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Paraprofessional supervision: A survey of special education teachers and paraprofessionals

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PARAPROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION: A SURVEY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those individuals whose continuous and unwavering support made its completion possible. First and foremost, I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Angelina. Since my acceptance to the doctoral program, Angelina has been one of the solid constants in my ever changing life. For the past 8 years, she has been a spouse, a guide, a friend, a mentor, and among many other things, an unyielding force that kept us both on a course of continuous improvement, and undying pursuit of excellence and perfection. It was Angelina who stood by my side when I was sweating the big concepts as well as the small details. It was she, who despite her own challenges to graduate from medical school, stood by my side and encouraged me to keep going. It was Angelina who helped me keep focus on my goals and to do no less than my best. It *is* Angelina without whom I would have not been able to even be in this country and pursue graduate studies at the College of William and Mary.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored special educators' supervisory methods, paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision, and the differences between the perceptions of the two groups. In addition, this study examined participants' perceptions of barriers to effective supervision, and their opinion as to what factors or strategies could facilitate effective supervision. Literature indicated that paraprofessionals have been an integral part of the educational process and their numbers in public schools have dramatically increased over the past two decades (French, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001). This increase along with enacted federal mandates contributed in the changing roles of both special educators and paraprofessionals. Special educators as well as paraprofessionals have increasingly assumed a wide array of roles and responsibilities. In turn, as paraprofessionals engaged in more tasks, special educators' roles expanded to include more supervision. This study examined the special educators' supervisory skills, paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision, the difference in the opinions between paraprofessionals and special educators, and lastly investigated barriers and possible facilitating factors and strategies to effective paraprofessional supervision. Surveys employed in this study were developed based on Pickett's (1999) model of major supervisory skills that special educators incorporated in their roles. Those skills included orientation and role clarification, planning, task delegating, mentoring and training, and evaluation and performance monitoring. Results from this study indicated that special educators had a tendency to engage more in planning and task delegating and less in role clarifying, mentoring and training, and evaluation and performance monitoring. In addition, this study found that overall there was an agreement in respondents' perceptions.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In schools across the nation, paraeducators are an integral part of the educational process. This is due, in part, to the increased numbers of students with disabilities in inclusive settings along with the growing number of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Daniels & McBride, 2001). Subsequently, there has been an expanding reliance on paraeducators for important contributions to general and special education service delivery models (French, 1998). Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, monitoring resource rooms, fulfilling housekeeping duties, providing clerical support, and even organizing home visits with parents. They also provide tutoring, either small group or one-to-one instruction (French, 2001; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Katsiyannis, Hodge, & Lanford, 2000; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Wadsworth & Knight, 1996). Paradoxically, these members of the educational team are probably the least trained individuals and yet most heavily depended on by special education (Daniels, & McBride, 2001; French, 1998; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002; Mueller, 2002; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Paraeducator is a term that refers to individuals who work under the direct supervision of special and general education teachers or other professionals to assist in the education of students with disabilities (Pickett, Likins, & Wallace, 2003). It is used along with many other terms that bear the same or similar meaning. In the literature, terms such as paraprofessionals, teacher aides, paratherapists, instructional assistants, occupational and physical therapy assistants, transition trainers, job coaches, and

education technicians have been referenced (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). In this paper, the terms, paraeducator and paraprofessional will be used interchangeably.

Although the significance of paraprofessionals' roles has been well documented (Blalock, 1991; Daniels & McBride, 2001; French, 1998; French & Chopra, 1999; Gartner & Riessman, 1974; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001; Hofmeister, Ashbaker, & Morgan, 1996; Jones & Bender, 1993; May & Marozas, 1981; Mueller, 2002; Pickett 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Pickett & NEA, 1994; Villegas, & Clewell, 1998; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001), limited research studies indicate that their supervision by teachers is minimal and inadequate (French, 1998; Pickett, 1997). Furthermore, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act reauthorized (IDEIA) in 2004 [Sec. 612(a)(14)(G)(ii)] affirms that state education agencies are required to "establish and maintain standards" and to ensure that paraprofessionals are "appropriately and adequately prepared, trained, and supervised in accordance with state law, regulations, or written policy" [(IDEIA) Sec. 612(a)(14)(G)(i)]. In other words, federal law mandates that paraprofessionals be prepared, trained, and supervised by 'qualified' (i.e., licensed) personnel.

Overview of the Study

This study is presented in five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction and overview of the problem, purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study, along with its limitations and major assumptions. The second chapter presents a review of literature regarding the trends of paraprofessional employment, roles, training and their supervision. Chapter three delineates the methods used for data collection and analysis. The fourth chapter analyzes the findings of the

research questions. Finally, chapter five discusses the significance of the results and their implications while offering recommendations for further investigation.

Statement of the Problem

Background of the Problem

Paraprofessional roles and responsibilities, training, and qualifications are major topics of interest, and numerous studies addressing these issues can be found in the literature (French, 1998; Giangreco et al., 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). However, there is limited research addressing paraeducator supervision, especially in inclusive settings. The reauthorized IDEIA 2004 and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Amendments 2001, also known as *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, address paraprofessional employment, preparation and supervision. Both IDEIA and Title I of NCLB require that paraeducators provide instructional support under the direct guidance and supervision of qualified personnel. Despite the requirements, Title I of NCLB does not clearly define what supervision is. This has implications for teachers and paraprofessionals who work in programs funded by Title I of NCLB.

According to French (2001), there is broad agreement that teachers and special educators in particular who supervise paraeducators have minimal or no training in supervision. Given that currently paraeducators provide instructional support, among other duties, with limited or no supervision at all, administrators, district officials, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and State Education Agencies (SEAs) may be compelled to set standards for training teachers in directing, monitoring, and assessing paraeducator duties (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Considering the lack of formal preparation regarding supervision of paraeducators, teachers rely on "real life experience" as the primary source of their knowledge on supervision (French, 2001). Moreover, there is little information in current studies that provides an accurate assessment of actual teacher practices related to paraprofessional supervision. French (2001) explored the practices of special education teachers as they supervise paraprofessionals. The results indicated that few teachers participated in selecting or hiring paraprofessionals that they supervised, yet as many as half of the respondents were responsible for evaluating the performance of the paraprofessional. In addition, teachers provided oral instructions to paraeducators rather than written plans. There is also evidence that reflects special educators' reluctance to supervise paraprofessionals (French, 2001; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). The reluctance of special educators to supervise paraeducators is suggested by the lack of face-to-face meetings, possibly due to time constraints, lack of planning for activities of the paraprofessional, and the actual content of plans regarding IEP goals and documenting student progress.

The Necessity for Paraprofessional Supervision Research

Existing literature offers limited information and leads to more questions than answers regarding supervision of paraprofessionals (French, 2001). The changing roles of paraprofessionals and their increased responsibilities necessitate the demand for adequate and appropriate supervision. As a result, greater emphasis has been placed in preparing paraprofessionals to provide services in special education while being appropriately and adequately supervised by qualified personnel (French, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Wallace, Shin, et al., 2001).

Despite the indicators for training of qualified personnel to supervise paraprofessionals, it has been well documented that teacher education programs are slow in providing teacher education candidates with knowledge of basic training in supervision of paraprofessionals (French, 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). Consequently, once they enter the field, teachers are not adequately and appropriately equipped to delegate tasks, monitor, and supervise paraeducators (French, 2001; Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001; Moshoyannis, Pickett, & Granick, 1999; Pickett, 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Although, over the past several decades there have been resources and materials developed for the training of paraeducators, teacher educator programs are lagging in developing programs for the preparation of teachers to supervise paraprofessionals (Wallace, et al., 2001). Two states, Minnesota and Washington, have included in their teacher educator programs curricula that encompass criteria, standards, and courses for licensure and certification of teachers in supervision (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Contemporary school administrators have operational responsibilities for implementing policies and personnel practices linked to paraeducator employment, preparation, evaluation and supervision (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). As part of the hiring process, they should develop job descriptions for paraeducators that encompass their roles as part of a multidisciplinary team while developing educational and experiential criteria for screening and selection. Administrators should also be responsible for establishing performance standards for their personnel and conducting annual performance reviews and evaluations. In addition, they should ensure that teachers are oriented and prepared for their supervisory roles with paraeducators. As part of the

preparation for training paraeducators, administrators must provide teachers standardized, systematic opportunities for preservice and inservice preparation as a component of their professional development program (Pickett, 1999). Over the past two decades, however, school administrators, state education agencies, and institutions of higher education, have paid little attention in establishing paraeducator core skills, determining specific qualifications for paraprofessional employment, developing criteria for advancement of paraeducators, and generating standards for supervision and evaluation of paraeducator performance (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to examine supervisory practices for paraeducators by special education teachers and to determine barriers and facilitating strategies related to their supervision. This study also explored supervision from the perspective of paraprofessionals. More specifically, it addressed the issue of whether a gap exists between teacher stated supervisory practices and paraprofessionals' perceptions of those practices.

Research questions were developed in part from Pickett's (1999) model of guiding principles regarding paraprofessional employment, roles, preparation and supervision (see Table 1, p. 8). Moreover, in the seventh guiding principle, Pickett described teacher skills needed in supervising the work of paraprofessionals. These skills include planning assignments, task delegating, monitoring and evaluating performance, on-the-job training and mentoring, and clarifying roles. These supervisory skills provided the framework of the survey questions in this study.

Table 1 – Guiding Principles for Paraeducator Employment, Roles, Preparation, and Supervision

Guiding Principle	Description
1	Skilled paraeducators are employed to improve the quality of education and services in other provider systems and to help ensure supportive, inclusive, safe, and healthy learning environments for children, youth, and staff.
2	Administrators and teachers/providers create environments that recognize paraeducators as valued team members and effectively integrate them into teams.
3	Members of all program planning and implementation teams participate within clearly defined roles in changing, dynamic environments to provide learner-centered and individualized experiences and services for all children and youth and thief families.
4	Paraeducators are respected and supported in their team roles by policymakers, administrators, teachers/providers, and families.
5	Standards for paraeducator roles and development assure that they are assigned to positions for which they are qualified to have the skills required to assist teachers/providers to provide quality learning experiences and related services for all children and youth and their families.
6	Paraeducators receive pre- and inservice professional development provided by the district/agency and opportunities for continuing education or career advancement offered by institutions of higher education.
7	Teachers/providers responsible for supervising the work of paraeducators have the skills necessary to plan for, direct, provide on-the-job training for, monitor, and evaluate the skills of paraeducators.

Note. From "Strengthening and Supporting Teacher/Provider-Paraeducator Teams; Guidelines for Paraeducator Roles, Supervision, and Preparation," By A.L. Pickett, 1999, p. 7.

Research Questions

1. What methods do special educators use in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings?
2. What are the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding teacher supervision of their work?
3. Do the perceptions of special education teachers and paraprofessionals regarding paraprofessional supervision differ significantly?
4. What are the perceived barriers in providing effective paraprofessional supervision?
5. What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?

Significance of the Study

Research into the supervisory practices of special educators is limited. Given the increasing reliance on paraprofessionals by public education, this study provides insight into how teachers supervise paraprofessionals and how that supervision is perceived in one New England school district. The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the gaps that exist in providing supervision from the perspective of both teachers and paraprofessionals. The research questions also attempt to identify strategies that facilitate better supervision of paraprofessionals. Armed with this information, school districts can create more effective professional development tools, establish standards for teacher credentialing and licensure in supervision, and improve paraprofessional training and orientation while clarifying roles and expectations.

Definitions of Terms

Administrators: For the purposes of this study and this specific school district, the term administrators, refers to principals, assistant principals in the elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as special education directors and coordinators of special education.

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

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

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

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

Instructional Team: Specific to the school district studied in this paper, the term refers to the group of professionals and paraprofessionals who provide direct or indirect instructional support or other related services to students with or without disabilities in a variety of educational settings.

