory and the application of it in our school systems. This research project addresses some of the issues that were identified between the disconnect of the theory and the practices that are happening at TSEC. This researcher found evidence that the recommendations that were outlined in French's (2003) framework are not being addressed extensively at TSEC. This study found that each of the seven executive functions of supervision needs additional attention from TSEC's administration in order to maximize their paraprofessionals' effectiveness.

Orientation, mentoring, and training are happening at TSEC, but they are only happening informally. All participants reported that the trainings that are provided to paraprofessionals at TSEC are happening "on-the-fly" and there is not a systematic training and development process in place. Systematic and planned trainings need to be incorporated into the current training practices to complement the "on-the-go" type of training model that is currently being utilized. The literature shows that this type of formalized training is lacking in other school systems as well (The Council for Exceptional Children, 2001; French, 1998; Jones & Bender, 1993; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). The paraprofessionals, teachers, and the participating supervisor noted that although "on-the-job" training was a beneficial way to learn new skills, it was not an effective method for on-going and continued training to occur. Thus, it is recommended that there is a need for more structured training programs to be implemented. This type of training will benefit all stakeholders, from the classroom teacher to the students.

Prior research also shows that training paraprofessionals makes it possible for them to meet and possibly exceed expectations (Chung, 2006; Giangreco et al., 2001; Stallings, 2000). Previous research also has documented the importance of structured on-the-job training and

mentoring for paraprofessionals (D'Aquanni, 1997; Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Mueller, 1997). Comprehensive paraprofessional training is unlikely to occur incidentally and needs to be developed and implemented in a meaningful and effective manner. This study suggests that paraprofessionals are relying on informal training methods to help them gain access to an understanding of classroom activities and dynamics. Training opportunities need to be readily available to paraprofessionals in both deliberate and organized ways and continuously throughout their careers so that the "on-the-go" training is supplemented by a deliberate process that is developed and designed by the administration. Districts must take an active role in determining what training works best to meet their paraprofessionals' unique needs.

Theoretical Recommendations

This study has resulted in the researcher identifying three major component that are missing from French's (2003) framework that would aid school districts and programs in implementing all of the elements in an effective manner. The researcher recommends that Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities for Paraprofessionals be considered as an additional element of effective paraprofessional preparation. The research also recommends that the theoretical framework be expanded to include professional development and on-going training. The overwhelming majority of participants in this study identified that the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals are not clearly defined and are hindering the effective implementation of all of the other elements of effective paraprofessional preparation and supervision. This has limited the implementation, scope and sequence of each of the elements. Many prior research studies have also identified that clearly defined roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals is lacking in schools across the nation (Chung, 2006; Clarke, 2001; Giangreco

et al., 2001; Stallings, 2000). The first step in the lengthy process of standardizing the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals is to identify specific expectations and outcomes.

According to the literature and the results of this study, accurate job descriptions are essential (Blalock, 1991; Chung, 2006; French, 1999; Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Pardee, 1992; Pickett, 1986; Pickett et al., 1993; Stallings, 2000). Laws such as NCLB and IDEA attempt to outline the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, but they fall short. This study joins with others to argue that there is a need to define the standards and guidelines that determine the work that paraprofessionals should be doing at the federal level; however, the needs of individual schools, programs, and students are unique, so attention needs to be focused at the school and program level to determine the specific duties of the paraprofessionals.

For example, TSEC needs to develop specific job descriptions so that the administration can move forward with implementing the other components of French's (2003) framework. With accurate job descriptions, the administration will be able to develop orientation, mentoring, and professional development programs based on expected outcomes. Not only will this guide the process of training paraprofessionals but it will also aid the administration in developing an effective evaluation process that can be used to monitor the paraprofessionals' performance, providing indicators for success, and identifying specific gaps in the current training practices.

With the development of an effective evaluation process, teachers will then be provided with the necessary resources to guide their training and help develop and shape the role of the paraprofessional. Teachers will be able to use the outlined roles and responsibilities as a guide to what to expect from the paraprofessionals and what tasks can be delegated to them. Currently, challenges in evaluating paraprofessionals are linked to inadequate job descriptions and poorly defined employment parameters. If teachers do not know what to evaluate, then it is unlikely

that their evaluation will accurately reflect the paraprofessionals' performance, and without adequate evaluation, paraprofessionals will not have the opportunity to thrive in their role. Both teachers and paraprofessionals need to be provided with guidelines and a process to evaluating paraprofessional performance so that they can both be working together as a team to improve the outcomes of paraprofessionals.

Clear job description and specific roles and responsibilities allow all members of the educational team to understand the expectations and outcomes of paraprofessionals in the classroom environment, thereby allowing the team to function optimally. Without such initial clarity, the remaining elements outlined in French's (2003) framework are difficult to apply.

Implications for Educational Practice

Current policies and practices at TSEC do not adequately address the changing roles, responsibilities, and training needs of paraprofessionals or their supervising teachers. Based on this study's findings, coupled with other existing research, several recommendations for changes in practice and policy are offered.

First, programs need to develop accurate job descriptions. State departments of education and local districts must define standards and guidelines for paraprofessionals so that individual schools can take an in-depth look at the students they serve and build job descriptions that allow paraprofessionals and special education teachers to respond effectively and efficiently to those needs. Clear job descriptions are instrumental in the hiring and interviewing process so that the best candidates can be recruited and identified. The more accurately the requirements and tasks of the position are described, the easier it will be for administrators to hire an appropriate team member. Additionally, candidates will be provided with a clearer job description regarding what is expected of them and provided with an outline of their roles and responsibilities.

Second, districts need to identify the training needs of the paraprofessional prior to beginning employment; therefore, general training topics that can be covered in training modules that are required for all paraprofessionals. Moreover, student needs change, so it is fair to assume that the work paraprofessionals do with students will also change, presenting new or different training needs. On-going training is essential, paraprofessionals require opportunities to inform their supervisors and administrators about their training needs, and what types of training are most helpful.