Paraeducator or Paraprofessional: A paraeducator or paraprofessional is a school employee who works under the supervision of a certified or licensed staff member and provides support and assistance with instructional and other related services. These employees may offer direct and/or indirect services to students and their parents. However, the certified/licensed staff member remains responsible for the overall conduct and management of the classroom or program, including the design, implementation and evaluation of the instructional program and student progress (Picket & Gerlach, 1997).

Preservice: Refers to the activities such as workshops, seminars, courses, and other learning experiences offered to education professionals before they begin their jobs (Ysseldyke, Algonzzine, Thrulow, 1992).

Qualified Personnel: Refers to an individual who has met state-approved certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which the individual is providing special education or related services.

Scope of Responsibilities: Refers to agreed-upon standards of practice for a profession or occupation. In general, scopes of responsibilities for teachers include developing lessons, modifying and implementing plans to meet individual learner needs, evaluating learner progress, and assessing the effectiveness of plans.

Special Education Director or Coordinator (also found under Administrator): For the purposes of this study, the term refers to those individual(s) who directly supervise, monitor, and make hiring and assigning decisions for and with special education personnel. They work within the special education department of school districts, supervisory unions, and individual schools.

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

Standards: Refers to statements that describe job function and responsibilities related to competency areas for a profession or occupation. The standards include knowledge and skill competencies and performance indicators to ensure that individuals have mastered the required skills.

Supervision: Refers to an individual supervisor's or administrator's responsibility to monitor, delegate, and manage paraprofessional's work (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

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

Limitations of the Study

Limitations are defined as those aspects of a study that the researcher knows may influence the results or the generalizability of the results (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). These aspects of the study cannot be controlled for during the investigation. This study had the following limitations:

1. The sample size used in this study was limited to one school district in Vermont.
2. The response rate to surveys and questionnaires was voluntary and hence, variable. Accurate sample representation of real teacher supervisory practices

and likewise paraprofessionals' perceptions of those practices may not be reflected in the results.

Major Assumptions

Listed below are the study's three major assumptions:

1. Paraprofessionals adhere to federal, state, and local district standards and as members of the educational team assist in the implementation of educational programs.
2. Paraprofessionals assist teachers and special educators in organizing material for student learning.
3. Special educators lead program implementation teams and have supervisory responsibilities for paraprofessionals.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This chapter starts with terminology overview. Then a review of the literature as it pertains to paraprofessional employment follows. Specific topics reviewed include: a) trends in use of paraprofessionals beginning in the 1950s through the present, b) hiring and assigning, c) evolving roles and responsibilities, and d) training and preparation of paraprofessionals. The second part of the literature review focuses on the supervision of paraprofessionals. Specifically, the following topics are addressed: a) federal legislation and policies, b) state standards, and c) common themes pertaining to paraprofessional supervision. The third section of this chapter provides a discussion of Pickett's (1999) model of guiding principles as it pertains to paraprofessional supervision. The literature is then synthesized to reflect specific teacher supervisory skills adapted for this study from Pickett's model (1999) that include: a) planning work assignments for paraprofessionals; b) delegating tasks to paraprofessionals; c) monitoring and evaluating performance of paraprofessionals; and d) training and mentoring of paraprofessionals. Further investigation of the literature also shows that an additional supervisory skill is delineating and clarifying roles between the teacher and paraprofessional (Chisom, 2002; Daniels & McBride, 2001; D'Aquanni, 1997; Floyd, 2004; French 1997; Milner, 1998; Prigge, 1996); thus, there is justification and support for evaluation of this skill as well in the current study. The chapter concludes with a review of the literature on paraprofessionals' perspectives of supervision as provided by special educators, issues identified in the literature as potential barriers to supervision, and strategies that facilitate supervision.

Paraprofessional employment, roles and responsibilities, and training have been the focus of much of the current research (Daniels & McBride, 2001; D'Aquanni, 1997; French, 1998; Giangreco et al., 2001; Pickett, 1997). Although these topics are relevant, few studies have specifically focused on the emerging issues related to paraprofessional supervision. Furthermore, the above mentioned skills have been targeted by experts as critical components in supervising paraprofessionals and yet research suggests that teachers do not currently offer this degree of supervision (Frank, Keith & Steil, 1988; French, 1997; Hoover, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). Due to the limited studies relating to paraprofessional supervision, these teacher supervisory skills form the basis of the survey instruments for this study.

Terminology

Paraprofessionals are not new to the field of education. Individuals worked alongside with teachers in classrooms even before the turn of the century—the late 1890s and early 1900s (Gerber, Finn, Achilles, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2001; Pickett, 1996). Although the prefix "para" in conjunction with the word "educator" signifies someone who works "alongside" an education professional, paraeducators work alongside special education teachers only figuratively speaking (French, 2003; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). Often, paraeducators provide instructional services alongside the student rather than the teacher (French, 1998).

A variety of job titles are used throughout the United States to refer to personnel who function in the role of paraprofessionals (Doyle, 2002). The multiple terms used to describe paraprofessionals have been generated in response to their evolving roles in the education field over the past 50 years. The shift in their responsibilities is evidenced in

the titles assigned to them. The term "paraprofessional," as referenced in IDEIA 2004[Sec. 612(a)(14)(B)(i)] is synonymous with educational assistant, paraeducator, instructional assistant, teacher aide, therapy assistant, transition trainer, and job coach (French & Gerlach, 1999).

Employment of Paraprofessionals

Trends in the Use of Paraprofessionals (1950s-1980s)

Rising enrollments in the nation's schools and increased diversity of the student population have led to a more significant utilization of paraprofessionals. It is estimated that approximately 300,000 paraprofessionals are employed in supporting students with disabilities while the total number of paraeducators working in schools is estimated to be between 500,000 and 700,000 (The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 2000).

In the 1950s, postwar teacher shortages compelled local school districts to identify alternative education providers (Pickett, 1996). At that time, paraprofessionals were employed to perform clerical duties in order to help teachers have more instructional time with students (Frith & Lindsey, 1982; Morehouse & Albright, 1991; Pickett, 1999, Wallace, Shin et al., 2001). This change came as a result of a pioneering project organized by the Ford Foundation in 1953. The project recruited and trained teacher assistants in Bay City, Michigan under the supervision of classroom teachers (Park, 1956). Results showed that teachers more than doubled the amount of time they spent on lesson plans and devoted more than 40% additional time to supervising students (Gerber, Finn, et al., 2001).

A study by Cruickshank and Haring (1957) examined the responsibilities of paraprofessionals in special education. These researchers investigated paraprofessionals in three educational settings: (a) regular kindergarten that included students with blindness, (b) general education classroom with students labeled as gifted, and (c) different types of self contained special education classrooms (i.e., intensive needs students, students with severe mental retardation). The key finding was that the primary responsibilities of paraprofessionals were the same regardless of the educational setting in which they worked. These responsibilities included clerical duties, student supervision in class and playgrounds, housekeeping tasks in the classroom, material preparation, and record keeping. The presence of paraprofessionals in classrooms allowed teachers to exercise more of their instructional skills. The authors concluded from their study that "teacher assistants" could be effectively used to enrich instructional programs.

During the same decade, a variety of events had an impact on schools and the utilization of paraprofessionals. Coinciding with the struggle of racial equality in the 1960s was a parallel movement to ensure the civil rights of children and adults with disabilities (Gartner & Riessman, 1974). In its landmark 1954 decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the Court rejected the "separate but equal" doctrine. The Court declared that racially segregated public schools were "inherently unequal." This case was instrumental in setting the legal foundation for the equal treatment of individuals with disabilities. Along with the 14th Amendment, *Brown v. Board of Education* became the basis for the *Education for all Handicapped Act* of 1975 (EHA), Public Law 94-142. This law was the first compulsory federal special education law that mandated a free, appropriate public education for all students with disabilities between

the ages of 3 and 21. In 1990, the name was changed to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). According to Green and Barnes (1989), individualized education for students with disabilities, distinct programs for students with multicultural backgrounds, and an increase in governmental support for the delivery of special services stimulated increasing employment of paraprofessionals.

The public's awareness of the inequalities in educational opportunities for minority groups led to declining confidence by parents and lawmakers in the ability of teachers to meet the needs of such students (Green & Barnes, 1989). School districts turned to paraprofessionals residing in the local communities to serve as liaisons between home and school. This was one of the earliest documented occurrences that paraprofessionals provided instructional support to students and parents (Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Green & Barnes, 1989).

Historically, education was the responsibility of states and localities. Under Title I of PL 89-10, *the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965* school districts were entitled to federal funding for paraprofessionals, particularly those employed in low-income regions (Gerber et al., 2001). This new act did not contain any guidelines for educating, training, or hiring of paraprofessionals. ESEA, however, established an important new relationship between local communities and the federal government. The states and local school districts now became recipients of federal money.

At the end of the 1960s additional legislative acts contributed to the expansion of paraprofessionals' roles. First, *The Bilingual Education Act of 1968* was a catalyst in employing multilingual members of communities to work as paraprofessionals in

schools. Many of the nation's students came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This resulted in increased demand for bilingual teachers. A second act was the *Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1966.* This act provided federal money to support the development of new careers and to assist the nations' economically disadvantaged population. The combination of these two acts created the mechanism for the hiring of additional paraprofessionals (Gerber et al., 2001). In 1971, an important case, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizen v. Pennsylvania,* and in 1975, the *Education for All Handicapped Act* (i.e., IDEA) generated more debates regarding special education. It prompted discussions about training of teachers and other instructional personnel who taught students with severe disabilities (Sontag & Haring, 1999). Recommendations, based on these discussions, called for training teachers who would not need a baccalaureate degree and traditional certification.

In the 1970s and 1980s, IDEA added to the increased hiring of paraprofessionals (Pickett & National Education Association [NEA], 1994). In the 1970s the U.S. Department of Education instituted the Career Opportunities Program (COP) in an effort to help individuals with career improvement programs (Pickett, 1986). The COP was implemented in alliance with local school districts. Emphasis was placed in the development of teacher education programs that supported paraprofessionals who wanted to enter the teaching profession. While the 1970s were legislatively important due to the passage of Public Law 94-142, the 1980s, according to Pickett (1996), were not as promising because funding for many educational programs was reduced.

The Present Perspective (1990s to present)

Just 50 years ago paraprofessionals had worked primarily in secretarial and clerical roles (French & Gerlach, 1999; Gerber et al., 2001; Green & Barns, 1989; Pickett & NEA, 1994). Today paraprofessionals increasingly engage in instructional activities, student supervision, and other tasks that typically have been considered teachers' roles (French & Gerlach, 1999; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett, 1996; Riggs & Mueller, 2001).

Questions regarding their roles, responsibilities, training, and supervision have been longstanding and continue to date (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle 2001; Jones & Bender, 1993; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001). The changing roles of paraprofessionals in conjunction with legal requirements are reality. Over the past five decades changes in the educational landscape necessitated the increase of paraprofessional utilization. Today, administrators find themselves in the arduous position of fulfilling paraprofessional jobs with individuals who may or may not meet the requirements of new legislation. In addition to that, many paraeducators provide services with limited or no supervision from teachers (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

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

Hiring and Assigning of Paraprofessionals

As shown in Table 2, reviewed literature is sorted out based on the following categories: (1) hiring and assigning, (2) roles and responsibilities, and (3) training and preparation. Of the 41 sources reviewed, approximately 34 percent (n=14) covered, to some extent, issues pertaining to hiring and assigning of paraprofessionals. Two articles discussed the paraeducator assignment in pull-out programs while the majority of the literature focused on assignments and roles of paraprofessionals in general education or mainstream classrooms.

Only one article discussed the issue of hiring in greater depth (Blalock, 1991). According to Blalock schools use several strategies for the recruitment of paraprofessionals; mainly, targeting individuals who work as substitutes over long periods of time, volunteers, and college students. Carroll (2001) suggested that schools often organize teams to conduct paraeducator interviews in which individuals get the opportunity to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and overall program philosophy, thus initiating relationships with prospective assistants.