In addition, paraprofessionals and special education teachers need to be provided with designated common planning time for collaboration and discussion in order to support the students in the classroom, and they need time to reflect on their collaboration. Teachers need clear direction as to how to maximize the impact of the paraprofessional in the teaching and learning environment of the classroom. Paraprofessionals and special education teachers that are already in the field need continued training and support on how to deal effectively with and manage adults in their classrooms.

Next, in order to ensure that the training is actually on-going and effective; an action research plan should be integrated into the professional development process for teachers and paraprofessionals (Rock & Levin, 2002). Educational researchers have found that the action research approach to professional development offers professional activities that develop skills of inquiry, reflection, problem solving, and collaboration (Burnaford, 1999; Casanova, 1989; Herndon, 1992; McCutcheon, 1987; Rock & Levin, 2002; Rosaen & Schram, 1997). This model of professional development moves away from the “one-day/one-size” fits all approach, which the participants in this study deemed inadequate for training educators and paraprofessionals.

Arnold (1993) stated that teacher educators believe that if they train teachers and paraprofessionals to use an inquiry process that requires on-going reflection and critical analysis, then the educators will be more likely to continue in this direction throughout their careers. TSEC needs to be sure to include this process of inquiry into the paraprofessionals' and teachers' professional development plans. The participants in this study recognized that there is a need for TSEC to move away from the "one-day/one-size" fits all approach to professional development. By providing teachers and paraprofessionals with the opportunities to work on action research plans/projects this will provide them with the opportunity for focused, deliberate learning that evolves out of the curiosity and genuine interests of the participants (Rock & Levin, 2002).

Two additional recommendations center on human behavior and the complexities that arise when individuals work together. Classroom teachers who work with paraprofessionals need to be trained in supervising and managing others. By law, paraprofessionals are to work under the direct supervision of a certified teacher. Teachers should receive in-service instruction on how to fulfill these new roles and ideally, similar forms of training should be added to teacher preparation programs. The second area needs to focus on the teachers and paraprofessionals working together as a team. Chung (2006) also recommended this training practice.

These recommendations are not necessarily new to the field of education; however, the researcher was able to identify these issues and concerns by applying French's (2003) framework to the day-to-day work of four different classrooms within TSEC. The researcher is encouraged that these findings will add to the bank of prior research and may assist others in understanding this critical dilemma faced in education. Current policies and practices can be addressed to help mediate the issues reflected in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

As the numbers of paraprofessionals in schools continues to grow, this growth has led to constantly changing paraprofessional responsibilities and has forced teachers to assume supervisory roles for which they have received no training and often find uncomfortable. This study grew out of the researcher's concern that more and more paraprofessionals are hired each year at TSEC, and they are not receiving adequate or timely training. Because the researcher undertook this study to assess these problems at TSEC, the findings are limited because it was conducted in only two schools in southeastern New England. Therefore, experiences of the participants interviewed and observed in this study may not reflect those of others working in other classrooms or school settings around the state or country. Because this may limit the applicability of this study to other settings, others are encouraged to conduct similar studies that may add to these findings.

With the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act, there are many new implications for paraprofessionals and their trainings that should be explored. Further research needs to investigate the evaluation methods for paraprofessionals in schools. Questions in the research need to focus on factors that constitute appropriate job performance of paraprofessionals and the indicators of effective paraprofessional performance. Additional research is needed to determine what programs will effectively train teachers to supervise and prepare paraprofessionals to assume broader responsibilities. If schools have existing training programs for teachers and paraprofessionals, research is needed to assess the effectiveness of these programs and how these programs can help aid school districts in developing best practice trainings for paraprofessionals.

Due to the changing nature of how paraprofessionals are used in schools, administrators often lack an understanding about the paraprofessional's roles and how the supervising teachers

can best supervise and support them. However, the administration needs to establish appropriate monitoring systems for the supervision and evaluation of paraprofessional within their buildings. It is generally their responsibility to clarify those roles and provide ample planning time for teams during the school day. This could become and interesting topic for further research to investigate what structures and strategies building administrators can employ to best support teachers and paraprofessionals teams. For example, since many school systems offer formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers, further studies could address the components of this training that would be appropriate to incorporate in a paraprofessional mentoring program. This could include mentoring for less experienced teachers who work with novice teachers to increase their ability to supervise and oversee paraprofessionals in their classrooms.

This study was limited to a population of one supervisor, four special education teachers, and nine paraprofessionals that work for one organization in two different middle school programs. Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for further study are recommended to be completed at TSEC:

1. Future studies should include veteran paraprofessional and special education teachers' (experience of 5-10 years and 10 or more years) perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and training versus newer paraprofessionals' and special education teachers' (experience of 1-2 years and 3-4) perceptions. This type of investigation would provide TSEC with further insight into how the roles, responsibilities, and training practices of paraprofessionals have changed or have not changed over time. This type of investigation will also help TSEC identify gaps in their previous and current training practices. This will aid TSEC administration in developing more focused training based on the needs of both groups of paraprofessionals.

2. Future research should include an investigation of effective paraprofessional orientation and mentoring programs in local school districts and in public/ private special education programs. Additional investigation into whether current teacher orientation programs can provide models for addressing paraprofessional training would also be useful.
3. Essential to improving the skills and performance of paraprofessionals would be an investigation into the most current means of providing paraprofessionals with an effective and useful evaluation process that will allow them to grow and learn.
4. Descriptive research at the college level is required to determine if current college teacher preparation programs have curriculum that prepare teachers for their emerging collaborative roles with paraprofessionals.

Conclusion

Research has documented that the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and paraprofessionals continue to grow and shift to accommodate the emerging needs of the students that are being served and the changing regulations that educators are faced with (Blalock, 1991; Chung, 2006; French, 1999; French & Pickett, 1997; Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Pardee, 1992; Pickett, 1986; Pickett et al., 1993; Stallings, 2000). School systems and programs need clearly defined roles for both special education teachers and paraprofessionals to maximize the benefits of hiring additional support staff for students. Federal and state polices reflect and respond to some of the ongoing changes but are not specific enough. School districts need to be proactive in preparing adequate and accurate job descriptions so that everyone understands exactly what the paraprofessionals need to be doing in the classroom environment. By having a

specific job description for paraprofessionals this will help to facilitate and guide appropriate paraprofessional trainings.

School districts also need to be proactive in the training provided to the paraprofessionals by providing training before the paraprofessionals work with the students in the classroom and continuously throughout their employment. A “one-size/one-day fits all” approach to training is not the most effective way to train paraprofessionals because our students do not fit into any “one-size fits all” category, and the students’ needs continue to change. There is a call for training of paraprofessionals, but there is also a need for special education teachers to have training on how to work with, supervise, and oversee the work of paraprofessionals in their classrooms.

Finally, the needs of students are paramount, and improving the training and supervision of special education teachers and paraprofessionals is essential. Employing, developing, and directing paraprofessionals is a multi-faceted endeavor and involves every level of a school district. Not only do paraprofessionals respond to the students’ individual needs, but also they must respond to the ways in which teachers, administrators, and organizational structures function and interact with them as well. Improving paraprofessional training and supervision will not only affect the work of paraprofessionals but it will also help to improve the overall performance and outcomes in the classroom environment.

References

Aldridge, J., & Goldman, R. (2002). *Current issues and trends in education.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

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

American Federation of Teachers. (1998). *Standards for a profession*. Washington, DC: Paraprofessional Division of The American Federation of Teachers.

Arnold, G.H. (1993). Strengthening student teachers' reflective/critical thinking skill through collaborative research. *Teaching Education Quarterly*, 20, 97-105.

Ashbaker, B., Young, J., & Morgan, J. (2001). *Paraeducators: Their roles in the instructional process*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Associate of Colleges for Teacher Education, Dallas, TX. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED454223)

Baker, A.J.L., Kessler, S., Piotrkowski, C.S., & Parker, F.L. (1999). Kindergarten and first-grade teachers' reported knowledge of parents' involvement in their children's education. *Elementary School Journal, 99(4)*, 365-380.

Blacher, J. & Rodriguez, T. (2007). Holding on to their kite strings: Paraprofessional support in inclusive settings. *Exceptional Parent*, 37(10), 74-76.

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

Brinker, R.P. (1985). Interactions between severely mentally retarded students and other students in integrated and segregated public school settings. *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, 89, 587-594.

Broer, S.M., Doyle, M.B., & Giangreco, M.F. (2005). Perspectives of students with intellectual disabilities about their experiences with paraprofessional support. *Exceptional Children*, 71(4), 415-430.

Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-2011 Edition Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos318.htm

Burnaford, G. (1999). Teacher action research as professional development in schools: Four paths toward change. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Bush, G.W. (2004). Signing of 2004 IDEA Amendment Speech. Retrieved from, http//www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/12/20041203-6.html

California Department of Education. (2008). No Child Left Behind paraprofessional requirements California Education Code, Sec. 22930-44920, Retrieved from California Department of Education Improving Teacher Quality Website: http://www.cde.ca.gov/nclb/sr/tq/parafaq.asp.

Carnahan, C.R., Williamson, P., Clarke, L. and Sorensen, R. (2009). A systematic approach for supporting paraeducators in educational settings: A guide for teachers. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 41 (5), 34-43.

Carpenter, L.B., & Dyal, A. (2007). Secondary inclusion: strategies for implementing the consultative teacher model. *Education*, 127.

Carroll, D. (2001). Considering paraeducator training, roles, and responsibilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34, 60-64.

Casanova, V. (1989). Research and practice: We can integrate them. *NEA Today*, 7, 44-49.

Causton-Theoharis, J. (2009). *The paraprofessional's handbook for effective support in*

inclusive classrooms. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Chen, G. (2009). Understanding self-contained classrooms in public schools. *Public School Review*, Retrieved from http://www.publicschoolreview.com/article73

Chung, H.E. (2006). Paraeducators in special education classrooms (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68, 2.

Council for Exceptional Children (2003). *What every special educator must know; Ethics, standards and guidelines for special educators.* Fifth Edition. Arlington, VA: Merrill Education/Prentice Hall, Inc.

Council for Exceptional Children (2010). *The Council for Exceptional Children's knowledge and skills for beginning special education paraeducators*. www.cec.sped.org/ps/parastds.html. Arlington, VA.

Cramer, M.M. (1997). *Factors influencing the tasks performed by paraprofessionals in elementary school classrooms* (Doctoral Dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997). ETD-82597-22506.

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

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

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

Devlin, P. (2008). Create effective teacher-paraprofessional teams. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 44(1), 41-44.

Douglas, M.E. (1979). *The time management workbook.* Grandville, MI: Time Management

Center.

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

Drawbaugh, C.C. (1984). *Time and its use: A self-management guide for teachers.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. (1965).

Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic field notes.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Emery, M.J. (1991). *Building team pride: Teachers and paraeducators working together*. Columbus: University of Missouri.

Etscheidt, S. (2005). Paraprofessional services for students with disabilities: A legal analysis of issues. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 30(2), 60-80.

Fletcher-Campbell, F. (1992). How can we use an extra pair of hands? *British Journal of Special Education*, 19, 141-143.

Frank, A.R., Keith, R.Z., & Steil, D.A. (1988). Training needs of special education paraprofessionals. *Exceptional Children*, 55, 253-258.