Alternative strategies for recruitment of paraprofessionals have been proposed. In their study, Genzuk and Baca (1998) suggested that this remarkable increase in numbers of paraeducators could potentially represent a source of prospective new teachers. Darling-Hammond (2001) took this notion a bit further to suggest that we need to consider paraeducator selection and retention in order to assist schools in meeting the needs of students from multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multilingual backgrounds.

Many paraeducators come from the communities where they work and know many of the students' families. This connection with the community many times makes paraprofessionals a good liaison between schools and the parents.

Table 2 – Sources from the Literature Pertaining to Employment of Paraprofessionals

Authors	Hiring and Assigning	Roles and Responsibilities	Training and Preparation
Daniels & McBride (2001)	√	√	√
Demchak & Morgan (1998)	√		√
Downing & Ryndak (2000)		√	√
Hilton & Gerlach (1997)	√	√	
French (1998)			√
French (2001)		√	√
French & Chopra (1999)			√
French & Gerlach (1999)	√	√	
French & Pickett (1997)			√
Freschi (1999)		√	
Frith & Lindsey (1982)		√	
Genzuk & Baca (1998)		√	
Gerlach (1994)	√	√	
Giangreco, Broer & Edelman (2002)		√	
Giangreco, Edelman & Broer (1999)		√	
Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli & MacFarland (1997)		√	
Green & Barnes (1988)		√	
Hofmeister, Ashbaker & Morgan (1996)		√	
Jones & Bender (1993)		√	
Marks, Schrader & Levine (1999)		√	
May & Marozas(1981)		√	

Table 2 – Sources from the Literature Pertaining to Employment of Paraprofessionals (Continued)

Authors	Hiring and Assigning	Roles and Responsibilities	Training and Preparation
Moshoyannis, Pickett & Granick (1999)		√	
National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998)		√	
Nittoli & Giloth (1997)	√	√	
Parsons & Reid (1999)	√	√	
Passaro, Pickett, Latham & HongBo (1994)	√	√	
Pickett (1997)		√	
Pickett (1999)	√	√	√
Pickett (2001)	√	√	
Pickett & Gerlach (2003)	√	√	√
Picket, Likins & Wallace (2003)	√	√	
Pickett & NEA (1994)	√	√	
Reid & Reid (1994)		√	
Riggs & Mueller (2001)	√	√	
SPeNSE Fact Sheet (2001)		√	
Storey, Smith & Strain (1993)		√	
U.S. Department of Education (1997)		√	
U.S. Department of Education (2002)		√	√
Wadworth & Knight (1996)		√	
Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay & Stahl (2001)	√	√	√

In turn, the connection they have with the community can be beneficial for all because paraprofessionals can be more invested in students' education and overall

learning (Clewell & Villegas 2001). These paraprofessionals are knowledgeable of the students' needs, and they are committed to helping them in being successful. They know their neighborhoods, schools, and the social and cultural backgrounds of the communities where they live.

Clewell and Villegas (2001) suggested that school districts can expand the educational support staff by tapping the paraprofessional pool. They proposed that identifying likely teacher-education students during their high school years may be one strategy. Involving them in early intervention programs can cultivate interest in teaching and guiding youngsters towards preparing for teacher education colleges (Villegas & Clewell, 1998).

High school juniors and seniors can be targeted for recruitment via mentoring programs. Many schools offer tutoring and mentoring opportunities to high school students who are interesting in helping students in middle school. According to Clewell (1995) mentoring programs such as educators clubs offer intensive teaching experiences to high school students who in turn become interested in course offerings in 2 and 4-year colleges.

In their study Nittoli and Giloth (1997) found that public money is spent on low-income communities in an attempt to tackle problems in the provision of human services, such as welfare, health, and housing. However, most of the time employees hired for the jobs in those service areas were not residents of the communities where they worked. Nittoli and Giloth also suggested that these monies could be better spent in investing on local communities where individuals can be part of a paraprofessional pool in coordination with local school districts. Finally, the renewed interest in paraeducators'

assistance in schools is founded on the fact that state funded human services programs are changing to adjust to current needs. Lack of jobs drive the need for paraprofessional utilization in rural areas as well as inner cities in order to fulfill those roles in servicing a variety of student needs (Villegas & Clewell, 1998).

Current practices in hiring and assigning paraprofessionals are based on need (Pickett, 1997). As mentioned earlier, literature focusing specifically on hiring practices and generally on the recruitment of paraprofessionals is limited. Increasing teacher turn over and growing student enrollment are factors affecting hiring and assigning of paraprofessionals (Pickett & NEA, 1994).

Previous job experience, references, educational level, literacy, language skills, and skills applicable to the specific position are important selection criteria for a successful candidate (French, 1998). However, a study by Harrington & Mitchelson (1986) showed that interpersonal skills and attitudes of applicants and also an interest in self improvement may be better indicators of how well a candidate fits into the team. Most recently, Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman (2002) reported that hiring practices targeted individuals who were energetic, caring for students, resourceful, productive, and knowledgeable.

Paraprofessionals are assigned to work with students who have the most challenging behavioral and learning characteristics (Blalock, 1991). Two additional articles in the literature addressed assignment issues by proposing guidelines for determining when a student with a disability would need individual paraprofessional support (Freschi, 1999; Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 1999). Both articles underscored possible downsides associated with assigning one-to-one paraprofessional support and

recommended alternatives such as fading supports, relying on natural supports, trading paraprofessionals or special educators, and exploring differentiated teacher roles (Giangreco et al., 2001). Generally, it is recommended that administrators and teachers/supervisors identify the specific student needs based on the educational setting, efficiently utilize existing resources, including special and general education staff, and assign paraprofessionals accordingly (Giangreco, et al., 1999).

Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals

The overwhelming majority of the literature reviewed, about 85 percent (n=37), focused on roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals. Most covered a variety of subtopics including recruiting, assigning, planning, delegating, training, and tutoring of paraprofessionals. Overall, paraprofessionals continue to engage in a broad range of activities, many of which they are untrained or insufficiently trained to perform (Blalock, 1991; Giangreco et al., 1999). Some of the roles include: (a) providing instruction in academic subjects, (b) teaching functional life skills, (c) teaching vocational skills, (d) collecting and managing data, (e) supporting students who exhibit challenging behaviors, (f) facilitating interactions with peers that do not have disabilities, (g) providing personal care (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001).

Trends in implementing inclusive education changed the landscape of the general education classroom. More and more special education students were mainstreamed and received services in general education classrooms with paraprofessionals' assistance (French & Chopra, 1999; Giangreco, et al., 2002; Jones & Bender, 1993; Pickett, 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001; Wadsworth & Knight, 1996). The high student enrollment in conjunction with teacher attrition widened the gap in student services making the need

for paraprofessional utilization even greater. Despite the increased use, confusion still exists about the role of paraprofessionals compared to the roles of teachers, special educators, and related service personnel (French & Pickett, 1997).

In earlier studies, Reid and Reid (1974) developed a classification of paraprofessionals' roles and responsibilities. Those included, but were not limited to, clerical, housekeeping, office, and non-instructional duties. The basic assumption with those roles was that teachers exclusively taught, while paraprofessionals prepared materials, organized supplies, acquired resources, and managed student behaviors (May & Marozas, 1981).

Today, many paraprofessionals still serve the special education population in non-instructional capacities, such as operation of audio-visual equipment, lunch recess, and free time activities (Blalock, 1991). However, paraprofessionals' instructional roles have gradually overlapped their traditionally clerical responsibilities (French & Gerlach, 1999). A report by the Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE, 2001) noted that while district and regional differences existed, the types of services paraprofessionals offered were similar in nature. Some of these services included: a) instructional support in small groups, one-on-one instruction, meeting with teachers, providing personal care help, implementing behavior management plans, adapting materials, and collecting data on students (SPeNSE, 2001). In addition, paraprofessionals in special education worked as therapy assistants, home tutors, transition trainers, job coaches, and liaisons between schools and the community (French, 1998).

Teachers and students recognize the importance of paraprofessionals' support on a daily basis (French & Chopra, 1999). Because there is more than one adult in the

average classroom, students feel that they receive increased attention toward their individual needs (French & Gerlach, 1999). With increased paraprofessional involvement in the daily classroom activities, teacher and special educator's roles have evolved to encompass monitoring, coaching, and guiding. This shift in roles has allowed paraprofessionals to provide more instructional assistance while teachers remain exclusively accountable for student outcomes (French, 1998; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

Some studies, however, have found that paraprofessionals report being "responsible" for the instructional program of a student, including teaching academic and social skills, making curricular modifications, and managing student behaviors. Paraprofessionals expressed that it was more appropriate for the classroom teacher to assume these primary responsibilities (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). Another study, by Downing, Ryndak, & Clark (2000) showed that paraprofessionals reported increased levels of responsibility in their job. Such duties included: a) decisions regarding adaptations, b) behavioral support, and c) interacting with team members including parents. Such findings lend support for the emerging need for further training and supervision not only of paraprofessionals, but also those who supervise and guide their daily work (Pickett & Gerlach, 1997).

With increasing use of paraprofessional as part of the education personnel that support students with disabilities, there is an emerging appreciation for their ability to perform a diverse range of tasks. Likewise, there is equal concern by leaders in the field to ensure that paraprofessionals are used appropriately. In 1998, a report by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) commented that, "the intent of using paraprofessionals is to supplement, not supplant, the work of the teacher/service

provider" (p.38). This concern was reiterated by Giangreco, et al., (1999), who suggested that one indication that too much responsibility has been assigned to paraprofessionals is when special educators defer decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and management about a student to the paraprofessional.

Nonetheless, paraprofessionals can be used to enhance the frequency, intensity, efficiency, and availability of instructional assistance and services as delegated and supervised by the qualified teacher/service provider (NJCLD, 1998). The use of paraprofessionals can also improve access to services for diverse and underserved populations. Paraprofessionals are often sought out from the surrounding community and offer a connection to families that are culturally and linguistically diverse (Pickett, 1997). The use of well-trained and-supervised paraprofessionals is one way to increase services while maintaining quality.

Training and Preparation of Paraprofessionals

Given the known challenges paraprofessionals have to meet in both inclusive classrooms and resource rooms when supporting students with disabilities, training and orientation to the profession is critical (Demchak & Morgan, 1998). Although the most recent reauthorization of IDEIA in 2004 calls for paraprofessionals that are "appropriately trained and supervised," Sec. 614 (G)14(ii) IDEIA does not specify what constitutes this designation. In fact, many paraprofessionals enter the field with limited or no training at all. In most cases, paraprofessionals assume their responsibilities upon appointment. They enter the classroom insufficiently equipped to deal with behavior issues, management of group activities, and assistance in implementation of lesson plans. Meanwhile, they are expected to simultaneously provide one-on-one attention to needy

special education students (Daniels & McBride, 2001; French, 1998; Pickett, 1999; Villegas & Clewell, 1998).

The inclusive education model has played a part in expanding the instructional role of paraprofessionals while limiting on-the-job training and mentoring. Historically, when the special education classroom was the dominant model of service delivery, informal paraprofessional training came directly from the special educator who was physically present in the classroom virtually all of the time. The inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom now means that special educators often are dispersed across several classrooms (Giangreco, Backus, CichoskiKelly, Sherman, & Mavropoulos, 2003).