French, N. (1997). A case study of a speech language pathologist's supervision of assistants in a school setting. *Journal of Children's Communication Development*, 18, 103-109.

French, N. (1998). Working Together Resource Teachers and Paraeducators. *Remedial and Special Education*. 19.6.

French, N. (1999). Paraeducators and teachers: Shirting roles. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32, 69-73.

French, N. (2001). Supervising Paraprofessionals: A Survey of Teacher Practices. *The Journal*

of Special Education.

French, N. (2003). *Managing Paraeducators in Your School.* Corwin Press, INC. California.

French, N. & Cabell, E. (1993). Are community college training programs for paraeducators feasible? *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 17, 131-140.

Friend, M., & Cook, L. (1996). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

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.

Fryxell, D., & Kennedy, C.H. (1995). Placement along the continuum of services and its impact on students' social relationships. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 20, 259-269.

Gerber, S., Finn, J.E., Achilles, C.M., & Boyd-Zacharias, J. (2001). Teacher Aides and Students' Academic Achievement, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(2), 123−143

Gerlach, K. (2010). *The paraeducator and teacher team strategies for success-Communication and team building*, 4th Edition, Seattle, Washington: Pacific Training Associates.

Giangreco, M., & Broer, S. (2005). Questionable Utilization of Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools Are We Addressing Symptoms or Causes? *Focus on Autism and other Developmental Disabilities*, 20.1, 10-26.

Giangreco, M., & Broer, S. (2007). School-based screening to determine overreliance on paraprofessionals. *Focus on Autism and other Developmental Disabilities*, 22(3), 149-158.

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

Giangreco, M., Edelman, S., Broer, S., & Doyle, M. (2001). Paraprofessional Support of Students with Disabilities: Literature from the Past Decade. *Exceptional Children*, 68.1.

Giangreco, M., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T., & MacFarland, S. (1997). Helping or Hovering? Effects of Instructional Assistant Proximity on Students with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 64, 7-18.

Goessling, D.P. (1998). Inclusion and the challenge of assimilation for teachers of students with severe disabilities. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 23 (3), 238-251.

Goetz, J.P. & LeCompte, M.D. (1981). Ethnographic research and the problem of data reduction. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 12, 51-70.

Griffin-Shirley, N., & Matlock, D. (2004). Paraprofessionals speak out: A Survey. *Review*, 36, 127-136.

Haller, E.R. (2007). *Educational outcomes and context of middle school mathematics inclusion Students.* Ed. D dissertation, St. John's University (New York), School of Education and Human Services, United States. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations database. (Publication No. AAT 3256205).

Hammeken, P.A. (2009). *The paraprofessional's essential guide to inclusive education* (3rd. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hawkins, T.D. (2008). *The preparation requirements for effective paraprofessionals: A case*

study of a program to certify paraprofessional under No Child Left Behind. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, United States. Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 3308299).

Hebdon, H.M. (2008). The use of one-on-one paraprofessionals in the classroom: Does this assistance help to build necessary life skills? *Exceptional Parent*, 38(3), 88-89.

Herndon, K. (1994). Facilitating teachers' professional growth through action research. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, LA.

Hilton, A., & Gerlach, K. (1997). Employment, preparation and management of paraeducators: Challenges to appropriate service for student with developmental disabilities. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 32,* 71-76.

Hoover, J.H. (1999). *The roles of paraeducators in a rural-remote state: Views of administrators, teachers and paras.* Rural Special Education for the New Millennium Conference Proceedings of the American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES). Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Huberman, M., & Miles, M.B. (2002). *The qualitative researcher's companion: Classic and contemporary readings.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications

Hughes, M.T., & Vallie-Riestra, D.M. (2008). Responsibilities, preparedness, and job satisfaction of paraprofessionals: Working with young children with disabilities. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 16(2), 163-173.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, (Pub. L. No. 105-107), 20 U.S.C. sec. 1400 et seq.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. Department of Education. Federal Register: August 14, 2006. Volume 71, Number 156

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

Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1980). Improving in-service training: The messages of research. *Educational Leadership*, 37, 379-385.

Kennedy, C.H., Shukla, S., & Fryxell, D. (1997). Comparing the effects of educational placement on the social relationships of intermediate school students with severe disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 64, 31-47.

Lamont, I.L., & Hill, J.L. (1991). Roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in regular elementary classrooms. *B.C. Journal of Special Education*, 15, 1-24.

Lieberman, A. (2000). Networks as learning communities: Shaping the future of teacher development. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 221–227.

Likins, M. (2002). Effective training for paraprofessionals. *Impact: Feature Issue on Paraeducators Supporting Students with Disabilities and At-Risk*, 15(2), 6-7. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage Publications, INC. California.

Love, I.H., & Levine, D.U. (1992*). Performance ratings of teacher aides with and without training and follow-up in extending reading instruction.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED349294).

Malmgren, K.W., Causton-Theoharis, J.N. & Trezek, B.J. (2005). Increasing peer interaction

for students with behavioral disorders via paraprofessional training. *Behavioral Disorders*, 31(1), 15-25.

Marks, S., Schrader, C., & Levine, M. (1999). Paraeducator Experiences in Inclusive Settings: Helping, Hovering, or Holding Their Own? *Exceptional Children*, 65.3.

Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach.* Sage Publications, INC. California.

McCutcheon, G. (1987). Teachers' experience doing action research. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 64, 116-127.

McKenzie, A.R. (2008). The role and training of paraprofessionals who work with students who are visually impaired. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*. Retrieved from http://findartiles.ccom/p/articles/mi_6836/is_8_102/ai_n28562467

Merriam, S.B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation.* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, California.

Mertens, D., & McLaughlin (1995). *Research and Evaluation Methods in Special Education*. Corwin Press, INC. California.

Milkulecky, M.T., & Baber, A. (2005). From highly qualified to highly competent paraprofessionals: How NLB requirements can catalyze effective program and policy development. *ECS Policy Brief*. Denver, CO.

Milner, C.A. (1998). Paraprofessionals in inclusive classrooms: Working without a net. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 59, 05-A (The University of North Dakota: 1527).

Moody, F.B. (1967). *Teacher aide: A description and analysis of a new staff position in*

selected Pennsylvania Public Schools. Education Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, United States. Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text Database. (Publication No. AAT 6803553).

Morgan, J., & Ashbaker, B.Y. (2001). *A teacher's guide to working with paraeducators and other classroom aides*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mueller, P.H. (1997). A study of the roles, training needs and support needs of Vermont's paraeducators. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61, 04-A (The University of Vermont: 1358).

National Education Association. (2008). Special Education and the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from http://www.nea.org/specialed/index.html

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (1998). *Learning disabilities: Use of paraprofessionals*. New York: National Center for Learning Disabilities.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Pub.L.No. 107-110, € 115, tat. 1425 (2002).

Pardee, S. (1992). *A descriptive study of the responsibilities and professional development of paraprofessionals serving students with and without disabilities.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

Perkins, R.L. (2007). *General education teacher role perceptions in relation to successful IEP meetings*. Ed. D dissertation, Azusa Pacific University, United States. Retrieved from Dissertation & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 3292179).

Pickett, A.L. (1981). *Paraprofessionals in special education: The start of the art*. New York City: University of New York, New Careers Training Laboratory.

Pickett, A.L. (1986). *Paraprofessionals in special education: The state of the art – 1986.* New

York: City University of New York, Graduate School and University Center.

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

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

Pickett, A.L. (2002). Paraeducators: The evolution in their roles, responsibilities, training, and supervision. *Impact*, 15(2). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. Retrieved from http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/152.

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

Pickett, A.L. & Gerlach, K. (2003). *Supervising paraeducators in school settings a team approach.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Pickett, A.L. & Gerlach, K. (2004). *Supervising paraeducators in school settings.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Pickett, A.L., Gerlach, K., Morgan, R., Likins, M., & Wallace, T. (2007). *Paraeducators in school: Strengthening the educational team.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Pickett, A.L., Vasa, S.F., & Steckelberg, A. L. (1993). Using paraeducators effectively in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation*. Bloomington, Indiana.

Radaszewski-Byrne, M. (1997). Issues in the development of guidelines for the preparation and use of speech language paraprofessionals and their SL supervisors working in educational settings. *Journal of Children's Communication Development, 18*, 5-21.

Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.R. (2004) *Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data*. Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Riggs, C. (2001). Employment and Utilization of Paraeducators in Inclusive Settings. *Journal of Special Education*, 35.1.

Rock, T.C. & Levin, B.B. (2002). Collaborative Action Research Projects: Enhancing Preservice Teacher Development in Professional Development Schools. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 7-21.

Rosaen, C. & Schram, P. (1997). Professional development for beginning teachers through practical inquiry. *Educational Action Research*, 5, 255-281.

Scheuermann, B., Webber, J., Boutot, E., & Goodwin, M. (2003). Problems with personnel preparation in autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 18: 197-206.

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

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research; A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. Columbia University: Teachers College Press.

Shadgett, J.H. (1967). *An analysis of certain teacher aide functions in selected elementary schools in Florida*. Education dissertation, The Florida State University, United States. Retrieved from Dissertation & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. AAT 6802922).

The Special Education Collaborative (2008). *The Special Education Collaborative Professional Development Plan*. Seaswan, MA. Retrieved from www.TSEColl.org

The Special Education Collaborative (2010). *Treasurer reports for the 2009-2010 school year*. Seaswan, MA. Retrieved from the Union Treasurer.

Stahl, B.J. & Lorenz, G. (1995). *Views on Paraprofessionals.* St. Paul, MN: Minnesota

Department of Children, Families, and Learning.

Stallings, C.F. (2000). *The identification of paraprofessional training needs with the context of inclusive education*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

Steele, K. (1994). Design and implementation issues in socializing and resocializing employees. *Human Resource Planning*.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Sullivan, M. (1980). *Managing your time and money…strategies for success*. New York: American Express.

Szwed, C. (2007). Remodeling policy and practice: The challenge for staff working with children with special educational need. *Educational Review*, 59(2), 147-160.

Trautman, M. (2004). Preparing and managing paraprofessionals. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 39(3), 131-138.

U.S. Department of Education. (1975). *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Education. (1997*). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *No Child Left Behind Act.* Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. *Student Placement in Elementary and Secondary Schools and Section 504 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/placpub.html

Vasa, S.F., Steckelberg, A. L., & Ulrich-Ronning, L. (1982). *A state of the art assessment of*

paraprofessional use in special education in the state of Nebraska. Lincoln: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Departments of Special Education and Communication Disorders.

Wadsworth, D. & Knight, D. (1996). Paraprofessionals: The bridge to successful inclusion. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 31, 166-172.

Weiner, J. & Tardif, C. (2004). Social and emotional functioning of children with learning disabilities: Does special education placement make a difference? *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice,* 12 (1), 20-32.

Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

York-Barr, J., Sommers, W.A., Ghere, G.S., & Montie, J.K. (2006). *Reflective practice to improve schools: An action guide for educators* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Young, C.M. (2006). *A study of the perceptions of paraprofessionals and teachers regarding the roles of paraprofessionals in the classroom*. Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, United States. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations database. (Publication No. AAT 3240164).