Few training materials for professional development exist for paraprofessionals who work in inclusive classrooms with students with disabilities (Ghere, York-Barr & Sommerness, 2002; Giangreco et al., 2003; Giangreco et al., 2001). Training materials vary on characteristics such as orientation, content roles, level of replicability, availability and cost. They often focus on intervention techniques, specifically, delivering instructional prompts, reinforcement, or error correction (Martella, Marchand-Martella, Miller, Young, & Macfarlane, 1995; Parsons & Reid, 1999; Storey, Smith & Strain, 1993). Giangreco, Backus, et al. (2003) designed a quantitative, descriptive evaluation of two sets of paraeducator training materials. Results of this study showed a number of important findings. First, the content objectives in the training materials were considered important by the paraprofessionals as well as their trainers. Second, paraprofessionals who received this training gained new knowledge, perspective, and skills that had direct application in their work assisting in the provision of special education, and finally, the

materials could be used successfully in a variety of course formats with similar positive results. Even more promising were findings where participants indicated that the reading materials, in-class activities, and lesson plans were very well constructed and useful for paraprofessionals. Finally, even though the above study contributes somewhat to the literature by providing some initial field-test data, to date there is still limited research on this topic.

Overview of Supervision of Paraprofessionals

Defining Supervision

In general terms, Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) define supervision as "assistance for the improvement of instruction" (p.10). The authors proposed that this definition allows supervision to be viewed as a function and process rather than a role or position. As special educators become experts in their fields, they also assume new and more challenging responsibilities. Among those responsibilities, teachers are called upon to be supervisors. This distinction becomes important in conveying the idea that position title of supervisor is not required in order for supervision to occur in one's job.

According to Pickett and Gerlach (2003) supervision of paraprofessionals is comprised of two major parts. First, at the district level, building administrators, local district administrators, and program coordinators assume roles and responsibilities from a top-down management approach. Second, special educators, as well as general education teachers, act as paraprofessional supervisors. On the one hand, administrative personnel serve as managers responsible for the employment, preparation, evaluation, and dismissal of paraprofessionals (French, 1998; French & Gerlach, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

On the other hand, teachers are responsible for delegating tasks and supervising paraprofessionals (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Another study that adds to the definition of supervision was conducted by Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, and Stahl (2001). This study identified competencies needed by teachers to supervise or direct the work of paraprofessionals in education settings. Participants included administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals. Respondents completed a survey and were also asked about the extent to which they observed teachers' demonstration of these competencies in their school environments. The skills were categorized into seven subscales that encompass: (a) communication with paraprofessionals, (b) planning and scheduling, (c) instructional support, (d) modeling for paraprofessionals, (e) public relations, (f) training, and (g) management of paraprofessionals.

Federal Legislation and Policies for Paraprofessionals

Several laws have had an impact in defining roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, as well as defining hiring and assigning practices, funding, and policy-making (Gartner & Riessman, 1974; Pickett, 2001; Pickett, & Gerlach, 2003). The current reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997* (IDEIA, 2004) addresses the requirement of paraprofessional training and supervision in order to provide support in special education. Additionally, the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001, established new criteria for the hiring of paraprofessionals who work with students in Title I programs. NCLB requires that

paraprofessionals who work in schools that receive Title I funds meet new standards. These include the following:

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

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

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

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), in September 2002, reviewed the implications of NCLB on paraprofessionals. CEC suggested that "...the relatively detailed statutory portrayal of the responsibilities of paraprofessionals will require careful continuing review in relation to the succinct authority for paraprofessionals contained in Section 612(a)(15)(B)(iii) of the IDEA..." (p. 33). More specifically, CEC noted that the new law places constraints on one-on-one tutoring of eligible students and on the provision of instructional services by a paraprofessional working under direct supervision of a teacher.

Given the lack of sufficient data on student outcomes, the potential impact of NCLB is yet to be explored due to the novelty of the law. Although this latest legislation does not refer specifically to special education, it does have practical implications for the field. There are school districts around the country, as is the school district in which this study was conducted, that are recipients of Title I funds supporting a variety of programs, including special education. According to the law, if a person works in a Title I schoolwide program and has instructional support responsibilities, the requirements apply regardless of the source of funding for the paraprofessional's position (Likins, 2003).

State Standards for Paraprofessionals

According to IDEIA 2004 [(IDEIA), 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.] state education agencies are "to establish and maintain standards" to ensure that paraprofessionals who "assist in the provision of special education and related services, are appropriately and adequately prepared, trained, and supervised in accordance with state law, regulations, or written policy" [20 U.S.C. 1412 § 612a(14)(G)(ii)]. The enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001, requires that paraprofessionals "may not provide any instructional service to a student unless the paraprofessional is working under the direct supervision of a teacher" [(NCLB) Title I—Part A § 1119g(3A)]. Both laws mandate that paraprofessional supervision is an inherent requirement that state and local education agencies will have to implement.

In response to the above laws, a variety of constituencies have countered with questions, research, and development of committees exploring how to improve the quality of special education services for all students with disabilities. Several professional organizations, such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD), and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYA) have issued declarations that request state and local education agencies to develop standards that address supervision of paraprofessionals. The NJLCD (1999) has established its own guidelines for the supervision of paraprofessionals as well as definition of their roles. In addition, a variety of professional organizations that represent allied health agencies and professionals such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists have

also spearheaded efforts to establish specific standards for the supervision of aides by qualified personnel.

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

According to the National Education Association (2000), there are approximately nineteen states that have developed standards for paraeducators. Examples of states that have implemented standards to support the effective employment of paraeducators in public school include California, Georgia, Maine, Iowa, Washington, West Virginia, and Vermont. Certification systems are in place in 13 states while others have licensure requirements including Alabama, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin (Beale, 2001). Some states such as Maine, Texas, Kansas, New Hampshire, and Vermont have instituted levels of certification that enable paraeducators to access career advancement by obtaining higher levels of certification. For example, Texas and Vermont require a specified number of college credits for the highest level, thus allowing for course work that could be applied to a college degree (Beale, 2001; Vermont Department of Education, 2005).While standards for employment have been initiated, in depth policies and regulations at the local level regarding supervision have yet to be defined in most states.

Common Themes on Paraprofessional Supervision

There is considerable consensus in the literature that professional educators should assign specific tasks, design instructional plans, deliver on-the-job training, hold planning meetings, and direct and monitor the daily activities of the paraprofessional (Doyle, 1997; French, 1998; French & Pickett, 1997; French, 2001; NJCLD, 1998). Despite the widespread agreement regarding the need for appropriate teacher supervisory skills, current research is limited in addressing practices, identifying barriers, and modifying strategies to improve the teacher/paraprofessional instructional team. Moreover, there is little in the literature that provides a picture of what teachers currently are doing about supervision, considering the lack of formal preparation (French, 1998; Salzberg & Morgan, 1995).

Pickett (1999) has developed a conceptual framework that addresses paraprofessional roles, preparation, and supervision. In this section, several studies will be reviewed in order to introduce common themes that emerge regarding paraprofessional supervision and reflect Pickett's conceptual framework.

The evolving roles and increased reliance on paraprofessionals in education over twenty years ago is highlighted in a small study by McKenzie and Houk (1986). In their investigation, the authors were interested in exploring how 23 resource teachers who work with paraprofessionals perceived a need to modify the role played by the paraeducator. More specifically, their research questions examined the extent to which assigned tasks for the paraprofessionals were relevant to instruction of special education and whether teachers perceived themselves as having adequate input in the selection and assignment process of paraeducators. Results from a questionnaire describing job

responsibilities for special education paraprofessional showed that teachers indicated their wish to be a part of the selecting and assigning process. Recommendations from the study emphasized the need for teacher-training programs to develop methods in the appropriate use of paraprofessional in special education settings.

Harrington and Mitchelson (1986) reported that teachers valued the presence of paraprofessionals in the classroom. They found that paraprofessionals provided individualized instruction, clerical and logistical support, classroom continuity, emotional support to teachers, and important community linkage. However, their study which was conducted on behalf of the Kansas State Department of Education also showed that teachers did not feel comfortable in supervising paraprofessionals.

A study with similar results was conducted by French (1998). The author sought to evaluate special education teacher practices. The purpose of the study was to clarify perceptions of paraeducator roles, preparation and performance and to compare those perceptions to self-reports of paraeducators. Finally, the study looked at the nature of teacher-paraprofessional relationships and the teachers' own views of their role as supervisors.

The participants of the study included eighteen matched pairs of teachers/paraprofessionals who worked together in one major urban school district. Twelve teacher-paraeducator pairs worked in elementary schools, three in high schools, and three in middle schools. The teachers and paraprofessionals each completed a separate yet similar survey. The teachers were also personally interviewed by the researcher and filled out evaluation forms for their paraprofessional. In addition,

paraeducators were asked to chart their daily activities by ten-minute intervals for two one-week periods and complete a self evaluation form.

When asked about formal preparation in supervision, 14 of the 18 respondents stated they learned supervision skills all on their own. The interviews revealed that teachers were reluctant to supervise in a traditional manner. Furthermore, they did not feel prepared to supervise paraeducators. In fact, the ideal paraprofessional was viewed as a person who required very little supervision or direction. Lastly, the results of the study confirmed that paraeducators served in instructional roles and that teachers valued this role. Despite their relative satisfaction with the work of their paraprofessional, teachers had a clear wish for greater training and preparation of paraprofessionals.

French (1998) concluded that teachers were reluctant to supervise because they failed to provide written plans or to hold sit-down meetings, yet were dissatisfied with the communications between the paraprofessionals and themselves. She also found that some teachers in the study failed to distinguish between "the ethical and legal responsibilities of the professional teacher and those tasks appropriately delegated to a paraeducator, describing the paraprofessional as a peer rather than a supervisee" (p.365). Finally, the author identified possible courses of action based on the data: (a) the need to help inservice teachers in order to refine their own supervisory skills and to engage in appropriate supervision with less reluctance, (b) the need for preservice preparation for future teachers, and (c) the need to continue gathering information, on a much larger scale, about the working relationships of teachers and paraeducators as well as the supervisory skills and practices of teachers. This last statement underscores the need for further research on this topic and laid the foundation for this study.

Building on her previous work, French (2001) conducted a more recent study in an effort to ascertain teacher perceptions and perspectives on paraprofessional supervision. In this study, the author examined the supervisory practices of special education teachers. The purpose of the study was to obtain information about special education teachers' supervision of paraprofessionals and compare that information to the existing literature. More specifically, the author asked the following questions: (a) "To what extent do special education teachers supervise paraprofessionals? (b) How have they learned to supervise as they do? What effect does training to supervise have on practice? (c) To what extent are teachers involved in selecting paraprofessionals, planning for them, meeting with them, training them, and evaluating them? (d) What tasks are most frequently assigned to paraprofessionals, and how are tasks shared or distributed between teachers and paraprofessionals? (e) To what extent are teachers satisfied with the amount and quality of paraprofessional assistance?" (p. 42).

The instrument used in this research was a questionnaire distributed to 447 special education teachers in Colorado selected randomly to reflect geographic distribution and school size from a population of kindergarten through 12th grade in public schools. The respondent rate of completed surveys was 71.8% (321 participants). French (2001) found that about 75% of special education teachers supervise one or more paraprofessionals. Once again, three years after her 1998 study, the author found that despite teaching credentials and graduate level education, 88% of participants reported that "real-life experiences" was the primary basis of their knowledge and ability to supervise paraprofessionals, rather than inservice training, college courses, or help from administrators.

The respondents indicated that formal preparation did not provide any training for their supervisory roles. Eighty eight percent of the respondents held master's degrees, 1% held a Ph.D. or Ed.D., and 62% had 11 or more years of teaching experience. There were no differences in the reported sources of knowledge and ability to supervise among those teachers who received endorsements before, during, or after 1989. Changes in Colorado's endorsement standards in 1989 apparently did little to change the preparation of teachers to supervise paraprofessionals.

Teacher supervisory skills that involve planning, meetings, and on-the-job training were also examined. According to French (2001), a little less than 19% of the respondents developed written plans for the paraprofessionals whom they supervise. More concerning was the actual content of plans, either oral or written. Fewer than half (43%) of the teachers regularly included IEP goals and even fewer consistently included specification for how paraprofessionals were to document student progress. French commented in her discussion that "instructing the paraprofessional about the intended outcomes of the lesson or activity seems essential to program integrity" (p.51).

About 25% of the teachers who responded to the question regarding frequency of formal sit-down meetings reported that they never or rarely met with paraprofessionals. Of those who reported that they hold formal meetings, about 15% indicated that they meet on a daily basis with paraprofessionals while the majority, about 50% reported meeting once a week, indicating that the average duration of meeting time was approximately 30 minutes. Regarding on-the-job training, the vast majority of respondents, about 76% indicated that "teaching techniques" and "behavior management" were most frequently the predominant issues discussed with paraprofessionals.

Classroom management, time and stress management, parent interactions, and health and safety procedures followed while the least discussed topic was role clarification and responsibilities. By far, respondents indicated that the most frequent method of paraprofessional training was to just tell them and give feedback on performance. Just less than 8% reported that they maintained records, agendas, and meeting minutes.

This study also identified some concerns about practices employed by districts in employing paraprofessionals. With respect to hiring, French (2001) indicated that about 21% of the teachers responding had no influence on the hiring process while 50% reported they had some influence and about 17% had whole control over the selection process. In the evaluation process, about 57% of the teachers reported that they were primarily responsible for the annual evaluation of paraeducators and that over 73% reported actual job performance as the primary influence in evaluating the paraprofessional.

In conclusion, French (2001) made several recommendations from her findings: (1) special education teachers should be part of the selection process for paraprofessionals, (2) teachers should be prepared to select, direct, train, monitor, evaluate, meet with, and otherwise supervise paraprofessionals, and (3) teachers should have state and district guidelines as well as training on interview techniques, planning methods, meeting facilitation, providing on the job training, and distinguishing between task appropriately and inappropriately delegated to paraprofessionals.

Guiding Principles to Paraprofessional Supervision

As mentioned earlier, Pickett is one of the leading researchers for paraprofessionals. Her work has led to the establishment of the National Resource Center

for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services (NRCP). In 1999, NRCP created a task force that included administrators from local and state education agencies, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and representatives from both two-and four year teacher programs. With the help of this task force, a national survey was developed that for the first time examined closely the roles of teachers and paraprofessionals. Over 400 surveys were completed by participants actively involved with paraprofessionals and/or their supervision. As a result, the guiding principles emerged as a way to specify the breadth of responsibilities of both paraprofessionals and the teachers who supervise them. A reprint of these principles is located in Table 1 (Chapter 1, p. 8). More specifically, Guiding Principle #7 describes specific teacher supervisory skills that have also been identified in the literature and adapted in developing the instrument survey for this research study.

The skills identified in Pickett's 1999 model will provide the framework for analyzing the literature on supervision of paraprofessionals. The supervisory skills include: (a) planning work assignments, (b) directing or delegating tasks, (c) monitoring and evaluating performance, and (d) providing on the job training and mentoring. The last skill is identified and adapted from other authors in the literature emphasizing role clarification (Chisom, 2002; D'Aquanni, 1997; Floyd, 2004; French, 1997).

Synthesis of Literature Reflecting Teacher Supervisory Skills

Overall, there were 15 studies that related to supervision of paraprofessionals (see Table 3, p. 43). With the exception of one study, all were published between 1990 and 2004 lending current and relevant data. There were five quantitative studies (Floyd, 2004; French, 1999; French, 2001; Marks et al., 1999; McKenzie & Houk, 1986), eight

qualitative, and one study (Prigge, 1996) used a mixed design of qualitative and quantitative methods. Half of the studies used a combination of observations and interviews to collect data.

Table 3 – Studies Emphasizing Teacher Supervisory Skills (Based on Pickett's model, 1999)

Author/Year	Planning	Delegating	Monitoring Performance	On-the-Job Training	Clarifying Roles
Chissom (2002)	X	X	X	X	X
D'Aquanni (1997)	X				X
Floyd (2004)	X	X	X	X	X
French (1997)		X	X	X	X
French (1998)	X	X	X	X	
French (2001)	X	X	X	X	
Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli & MacFarland (1997)	X		X	X	X
Harrington & Mitchelson (1986)		X			X
Jensen, Parsons & Reid (1998)			X	X	
Marks, Schrader, Levine (1999)	X	X			X
McClain (1993)	X	X			X
McKenzie, Houk (1986)		X			
Milner (1998)				X	X
Prigge (1996)	X				X
Rose (2000)	X				X

Two studies (Chissom, 2002; D'Aquanni, 1997) employed document analysis while four used surveys to gather data (Floyd, 2004; French, 1999; French, 2001; Prigge, 1996). Lastly, eight of the fourteen studies focused exclusively on the supervision of paraprofessionals.

Planning Assignments

The first supervisory skill relates to planning work assignments. As evidenced by French's (2001) study, "...the majority of respondents reported that no one planned for the paraprofessional; among those who did plan for the paraprofessional, the majority transmitted their plans orally" (p. 51). Often times, teachers and paraprofessionals are unsure of who is responsible for planning assignments for the paraprofessional. In a training program developed by Pickett (1997), the author emphasizes that creating instructional material and making decisions about goals, activities, or student evaluation of instructional lesson plans is beyond the responsibility of the paraeducator. The importance of written plans is highlighted in several studies (Chissom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 1997; French, 2001).

While studying the effects of proximity of instructional assistants to the students they were assigned, Giangreco et al. (1997) found that without proper training, paraprofessionals could hinder rather than help student progress. The study emphasized the importance of teachers providing classroom-based, continuous supervision. It explained that paraprofessionals should have the opportunity to provide input into lesson planning based on their experience with the student, but distinguished the "ultimate accountability for planning, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting instruction should rest with the professional staff" (p.16).

Another investigation that underscored the importance of planning was conducted by Rose (2000). Interviews and observations were used to gather data in a single junior high school about the methods used to provide access to learning for students with special needs. During semi-structured interviews, the author noted that teachers felt it was

important to involve their paraprofessionals in lesson planning. Rose pointed out that when paraprofessionals worked with small groups of students, " it was noticeable that in such situations, the [paraprofessionals] were well prepared; had a clear sense of purpose as a result of involvement in planning; and had received direction from the class teacher" (p. 194). However, the findings of this study are the exception in the literature.

A recurrent theme in the literature is that planning, whether formal or informal, does not exist, as it should between teachers and paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 2001; D'Aquanni; Prigge, 1996). More specifically, Floyd found that scores for planning work assignments were consistently within the "seldom" range on related Likert-items. This finding was irrespective of formal preparation, school setting, or years of supervising paraprofessionals. Similarly, Chisom found planning time between the paraprofessional and teacher took place on average ten minutes in the morning. Teachers assumed that paraprofessionals knew 'how to do their job' therefore they did not recognize the need for planning. As a result, services stated in students' IEPs were not delivered appropriately, adequately, or efficiently. In both studies, the content of the meetings between the teacher and paraprofessional was not specified.

Delegating Tasks

The second supervisory skill is assigning or delegating tasks in order to allow the teacher to focus on other responsibilities such as student needs, instruction, or other duties that cannot be delegated to the paraprofessional. Pickett (1997) states that the task of delegation should specify the goals, time for completion, and level of authority, but should not demand that the task be performed in exactly the same way as the teacher, nor should it demand perfection. French (1998) indicated that teachers did not have the

formal preparation to delegate and were ambivalent about delegating even clerical tasks to paraeducators. The supervisory skill of delegating was reported in three studies (French, 1997; French, 1998; McClain, 1993).

French (1997) used a single case interview that asked open-ended questions to a recent speech language pathologist (SLP) graduate responsible for supervising assistants in a small urban school district. During the one year period of investigation, the SLP took a course that provided her with information regarding "roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals, liability and legal issues, as well as the skills of directing, delegating, and giving feedback" (p.106). French (1997) found that the tools learned in the course helped the SLP develop appropriate tasks for her assistants and helped her vary the level of responsibility for task delegation based on her perceptions of the assistant's skill. The issue of giving directions or delegating was also noted as a common occurrence in another study involving resource classrooms.

In a study that examined paraprofessional supervision in separate placements, McClain (1993) observed verbal interactions between teachers and paraprofessionals in an elementary school setting. The observations took place in special education classrooms and the researcher was able to examine lesson plans, behavior rating charts, problem solving worksheets. Teachers were observed giving directions, generally verbal, to paraprofessionals throughout the day.

Similar observations with respect to the importance of delegating tasks emerged from both of the above studies and add to the mounting evidence for structured supervision of paraprofessionals. The ability to delegate tasks was only studied in any great depth in the setting of separate placements. Both French (1997) and McClain (1993)

note that such settings require paraprofessional/teacher teams to work along side one another and provides for more opportunities to supervise. In such settings, tasks are better defined and goals more clearly stated.

Monitoring and Evaluating Performance

The third supervisory skill set that teachers must be able to do is monitor paraprofessional performance and provide feedback of that performance. According to Pickett (1997), the evaluation of a paraprofessional should be based on performance standards, written data from personal observations and appropriate documentation. Chisom (2002) and Floyd (2004) comment on the extra burden that monitoring performance adds to a teacher's full schedule of responsibilities, yet stress the importance of insuring that paraprofessionals carry out their responsibilities correctly. There are four studies in this data set that include the skill of monitoring performance and evaluation of paraprofessionals in their design (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; Giangreco et al., 1997; and Jensen et al., 1998).

Jensen and colleagues (1998) used qualitative methods to evaluate a means of training special education teachers in supervisory strategies. The purpose of the study was ultimately to improve the instruction related performance of their paraprofessionals. The study took place in a pullout classroom of adult learners, the majority of whom were labeled with severe mental retardation. The seven teachers who participated in the study were given supervisory training. Part of the training required that the teachers observe and provide feedback to their paraprofessionals on monthly basis. The results of this multi-probe design showed that collecting observational data on paraprofessionals improved. An important finding of the study was the implication that "when teachers are

trained to systematically observe and provide contingent feedback regarding the teaching-related performance of [paraprofessionals], the targeted teaching skills of their [paraprofessionals] improve" (p. 461).

In a more recent qualitative study, Chisom (2002) explored supervision of paraprofessionals in two middle schools in Virginia. The participants of this case study were two principals, two special education coordinators, four special education and four general education teachers, and eight paraprofessionals half of whom work within general education programs and the rest under special education (n=20). The researcher began by observing paraprofessionals and teachers in both inclusive and pull-out settings for a period of three months. Subsequently, she conducted interviews using open-ended questions in semi-structured format.

Chisom (2002) indicated that teachers felt uncomfortable about supervising paraprofessionals due to the level of connection they had amongst themselves. Teachers who monitored paraeducator performance reported that they did not set formal evaluation meetings or discussions. They stated that simple conversations in the hallways replaced the formal process of evaluation. Some paraprofessionals indicated that they solicited feedback from their supervising teachers because they never had any formal process by which they were given advice. This study is one of four from the literature that addresses the skill of evaluating paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French 1997; French, 1998).

French (1998) found that teachers were often responsible for the evaluation of paraeducators either exclusively or with the help of the principal. In almost half of the participants, the sole responsibility lay with the teacher in evaluating the

paraprofessional. In the other cases, teachers completed the evaluation forms and took them to the principal for signature often without discussing the evaluation.

Floyd (2004) indicated that the overall mean scores in the area of evaluating paraprofessional performance were low. In her analysis, she concluded that annual evaluations of paraprofessionals were completed by the principals (49%) while 27% reported that special education administrators completed paraprofessional evaluations. Interestingly, her study found that only teachers with more than 25 years of experience reported higher than the "seldom" range on Likert-scale items regarding evaluations of paraprofessionals while some did not perceive themselves as supervisors.