Appendix A
Signed Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Department of Education
Name of Investigators: Jennifer Boudreau, Doctoral Student, Dr. Jane Lohmann, Principal Investigator
Title of Project: Paraprofessionals as Educators: Differing Perceptions, Responsibilities and Training

Request for Consent to Participate in a Research Study

January 9, 2011

Dear potential participants,

I am preparing to begin my doctoral research project. The goals of this case study are to determine (a) the current roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in a substantially separate special education classroom as defined by their supervisor, the special education teacher and paraprofessionals, (b) the training practices for paraprofessionals as perceived by their supervisors, special education teachers and paraprofessionals in substantially separate special education programs, (c) the perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, as viewed by their supervisors, special education teachers and paraprofessionals, (d) the differences and similarities that exist between current training practices and perceived training needs of paraprofessionals, (e) the differences and similarities that exist in perceptions of supervisors, special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The analysis of the findings will be used to encourage and guide The Special Education Collaborative administration to build and develop a tailor made paraprofessional training program that will address the identified gaps between the current practices, the perceived practices and the current training needs of paraprofessionals.

I invite you to participate in this research process and I seek your consent to interview you and to observe your current role as a teacher, paraprofessional or supervisor at TSEC as it relates to the areas of staff orientation, training, delegating, sharing information, monitoring performance, providing on the job training and professional development. All of which I will describe below:

As part of the informed consent process, there are several points I would like to explain:

- There is no compensation offered for participation.
- However, you may benefit from involvement in the project by being provided the opportunity to speak openly about the types of trainings you would like to receive. This opportunity may result in additional professional development for you to participate in and to grow as a professional.
- I cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of your participation at the local level. However, I will not identify anyone by name in any publications of the project results. The purpose of this research is not to evaluate your performance but to gather your insights regarding the roles, responsibilities and trainings of paraprofessionals.

- Your participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw at any time. Your decision to participate will not have any effect on your position at The Special Education Collaborative.
- Participation in this study will not affect any evaluation on your performance or your role as an employee at The Special Education Collaborative. Remember that your evaluation process is outlined in the union contract and this study will not have any effects to you or your evaluation as an employee.
- I will offer you the opportunity to review the transcripts of your interviews and you will be provided with the opportunity to request any of your contributions to be withheld from the analysis.
- I will safeguard your wellbeing by ensuring that any challenges and obstacles that are discussed during the interviews are not framed as individual failures.
- You will also be asked to participate in "Member Checking," which is used to solicit your views of my findings and interpretations. For this purpose, you will be given a preliminary draft of my data to review analytically. A summary of the case study will also be shared with you to verify my conclusions. Comments received from the Member Checking process will be reviewed and incorporated into the study results.
- All digital recordings will be deleted and destroyed following transcription and analysis.
- I do not foresee participation in this project posing any immediate risk or harm to you.

Specifically, I am seeking your consent for the following:

- **Interview:** All participants will be expected to participate in one semi-structured interview during the duration of this study. The interviews are expected to last no more than an hour and a half and will be conducted in Conference Room B at the Winterset Middle School, in Winterset, Massachusetts. These interviews will be conducted in privacy and during the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. depending on what is convenient for your schedule. All of the interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The goal of the interview is for me to be provided with your perceptions of what is currently happening in regards to paraprofessional roles, responsibilities and trainings. I anticipate that these interviews will start to take place during the winter of 2011.

- **Observation:** I will conduct informal observations to gain a more thorough understanding of the organization, its climate, and its day-to-day operations. I will not be conducting separate observations of each participant but I will conduct classroom observations to obtain a sense of how these areas are displayed and carried out in the classroom settings. I will conduct observations during the months of February and March 2011. Each classroom will be observed on five different occasions for no more than one hour at a time.

- **Member Checking:** Your review of my interpretations of the project data, particularly as it represents your personal perspective, is critical to the validity of my research. I will actively seek your review of the findings and conclusions and ask for your verification of my interpretations. I will do my best to limit the time required of

you, but your justification of my findings is invaluable. I anticipate that this will take place during the spring of 2011.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research. You may contact me at: boudreau.jen@huskey.neu.edu or 774-930-3373. You can also contact Dr. Jane Lohmann, the Principal Investigator at j.Lohmann@neu.edu or 617-756-3237.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. You may also contact her at jrb@neu.edu or 617-373-4588. You may also call anonymously if you wish.

Please indicate your consent to the interview, observation and Member Checking by signing below:

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part **Date**

_____

Printed name of person above

_____ _____

Signature of person who explained the study and obtained consent **Date**

_____

Printed name of person above

Appendix B

Paraprofessional Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:
Time of Interview:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

1. How did your teacher provide initial orientation to the program? If any?

Prompts

- Describe the type of orientation that you received from TSEC.
- Describe the type of orientation that you receive from the teacher.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities that were outlined to you during the orientation process.
- Describe the types of introductions that you received about the school.
- Describe the type of orientation that you received about the students.
- Describe how you learned about the safety and emergency procedures of the organization and the school.
- Describe how you learned about student confidentiality and student rights.

2. Describe an average day in the classroom, keeping in mind the teacher's process for delegate tasks and responsibilities to paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Describe the types of tasks that the teacher assigns you to complete.
- Describe how you know what tasks to complete each day.
- Describe how the teachers communicate to you what you are expected to do each day.

3. Describe and explain the types of student documentation that the teacher shares with you:

Prompts

- Describe how the teacher shares lesson plans with you and describe an interaction that you have had with the teacher that illustrates what the lesson planning process between the two of you might look like.
- Describe how you are informed of information regarding student modifications.
- Describe how the teacher shares student IEP goals and objectives with you.

4. What types of clearly defined daily, weekly, semester, or yearly goals are expected of you by the teacher or by TSEC?

Prompts

- Describe how the teachers and paraprofessionals set goals for the classroom and how does each other know that the goals are accomplished.
- Describe how teachers and paraprofessionals set expectations for outcomes.
- Describe how the teacher and paraprofessionals identify tasks of importance.
- Describe how you know what is expected of you in your job responsibilities each day.
- Describe how information is provided to you regarding the TSEC's policies and procedures?