On the Job Training and Mentoring

The supervisory skill mentoring and on-the-job training can be approached in many different ways by teachers. An important outcome of this skill can be to improve paraprofessional performance in assigned tasks. This can be accomplished through formal or informal meetings, modeling, providing constructive and timely feedback, and coaching paraprofessionals through various situations (Chisom, 2002). The need for paraprofessionals to be supervised by a licensed professional is mandated by IDEIA (2004) and NCLB (2001). With respect to mentoring and on-the-job training, nine of the fourteen studies on supervision address this skill (Chisom, 2002; D'Aquanni, 1997; Floyd, 2004; French, 1997; French, 1998; French, 2001; Giangreco et al., 1997; Jensen et.al., 1998; Milner, 1998)

Chisom (2002), found patterns relating to on-the-job training that emerged from her qualitative study on supervision of paraprofessionals. Chisom also found little or no training is provided to paraprofessionals and when it is available it is informal and

consists of hand-on activities. Similarly, special education teachers who participated in Floyd's (2004) study responded to a survey as "seldom" engaging in tasks associated with mentoring and on-the-job training. More surprisingly, there was no difference whether or not teachers had preservice preparation. However, teachers with an average of 6-10 years of experience scored higher in the "sometimes" range of the Likert-related items.

D'Aquanni (1997) conducted a qualitative study examining the role of paraprofessionals in inclusive programs. Using interviews and observations to collect data, eight paraprofessionals working in four elementary schools in New York were chosen to participate in a multi-case design. The author observed that paraprofessionals were unable to ask questions of teachers or to elaborate on teaching methods introduced to them through training activities. D'Aquanni noted that "on-the-job training was viewed by many of the paraprofessionals in this study as a successful way of providing instruction" (p.394). However, a common theme that emerged from this study was that lack of planning time was often the reason for inadequate training.

The importance of on-the-job training is also highlighted by several studies that have been previously described. Giangreco et al. (1997) conducted a qualitative study that relied heavily on classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The authors noted that paraprofessionals who were in close proximity to students with disabilities for prolonged time could adversely affect peer relations and student-teacher interactions. The study stressed the necessity for instructional assistants to have competency-based training with continuous supervision. Similar conclusions were drawn by Jensen et al. (1998) whose study participants received supervisory training relating to on-the-job mentoring

and found that consistent teacher feedback and mentoring helped to improve the teaching skills of paraprofessionals under their supervision.

French (2001) in her study examining supervisory practices of teachers found that the technique used most frequently in training was "telling" followed by "giving feedback on performance". The author noted that few teachers maintained records or documented the training provided to paraprofessionals while less than ten percent of participants actually maintained files with dates and topics of training addressed. This study's findings support previous studies proposing that on-the-job training is a significant tool in paraprofessional support and ultimately student outcomes.

Clarifying Roles

The final supervisory skill that will be addressed from the literature entails role clarification. For effective instruction to occur, the roles of the teacher and paraprofessional must be defined. According to Pickett (1997), teachers need to consider "experience, training, comfort level, time constraints, and knowledge levels of individual team members" (p. 175). And yet the literature reiterates that confusion still exists about the roles of paraprofessionals when compared to the roles of teachers (French & Pickett, 1997; Giangreco, Edelman et al., 2001). Role clarification emerges as a common theme in eleven out of the 14 studies relating specifically to supervision of paraprofessionals (Floyd, 2004; Chisom, 2002; D'Aquanni, 1997; French, 1997; French, 1998; Giangreco et al., 1997; McClain, 1993; Marks et al., 1999; Milner, 1998; Prigge, 1996; Rose, 2000).

French (1998) in her study of paraprofessional-teacher teams found that some teachers failed to distinguish between the ethical and legal responsibilities of the professional teacher and tasks that are appropriate for the paraeducator. Her study

confirmed that there is a reported shift in paraeducator responsibilities toward more instruction. However, in clarifying roles, teachers were divided about who should be responsible for tasks such as typing, filing, and copying.

Milner (1998) used a qualitative design to describe the interactions of successful paraprofessionals with students with disabilities and general education teachers in inclusive settings. The study participants included three paraprofessionals, three special educators, eleven general education teachers, and nine students. Using observations and interviews, the researcher noticed common patterns emerging with respect to role clarification. First, general education teachers were unclear about what the paraprofessional ought to be doing in their classroom. Second, there were not regular, scheduled communication times between the teacher and paraprofessional. Third, general education teachers did not understand their own role in supervising the paraeducator which created additional confusion in dividing the work. This small study highlights the value of clear communication between teacher/paraprofessional teams regarding roles and responsibilities (Chisom, 2002; Prigge, 1996).

D'Aquanni (1997) looked specifically at the roles of paraprofessionals in inclusive settings. The details of the study were described in an earlier section of the paper as they pertained to on-the-job training. This study also sheds light on the need for role clarification. The author found, "historical job descriptions have not coincided with the evolving role of paraprofessionals" (p. 380). In this study, staff had difficulty with understanding who maintained the responsibility of supervising the paraprofessionals. Likewise, Giangreco et al. (1997) found a need for instructional assistants to have roles clarified so that student progress would not be hindered. French (1997) indicated a need

for formal training in teaching her participant SLP how to clarify roles and improve assistant interactions.

In addition, Chisom (2002) points out that a common pattern found in her study on supervision was the misconceptions and lack of clarity as to who does what. More specifically, both paraprofessionals and teachers made several assumptions about each other's roles and responsibilities. However, Floyd (2004) documents different findings in her quantitative study of teacher supervisory practices. The majority of participants reported having clear distinction between roles and responsibilities of the teacher and paraeducator. This is the only study to date that has found such a result. The author also states "special education teachers reporting themselves as frequently engaging in role clarification may indicate a level of readiness for continued professional development in the area" (p. 92). One must keep in mind that these results only reflect the perception of teachers and it is difficult to assess what the paraeducator perceives or understands from role clarification.

Several themes emerged from the literature reviewed in this section. The key findings included: (a) lack of role clarification for teachers and paraprofessionals, (b) limited formal communication and planning, (c) inability or lack of knowledge of teachers to supervise, and (d) inadequate training for both paraprofessionals and teachers (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 1998).

Paraprofessional Perspectives on Teacher Supervision

The literature is clear that paraprofessionals are vital contributors to the service delivery in special education programs (French, 1998). As discussed, there is much information surfacing on the employment of paraprofessionals from many authors.

Although the literature is full of qualitative studies observing paraprofessionals and their evolving roles being the target, to date, there is no study that asks the perspective of paraprofessionals regarding their actual supervision. There are, however, several studies that have sought to explore paraeducators' perspectives on their roles in inclusive settings and underscore the need for appropriate supervision (Marks et al., 1999; Downing et al., 2000).

Using interviews to collect data, Marks and colleagues (1999) attempted to examine the perspectives of 20 paraprofessionals who worked in an inclusive setting. After gathering demographic information and general working experiences of the paraeducators, the authors identified five participants for follow-up in-depth interviews. The purpose of the study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of paraprofessionals and to analyze the various roles they assumed during the course of a typical school day. Once the initial analysis was performed, themes that emerged were presented to another group of paraeducators in order to corroborate the experiences of the study participants.

Marks et al. (1999) showed that paraeducators assumed a range of job responsibilities. A striking observation was made about how paraprofessionals negotiated their roles and responsibilities in that many of them assumed the primary burden of success for the inclusion students. This involved both taking on academic and behavioral needs. However, "paraeducators expressed that it was more appropriate for the classroom teacher to assume these primary responsibilities" (p. 318). The results of the study led to the conclusion that "further training for paraeducators, teachers, and school personnel is absolutely necessary" (p. 325). Marks and colleagues concluded that ongoing support and

supervision by special educators was an integral piece in coordinating instructional efforts to better meet the needs of inclusion students. They also shared that further research is needed to identify improved practices for utilizing paraeducators and stressed that "the voices and perspectives of all involved in the complex task of educating special education students" (p.327) is important. This research lends support to the current study that will examine both the teachers' and paraprofessionals' perspectives on supervision.

Paraeducators have been described as adapting materials, implementing behavioral interventions, providing personal care, collecting data, and offering direct instruction (Downing et al., 2000; Hilton & Gerlach, 1997; Jones & Bender, 1993). Downing and colleagues (2000) sought to understand how paraeducators viewed their roles with the purpose of offering information to the field that could help correct misconceptions, establish performance guidelines, and provide the appropriate training and supervision.

Sixteen paraprofessionals were interviewed using a qualitative, semi-structured format. Downing et al., (2000) expressed concerns with some of the statements made by the study participants. Paraeducators described high levels of responsibility for education programs of students with moderate to severe disabilities characterized by the great deal of independence given for decision making. The paraeducators reported feeling alone in decision making and expressed reservations about their qualifications to make such decisions. This perceived lack of training and absence of formal supervision is echoed by other authors (French, 1998; French & Pickett, 1997; Giangreco, 1997).

Barriers to Effective Supervision

Limited existing literature hints to possible barriers of effective supervision. Common themes that emerge include lack of time, lack of formal preparation to supervise, and lack of clear role delineation both ethically and legally. French (1998) found that paperwork and time management were key aspects of a teacher's job that were problematic in allowing for proper supervision of his/her paraprofessional(s). According to French many teachers defer from the supervisory responsibilities because they feel confused, lacking of control and self-confidence, they are uncertain as to whether they can supervise or not, and fear of failure. Furthermore, French explained that some teachers seem unable to distinguish and decide on importance of tasks or urgency of tasks. This in turn, results in poor time management.

Marks et al., (1999) found that too often special educators assigned with the responsibility of supervising paraeducators had high caseloads. This resulted in limited time for the level of ongoing support that current recommendations deem necessary for daily academic and curricular modifications. Mark and colleagues concluded that "in the absence of such resources, paraeducators will likely assume roles that others more qualified should assume" (p.327).

Teachers often admit that they know little about the legal, liability and ethical considerations that relate to working with paraprofessionals (French, 1998; Katsiyannis et al., 2000). This is also cited as an issue that often precludes effective supervision of the paraprofessional. Although teachers are no longer solely responsible for the delivery of instruction, they are considered fully accountable for the outcomes of the instructional

process. Often the responsibility of training and orienting falls on the teacher while school administrators tackle other school-related concerns.

Strategies for Effective Paraprofessional Supervision

Review of the literature revealed only one publication that discussed strategies for effective paraprofessional supervision. French (2001) described the shift towards a stronger professional status for teachers and its impact on teacher functions and roles. The author compared the position to one of leadership within a group and labels it as more of an executive role. According to French seven keys to success as a school professional who supervises paraeducators can be paralleled to the same kinds of executive functions performed by team leaders in business. The following list delineates those executive functions that are vital in keeping a team working properly.

1. Team leaders orient new paraeducators to the program, creating personalized job descriptions for each paraeducator.
2. They set a schedule so all members know where they need to be, and when the work needs to be done.
3. They provide plans and direction for the work that needs to be done.
4. They delegate the right kinds of tasks to people who are best able to handle them.
5. Executives make sure that their workgroup members have the right training to do the job, and help them get more training for new skills or they provide additional job-specific training themselves.
6. They monitor the performance of group members to assure that the work gets done in the right way and they give feedback and coaching to the team members to help them do their work well.

7. Finally, a team leader or executive makes sure that the workplace functions smoothly by creating communication pathways and systems, implementing problem-solving sequences, and either mediating conflicts or assisting with conflict management approaches among team members.

French (2001) suggested that time management, knowledge of legal and ethical considerations and liabilities, along with smart instead of hard work are key components to successful supervision. More specifically, according to French a teacher must self-manage and recognize the scope of his or her responsibilities. Instead of assuming all work, teachers should be aware of the value of tasks at hand and prioritize accordingly. Additionally, teachers should assign or delegate tasks to paraprofessionals in order to share work load and responsibilities. Smarter work means that teachers work along side paraprofessionals sharing responsibilities thus reducing stress and anxiety (French, 2001).

Legal and ethical considerations are part of the key strategies French (2001) suggested for effective supervision of paraprofessionals. Teachers must familiarize themselves with state laws and regulations regarding employment, roles, responsibilities, qualifications, and supervision of paraprofessionals. Although the NCLB Act provides general guidelines for paraprofessional credentialing and qualifications, states set their own standards with regard to definition of paraprofessionals, their roles, qualifications, and supervision. Teachers need to know those state laws and regulations in order to perform their duties in accordance to the law, provide services to students with disabilities, and properly supervise and monitor paraprofessionals. French suggested that legal and ethical considerations are key components of effective teacher supervision of paraprofessionals. Knowing about liability and other legal considerations helps teachers

to avoid misunderstanding of individuals' roles and responsibilities, thus providing services to students in accordance to the law (French, 2001).

Summary

This literature review looked at both the broad topics pertinent to the employment of paraprofessionals as well as the issues specific to teacher supervision of paraprofessionals. Pickett's (1999) model referencing specific supervisory skills including planning, delegating, monitoring, evaluating, and mentoring provided the framework in synthesizing the studies on supervision. The last supervisory skill addressed role clarification and was adapted from multiple authors in the literature (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 1998; Giangreco et al., 1997). The fifteen studies listed in Table 4, p. 42, related to these five supervisory skills were reviewed in greater detail to shed light on supervisory practices.

Characteristically, the majority of studies used qualitative methods of observation and interview. Planning and role clarifying were addressed with greater frequency in studies that took place in inclusive settings (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 1998; D'Aquanni, 1997; Giangreco et al., 1997; Prigge, 1996; Rose, 2000). The supervisory skills of delegating tasks and monitoring performance emerged as issues in pullout classroom settings (French, 1997; Jensen et al., 1998; McClain, 1993). On-the job training was discussed in seven of the fourteen studies supporting the need for paraprofessional standards and credentialing (Chisom, 2002; D'Aquanni, 1997; French, 1997; French, 2001; Giangreco et al., 1997; Jensen et al., 1998; Milner, 1998).

Confusion regarding roles of paraprofessionals ties closely to the lack of provisions for their effective supervision and evaluation. According to Morgan and

Ashbaker (2001), teachers are aware that they themselves lack the skills to effectively supervise paraprofessionals. Although teachers' responsibilities have not traditionally included training of paraprofessionals, as certified personnel, they are ultimately responsible for ensuring that students receive free, appropriate public education and that procedures, as mandated by IDEIA (2004), are followed accordingly. In fact, according to French (2001), the NJCLD posited that teachers who "fail to provide appropriate supervision of paraprofessionals may be in violation of their profession's code of ethics" (p. 25).

In their review of legal and practice considerations, Katsiyannis et al., (2000) indicated that several authors suggested offering university-based instruction and observation practicum experiences to preservice undergraduate students, and more specific training to graduate students who are serving as teachers and administrators. French (2001) also echoes the recommendation that schools, colleges, and departments of education provide "specific skills instruction" to preservice special educators and that school districts educate teachers in supervising paraprofessionals.

Over the past decade, research indicates that paraprofessionals are an integral part of educational teams (Daniels & McBride, 2001; French, 1998; French & Pickett, 1997; Gerber et al., 2001; Giangreco et al., 2002; Giangreco et al., 2001; Pickett, 1999; Pickett & Gerlach, 1997). Recently, there has been an increased appreciation of issues surrounding paraeducator roles, training, and their supervision. A fundamental reason for this heightened awareness of paraeducator issues is the Amendments to IDEA, 1997 most recently, reauthorized to be IDEIA 2004, and ESEA, also known as No Child Left Behind Act—two federal mandates that have an impact on current practices employed by

schools around the country. Even though extensive literature examining paraprofessional roles and responsibilities exists, there have been few studies relating to their supervision by both special and general education teachers.

Teachers and special educators need to be equipped with better skills that allow them to problem-solve, guide, and supervise paraprofessionals (French & Pickett, 1997). This literature review has demonstrated that there is a current need for appropriate supervision of paraprofessionals (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; Giangreco et al., 1997; Jensen et al., 1998; Rose, 2000; and Milner, 1998). To date, only two studies, one qualitative and one quantitative, have examined paraprofessional supervision using the comprehensive skill set outlined in Pickett's model (1999) with the remainder of studies highlighting at least one or more of the supervisory responsibilities.

This study examined the supervisory skills proposed by both Pickett (1999) and other authors in the literature (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 1998; Giangreco et al., 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). A quantitative design was employed to explore the extent to which special educators supervise paraprofessionals and to compare those practices with the perspectives of paraprofessionals in one school district in northwest Vermont. The research questions are as follows:

1. What methods do special educators use in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings?
2. What are the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding teacher supervision of their work?
3. Do the perceptions of special education teachers and paraprofessionals regarding paraprofessional supervision differ significantly?

4. What are the perceived barriers in providing effective paraprofessional supervision?
5. What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?

This research distinguishes itself from others in that both teachers and paraprofessionals were participants in a quantitative study pertaining specifically to supervision. Given the increasing numbers of paraprofessionals in school settings, the findings of this research will add to the limited literature that addresses supervisory practices and will offer possible strategies for decreasing the barriers and misconceptions that exist regarding role clarification, planning work assignments, appropriate delegation of tasks, and constructive feedback on performance.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter explains the research methods utilized in this study. The first section provides an overview of the study. The second section delineates the methods used in developing the survey instruments. Finally, the last section describes the population sample, reviews the survey instrument, and discusses methods of data collection and analysis. Lastly, this chapter addresses ethical safeguards.

Overview of the Study

Despite the increasing evidence that supervisory roles are expanding for special education teachers, the current literature suggests that teachers are not trained in supervision (French, 2001; Genzuk & Baca, 1998; Giangreco, et al., 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). While the numbers of training material and resources for paraprofessionals were increased to meet the escalated use of paraprofessionals, teacher education programs have fallen short in developing and offering curricula that prepare teachers for their supervisory roles (Wallace et al., 2001). At the same time, the legal requirements of IDEA, and most recently, Title I of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, mandate that paraprofessionals provide instructional services to students with disabilities under the direct supervision of special education teachers.

The school district participating in this study employs paraprofessionals through the Department of Student Services. Student Services is responsible for all those students who are special education eligible, have a disability, and are under Section 504 plans. Participants in the study work in the districts' three schools; elementary, middle, and high school.

This study examined special educators' supervisory practices of paraprofessionals in inclusive settings. It also explored paraprofessionals' perspectives of those supervisory practices. Finally, it attempted to identify barriers to effective supervision and possible solutions to developing strategies for effective paraprofessional supervision.

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5. What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?

Research Methodology

Given the research problem and the purpose of the study, the methodology selected was based on a quantitative as well as a qualitative model. A survey was distributed for the purpose of gathering information that reflected the supervisory practices of special education teachers who worked with paraprofessionals in inclusive settings. Both special education teachers and paraprofessionals responded to a number of questions in order to draw their views of paraprofessional supervision. Surveys constitute a methodical way of collecting data and they have been considered valuable in educational research (Gall, et al., 1996; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). To date, there

were only two quantitative studies found that shed light on the perception of teacher supervisory practices while the remaining studies are qualitative (Floyd, 2004; French, 2001).

Instrumentation

The development of the survey instruments was based on an assessment of the current literature, interviews with local school district administrators, personal communications with special education researchers at the Center on Disabilities and Community Inclusion (CDCI) at the University of Vermont and the researcher's teaching experience in inclusive classrooms. Two separate surveys (see Appendix A & B) were constructed with items developed by the researcher and deemed pertinent to the research questions regarding teacher supervisory practices and paraprofessionals' perceptions of those practices. Pickett's (1999) model of guiding principles regarding teacher supervision of paraprofessionals lent to the categorizing of teacher skills for supervision. Additional items were adapted with permission from instruments developed by Floyd (2004).

Two separate survey instruments were used. The first was intended for the special educator participants (teacher instrument) while the second was designed for the paraprofessional participants (paraprofessional instrument) of the study. The teacher instrument was divided into three sections. The first section was designed to collect demographic data from the respondents. The second section was designed to collect data regarding specific supervisory practices. It used Likert scales and was categorized according to teacher skills in order to measure each construct with greater accuracy. This was done because individual survey items may have significant random measurement

errors thus leading to decreased reliability (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Finally, the third section consisted of two open-ended questions that explored participants' perspectives on barriers to providing effective supervision and possible solutions to address these barriers. The paraprofessional instrument paralleled the format used for the teacher survey. It was also divided into three sections including respondents' demographics, perceptions of teacher supervisory practices, and two open-ended questions addressing barriers to and solutions for effective supervision.

In any study, it is important that correct inferences are made based on accurate results. Validity refers to the degree to which inferences can be correctly made based on results from an instrument. This may depend on the instrumentation process and the characteristics of individuals studied (Creswell, 2002; Gall et al., 1996). In order for the survey items to be instrumentally valid, they have to accurately correspond to the research questions. Thus, a construct validity of the highest degree is important. Evidence of construct validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures an intended hypothetical construct (Patton, 1990).

In order to establish content validity a panel composed of two school administrators, a special education coordinator, two former special education teachers who are presently university professors and researchers on the topic of paraprofessionals, and two paraprofessionals were provided copies of the instruments to assess for clarity, ease of responsiveness, and comprehensiveness. It is important to collect information in more than one measure of the same construct to ensure validity (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996). Responses from the contributing panelists were recorded on a feedback form and subsequently used to make necessary changes in both instruments. Lastly, the instrument

was reviewed by members of the researcher's dissertation committee and suggested modifications were made prior to field-testing.

Survey instruments for data collection were field-tested prior to distribution. Two teachers and two paraprofessionals were asked to review the survey instruments and offer feedback. The participants in this small scale study were sent a feedback form to provide their comments. Their comments were also used to help modify the instruments for more accurate responses from the study participants.

Sample Selection

Special education teachers and paraprofessionals from one northwest Vermont school district served as the subjects for this study. This particular school district, just like others in Vermont, strongly supported and engaged in inclusive education. At the time of this study there were 2131 students in the school district, 343 of whom were classified as students with disabilities while 71 were identified as students with special needs. Although these pupils were identified as individuals with special needs, they were not classified as special education students. However, general education teachers provided additional support and services to those students, usually under the auspices of the Educational Support Team (EST) in collaboration with special education paraprofessionals. At the time of the study, 38 special education teachers and 71 paraprofessionals were employed in the districts' elementary, middle, and high school and offered services to all eligible students (E. Sonnick, personal communication, October 29, 2004).

Although it is recognized that variability of characteristics exists, and random sampling may insure greater degree of generalization, convenience sampling was used.

Lack of resources and limitations in drawing sample from a larger population necessitated that sampling focused on an accessible population. According to Gall et al., (1996) accessible population refers to those individuals who realistically can be included in the sample.

Several factors contributed to the selection of this participant sample. First, the researcher's proximity to the above school district allowed easier approach to the accessible population. Second, familiarity with the district's organization and employment practices of special education teachers and paraprofessionals allowed for more expeditious collection of data. The size of population selected for this study was relatively small, thus surveys were distributed to the entire population. All participants were expected to return completed surveys. Names of all participants were obtained, and kept confidential from the district's central office and the secretary of student services volunteered to place the surveys in their mailboxes.

Generalizability of Results

The results of this study may be generalizable to public schools with the same or similar demographics. In this specific school district, the majority of special needs students were served in inclusive settings. Even students with severe disabilities, those classified as intensive needs students, were partially included in the general education classroom for certain subjects. These students received in-classroom support by paraprofessionals as well as special education teachers. During instruction, general education teachers collaborated with special education teachers and paraprofessionals, however, supervision of paraprofessionals was primarily the job of special education staff. Students in this district come primarily from lower socio-economic backgrounds;

about 60 percent of all pupils were under free or reduced lunch programs. Lastly, the generalizability of this study was strengthened when the participants' demographics were also characteristic of the school district's teaching staff and support personnel.