5. How do teachers share information about their roles with paraprofessionals?

Prompts:

- Describe your role, or job description in the classroom.
- Describe how your supervising teacher communicates the responsibilities of the paraprofessional position to you.
- Describe how often and under what circumstances you meet with the teacher to review your role, responsibilities and goals.

6. Describe how teachers monitor the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Describe how the teacher provides you with feedback about your skills and performance.
- Describe how you know if you are doing your job correctly.
- Describe how you know if you are not doing your job correctly.
- Does anyone observe you completing your daily routine? If yes, please explain.

7. Describe how the teachers provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals in the classroom:

Prompts:

- Describe how the teacher assesses your current skill level.
- Describe how the teachers introduce or coach new skills in the classroom.
- Please describe any on-the-job training or mentoring you have received in your position as a paraprofessional.

8. What types of professional development have been offered to you?

Prompts:

- Describe the type of professional development that has been offered thru TSEC.
- Describe any types of professional development you have participated in off-site locations.
- Describe the types of professional development have you sought out on your own and why?
- Describe the types of professional development that the teacher has provided you with?
- Describe the types of professional development that you would consider useful to your position.

9. Is there anything else you care to share with me about your experience as a paraprofessional?

(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews.)

Notes or observations during interview:

Note. Adapted from The Seven Executive Functions Associated with Paraeducators Supervision, by Nancy French, 2003, *Managing Paraeducators in Your School.* Corwin Press, INC. California

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:
Time of Interview:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

1. Describe how you as a teacher provide orientation to the paraprofessionals in your classroom:

Prompts

- Describe the type of information that you offer about TSEC.
- Describe the roles and responsibilities that were outlined to the paraprofessional during the orientation process.
- Describe the type of introduction that you provided about the school.
- Describe the type of orientation that you offered about the students.
- Describe how you conveyed safety and emergency procedures to the paraprofessionals?
- Describe how you ensure that the paraprofessionals in your classroom are aware of student confidentiality and student rights.

2. Describe how you delegate tasks to the paraprofessionals in your classroom:

Prompts:

- Describe the types of tasks that you assign them to complete.
- Describe how paraprofessionals know what tasks to complete each day.
- Describe how you communicate to the paraprofessionals what you expect them to do each day.

3. Describe the types of student documentation that you share with the paraprofessionals in your classroom:

Prompts

- Describe how you share lesson plans with the paraprofessionals in your classroom.
- Describe how you share information regarding student modifications with your paraprofessionals.
- Describe how paraprofessionals are made aware of student IEP goals and objectives.

4. What types of clearly defined daily, weekly, semester, or yearly goals do you or TSEC expect of paraprofessionals?

Prompts

- Describe how you and paraprofessionals set goals for yourselves and the classroom as a whole.
- Describe how you and your paraprofessionals set expectations and outcomes.
- Describe how you and your paraprofessionals identify tasks of importance.
- Explain how the paraprofessional knows what is expected of him/her each day.
- Describe and explain how information was provided to the paraprofessionals regarding TSEC's policies and procedures.

5. Explain how you share information with the paraprofessional about their roles:

Prompts:

- Describe the paraprofessional's role, or job description in the classroom.
- How did you communicate the responsibilities of the position to the paraprofessional?
- How often do you meet with the paraprofessional to review his/her role, responsibilities and goals?

6. Describe how you monitor the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Describe how you give feedback on the paraprofessionals' skills and performance.
- How do you know and how does the paraprofessional know if they are doing his/her job correctly?
- How do you know if they are not doing their job correctly and explain how you would handle this type of situation?
- How do you go about resolving conflicts between yourself and the paraprofessional?
- Does anyone observe the paraprofessional completing their daily routine? If yes, please explain.

7. Explain how you provide systematic on-the-job training and mentoring to paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Explain how you assess the paraprofessionals' current skill level.
- Explain how you introduce or coach new skills to paraprofessionals in your classroom.

- Please describe any on-the-job training or mentoring you have provided to paraprofessionals in your classroom.

8. Describe the types of professional development that have been offered to you, regarding the roles, responsibilities, training and supervision of paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Describe the types of professional development that have been offered thru TSEC.
- Describe the types of professional development that have been offered off-site.
- What types of professional development have you sought out on your own?
- What types of professional development would you consider useful to your position and to the position of the paraprofessional?

9. Is there anything else you care to share with me about your experience as a teacher with paraprofessionals in the classroom?

(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews.)

Notes or observations during interview:

Note. Adapted from The Seven Executive Functions Associated with Paraeducators Supervision, by Nancy French, 2003, *Managing Paraeducators in Your School.* Corwin Press, INC. California

Appendix D

Supervisor Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:
Time of Interview:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:

(Briefly describe the project)

1. Describe how TSEC provides orientation to new paraprofessionals in the organization:

Prompts

- Explain the components of orientation that are offered at TSEC.
- Explain the roles and responsibilities that are outlined to the paraprofessional during the orientation process.
- Describe the type of introduction that you offer about the school.
- Explain the components of orientation that you offer about the students.
- Explain how safety and emergency procedures get conveyed to paraprofessionals.
- Explain how and what you review about student confidentiality and student rights.

2. Explain how to delegate tasks to paraprofessionals and how you would train your teachers to delegate these responsibilities:

Prompts:

- Explain the types of tasks that are assigned to them to complete.
- How do paraprofessionals know what tasks to complete each day?
- Explain how you communicate to the paraprofessionals what you expect them to do each day?

3. Describe the types of student documentation you share with the paraprofessionals:

Prompts

- Explain how teachers are encouraged to share lesson plans with their paraprofessionals.
- How are paraprofessionals provided with information regarding student modifications?
- How are teachers encouraged to share student IEP goals and objectives with their paraprofessionals?

4. Explain the types of clearly defined daily, weekly, semester, or yearly goals that TSEC expects of paraprofessionals:

Prompts

- Explain how you go about setting goals with paraprofessionals.
- How do you and paraprofessionals set expectations for outcomes of the students?
- Describe how you and paraprofessionals identify tasks of importance.
- How does the paraprofessional know what is expected of him/her each day?
- Explain how information was provided to paraprofessional regarding TSEC's policies and procedures.

5. Explain how you share information with the paraprofessional about their roles and responsibilities:

Prompts:

- Describe the paraprofessional's role, or job description in the classroom.
- Explain how you communicate the responsibilities of the position to the paraprofessional.
- How often do you meet with the paraprofessional to review his/her role, responsibilities and goals?

6. Explain how you monitor the day-to-day performance of paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Explain how feedback is provided to the paraprofessionals' about their skills and performance.
- How do you know if the paraprofessional is doing his/her job correctly?
- How do you know if they are not doing their job correctly?
- Describe how you go about resolving conflicts between the teacher and the paraprofessional?
- Does anyone observe the paraprofessional completing their daily routine? If yes, please explain.

7. Describe the types of systematic on-the-job training and mentoring that is provided to paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Explain how the paraprofessionals' current skill level is assessed.
- Describe how you would introduce or coach new skills.
- Please describe any on-the-job training or mentoring you have provided to paraprofessionals.

8. Explain the types of professional development that have been offered to teachers and/or paraprofessionals regarding the roles, responsibilities and duties of paraprofessionals:

Prompts:

- Explain the types of professional development that have been offered thru TSEC.
- What types of professional development have been offered off-site to paraprofessionals?
- What types of professional development would you consider useful to their positions?

9. Is there anything else you care to share with me about your experience as a supervisor of teachers and paraprofessionals?

(Thank individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses and potential future interviews.)

Notes or observations during interview:

Note. Adapted from The Seven Executive Functions Associated with Paraeducators Supervision, by Nancy French, 2003, *Managing Paraeducators in Your School.* Corwin Press, INC. California.

Appendix E
Observational Documentation Protocol

Classroom:
Observation Date:
Observation Time:

Information will be recorded charting any observations related to the following categories:

Orientation
Planning
Delegating
Sharing Information
Monitoring Performance
Providing on the Job Training and Mentoring

Professional Development
Miscellaneous

Note. Adapted from The Seven Executive Functions Associated with Paraeducators Supervision, by Nancy French, 2003, *Managing Paraeducators in Your School.* Corwin Press, INC. California.

Appendix F
Document Analysis Protocol

Document Source:
Date of Document Analysis:
Date Document was Written or Updated:

Information will be recorded charting any observations related to the following categories:

Orientation
Planning
Delegating
Sharing Information
Monitoring Performance
Providing on the Job Training and Mentoring

Professional Development
Miscellaneous

Note. Adapted from The Seven Executive Functions Associated with Paraeducators Supervision, by Nancy French, 2003, *Managing Paraeducators in Your School.* Corwin Press, INC. California.

Appendix G1

Themes Surrounding Orientation

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
No Formal Orientation Process	S	x		x
	SET	x		
	P	x		
Responsibility of the Classroom Staff and Teacher	S	x		
	SET	x		
	P	x		
"Learn-As-You-Go" Model	S	x	x	
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	

Appendix G2

Themes Surrounding Task Delegation

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
Limited Task Delegation	S	x		
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	
Paraprofessionals "Know" What to do	S	x		
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	

Appendix G3

Themes Surrounding Scheduling/Planning Work Assignments

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
Schedules are Written on the Board	S	x	x	
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	
Lack of Planning Time	S	x	x	x
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	

Appendix G4

Themes Surrounding On-The-Job Training

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
No Mentoring Program for Paraprofessionals	S	x		x
	SET	x		
	P	x		
"Learn-As-You-Go" Model	S	x	x	
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	

Appendix G5

Themes Surrounding Monitoring Performance

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
Monitoring is Informal	S	x	x	x
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	
Teachers are Not Provided with an Outline, Form, or Document to Follow	S	x	x	x
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	

Appendix G6

Themes Surrounding Managing the Work Environment

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
Communication is Haphazard	S	x	x	
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	

Appendix G7

Themes Surrounding Professional Development

The "X" in each column highlights the themes and how they were presented according to the type of data collection that was used.

S = Supervisor

SET = Special Education Teacher

P = Paraprofessional

Theme	Personnel	Interviews	Observation	Documentation
Trainings are Geared More Towards Teachers than Paraprofessionals	S	x		x
	SET	x		
	P	x		
No Training Regarding Roles and Responsibilities	S	x		x
	SET	x		
	P	x		
Lack of Follow Through	S	x	x	
	SET	x	x	
	P	x	x	
A "One-Size/One-Day Fits All" Approach is Not Effective	S	X		
	SET	x		
	p	x		

Appendix H

Documents Collected and Analyzed

D/1	TSEC Professional Development Plan
D/2	Paraprofessional Job Postings
D/3	Middle School Handbook for Students and Parents
D/4	TSEC Vision Statement
D/5	TSEC Mission Statement
D/6	TSEC Core Values
D/7	Employee Checklist Once Hired
D/8	Documentation Required to be Completed Once Hired
D/9	Employee Handbook; Policies and Procedures
D/10	Strategic Plan for TSEC; 2006-2012
D/11	Safe Schools Plan
D/12	TSEC Federation/Unit “B” Contract; July 1, 2008- June 30, 2011
D/13	Staff Evaluation/Program Aide
D/14	Professional Teacher Evaluation
D/15	TSEC Program Handbook