Data Collection

This study's participants were selected from a local school district in the state of Vermont. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous. Surveys, consent forms, and separate return envelopes for each were distributed directly to individual mailboxes by the Student Services secretary. Respondents filled out both survey and consent forms and returned them in separate sealed envelopes to a designated mailbox in the Student Services Office. Confidentiality was preserved in the following ways: a) the researcher was not involved in administering and collecting the surveys; the Student Services secretary distributed sealed envelopes containing the surveys b) no identifying information, including names were on the actual survey instrument, and c) consent forms were returned in separate envelopes.

The participants' responses to the surveys were critical for achieving high return rate. The first step in achieving this goal was to announce at the monthly district special education department meeting that this study would be conducted and volunteer participation was requested. Second, a follow-up letter identifying the researcher and the academic institution sponsoring the doctoral candidacy, along with the purpose of the study and a brief explanation of the survey was distributed to individual mailboxes. Third, the survey instrument was delivered to individual mailboxes by the student services secretary along with small totes of candy as an initial incentive to complete the survey. The names of participants who completed and returned the surveys within 10

days were entered into a lottery drawing for a fifty dollar gift certificate to a local mall. Those who submitted the consent form and the completed survey were asked to provide their names on a separate form indicating their wish to be included in the lottery drawing. Since there were two separate groups participating in this study, two separate drawings took place. Lastly, reminders for the survey due date were placed in individual mailboxes ten days prior to the due date. In the event participants had lost the initial survey packet, additional copies were available at the student services secretary's office.

Data Analysis

Data from teacher and paraprofessional instruments were analyzed using SPSS version 11.0.3 software. Descriptive statistics formed the basis of the analysis. Table 4 outlines questionnaire items as they corresponded to the research questions. Using SPSS in 'variable mode' specific survey items such as demographic data (i.e., years of experience, current placement, etc.) and supervision-specific questions were coded. Each item or survey question from both the teacher and paraprofessional instruments were segmented into sections separated by category of skills (see Table 4, p. 71). Using SPSS file, in variable view mode, each survey question was codified and named in order to be entered in the data file. The purpose for designating codes and entering each question as a variable in SPSS data view file was to allow a summary list and subsequently, through the program to obtain a frequency distribution of each of the events labeled as variables. Once responses were received, they were then entered as data in respective cells of the 'variable view' table.

Table 4 – Survey Items Corresponding to Research Questions

	Survey Instrument Items	Statistical Analysis
Research Question		
	Teacher's Demographics: 1-15	Analysis of Frequencies
1. What methods do special educators use in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings?	Likert Scale (teacher survey) - Orienting and Clarifying roles (Knowledge and skills): 16-23 - Planning: 24-32 - Task delegating: 33- 38 - Training and mentoring: 39-46 - Evaluation and performance monitoring: 47-59	Analysis of Frequencies
	Paraprofessional's Demographics: 1-12	Analysis of Frequencies
2. What are the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding their supervision by special education teachers when working in inclusive settings?	Likert Scale (paraprofessional survey) - Orienting and Clarifying roles (Knowledge and skills): 13-20 - Planning: 21-29 - Task delegating: 30- 35 - Training and mentoring: 36-43 - Evaluation and performance monitoring: 44-56	Analysis of Frequencies
3. Do the perceptions of special education teachers and paraprofessionals regarding paraprofessional supervision differ significantly?	Likert Scale: In teacher survey items: 16-59 In paraprofessional survey items: 13-56	Independent Samples T-Test
4. What are the perceived barriers to providing effective paraprofessional supervision?	Open-ended: Teacher survey: item 70 Paraprofessional survey: 57	Frequency analysis of words, themes and patterns
5. What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?	Open-ended: Teacher survey: 71 Paraprofessional survey: 58	Frequency analysis of words, themes and patterns

Responses from the open-ended questions were reviewed in order to identify common words and phrases. Most frequently appearing words were highlighted by color, in an effort to categorize them and quantify the responses using statistical analysis (Gall

et al., 1996). Specifically, the researcher analyzed each written response and color code key words categorizing them by themes. For example, the word 'time' was coded in yellow. Then, each time the specific word appeared in a response it was tallied and counted. In order to determine common themes, the most frequent words and phrases were selected as they corresponded to the question that addressed perceived barriers to providing effective paraprofessional supervision. Subsequently, the same process was applied for the question that addressed possible solutions for effective paraprofessional supervision.

Ethical Considerations

The Webster's New Riverside Dictionary defines ethical behavior as one that "conforms to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group." The Committee on Scientific and Professional Ethics of the American Psychological Association (APA) has published principles for the conduct of research with human subjects. The summary of that statement addresses primarily the protection of participants from harm, ensuring confidentiality of research data, and the deception of subjects. Since the design of this study was to explore special educators' and paraprofessionals' perspectives on supervision, there was no requirement of interventions or various treatments. The proposal of this study was submitted to the Human Subjects Committee for review and approved for completion. Upon approval, the study was conducted within the parameters of ethical, appropriate, and respectful research practices.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of the Results

Special educator supervisory practices and paraprofessionals' perceptions of teacher supervision were studied in inclusive settings. This study also investigated whether differences between special educators' and paraprofessionals' perceptions regarding supervision exist. Lastly, this study explored perceived barriers to providing effective paraprofessional supervision and factors or strategies that may facilitate paraprofessional supervision.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through surveys and the findings are reported in this chapter. The first part of the chapter provides an overview of how the questionnaire was developed and statistical analyses of internal reliability. The next section describes the demographic findings of the surveyed sample. The last section presents the answers to the five research questions posed in the study.

Instrument Development

An important aspect of paraprofessional employment is their supervision. Review of existing literature regarding supervision revealed that little has been done or discussed to address this issue. This study was undertaken in order to explore special educators' supervisory practices, paraprofessionals' perceptions of teacher supervision, and insight into the perceived barriers for effective supervision as well as possible solutions. Two separate surveys in parallel format and content (see Appendices A and B) containing items that address supervision were developed by the researcher and distributed to both special educators and paraprofessionals. Some survey items were drawn from other similar instruments including Floyd (2004), French (2001), and Pickett and Gerlach

(2003). Based on Pickett's (1999) model of the key supervisory skills, the existing literature, and through the researcher's own experience as a special educator, five supervisory categories were adapted for the instrument. More specifically, Pickett's seventh guiding principle for paraeducator employment, roles, preparation, and supervision lent the idea for developing these categories.

The survey instruments were developed based on a parallel design. There were three sections in both the teacher and paraprofessional surveys. The first section was designed to collect demographic data about the respondents. The second section was based on the five supervisory categories: a) Orienting and Clarifying Roles, b) Planning, c) Task Delegating, d) Training and Mentoring, and e) Evaluation and Performance Monitoring. These categories were designed based on the Pickett's (1999) seventh guiding principle. According to Pickett "Teachers/providers responsible for supervising the work of paraeducators have the skills necessary to plan for, direct, provide on-the-job training for, monitor, and evaluate the skills of paraeducators." (p. 7). Using the above skills, these five categories were designated to address each of the supervisory tasks. Questions addressing each of those categories are shown in Table 5 (p. 75).

This section was identical in terms of number of items and content in both the teacher and paraprofessional surveys. It sought responses that addressed teachers supervisory practices and paraprofessionals' perceptions of their supervision. The third section included two open-ended questions soliciting special educators' and paraprofessionals' opinions regarding barriers to supervision and possible solutions to achieving effective supervision. Finally, the responses of both surveys were analyzed and coded providing primarily quantitative data with additional qualitative information.

Table 5 – List of Items Corresponding to the Five Categories of Supervisory Skills

Categories of Supervisory Skills	Survey Items (See Appendices A and B)	
	Teacher Survey (Appendix A)	Paraprofessional Survey (Appendix B)
Orienting and Clarifying Roles	Items: 16-23	Items: 13-20
Planning	Items: 24-32	Items: 21-29
Task Delegating	Items: 33-38	Items: 30-35
Training and Mentoring	Items: 39-46	Items: 36-43
Evaluation and Performance Monitoring	Items: 47-59	Items: 44-56

Internal Consistency

Using SPSS, Likert-scale items were analyzed to test for reliability. This analysis helped to determine internal consistency of the instrument items. SPSS' scale analysis option was utilized which allows an Alpha (Cronbach's) analysis of the survey items. Alpha analysis helps to quantify the relationship between a set of measurement items and the fundamental concept that those items are supposed to measure. This analysis provides information about the reliability of any given set of measures.

Alpha analysis is interpreted as a correlation coefficient, thus its value ranges from 0.00 to 1.00. According to George and Mallery (2003), when Alpha analysis produces coefficients of 0.70 or greater, then scaled items are considered to be reliable. Therefore, the closer Alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the set.

Table 6 (p. 76) provides Alpha scores and descriptive statistics for the five supervisory skills categories. The Alpha scores for *orienting and clarifying roles* (.87 and .94 for special educators and paraprofessionals' survey items respectively) indicate very high internal reliability. Alpha scores for *planning assignments* (.86 and .88) signify good internal reliability as well. From the other three skills categories, *delegating tasks* (.88

and .89), *training and mentoring* (.81 and .88), and *monitoring performance* (.78 and .86), the alpha scores were also indicative of good internal reliability.

Table 6 – Reliability Analysis

Scales (Supervisory Skills)	Number of Items per Scale	Alpha Scores	
	n	Teacher Survey	Paraprofessional Survey
Orienting and Clarifying Roles	8	.87	.94
Planning	9	.86	.88
Task Delegating	6	.88	.89
Training and Mentoring	8	.81	.88
Evaluation and Performance Monitoring	13	.78	.86

Although the Alpha score for the evaluation and performance index was the lowest among the five categories (.78), it still exceeded the minimum value of .70 for internal reliability. Since Alpha scores among all five supervisory skills categories were .78 or higher, all items were considered to be reliable and thus were included in the analysis of the findings.

Description of Survey Sample

Special Educator Respondents

The first section of the teacher instrument contained 15 items (see Table 7 on pp. 77-78). Survey items 1 through 15 were used to collect general demographic information in addition to background variables relating to (a) licensure, (b) school setting, (c) years of teaching experience, (d) educational background including coursework completion regarding preparation in supervision and courses taken that dedicated class sessions specifically to paraprofessional supervision, (e) student caseload demographics including

number of students on IEP as well those who were not under an IEP, disability classification and student placement, (g) professional development and proficiency in supervision, and (h) number of years supervising and number of paraprofessionals supervised.

Table 7 – Teacher Demographics

Item Number	Demographics		Percent	F
1.	Gender	Female	97%	33
		Male	3%	1
2.	Vermont Special Educator's License	Level I	88%	30
		Level II	6%	2
		Provisional	3%	1
		Other	3%	1
3.	School Setting	High School	32%	11
		Middle School	21%	7
		Elementary School	38%	13
		Preschool (EEE)	9%	3
4.	Teaching Experience	This is my first year	3%	1
		2-3 years	18%	6
		4-7 years	38%	13
		8-13 years	23%	8
		Over 13 years	0%	0
5.	Highest Degree of Education	Bachelor Degree	32%	11
		CAS	3%	1
		Master Degree	65%	22
		Doctorate Degree	0%	0
6.	Courses taken pertaining to supervision in general	No	71%	24
		Yes (Number of courses)	29%	10 (3)
7.	Courses taken with *class sessions* dedicated to paraprofessionals supervision	No	79%	27
		Yes (Number of courses)	21%	6 (1)
8.	Number of special education students on my caseload	Less than 8	21%	7
		9-14 students	29%	10
		15-21 students	41%	14
		22 or more students	9%	3

Table 7 – Teacher Demographics (continued)

Item Number	Demographics		Percent	F
9.	Number of other than IEP students (EST, 504)	Less than 3	53%	18
		4-6 students	17%	6
		7-12 students	9%	3
		13 or more	21%	7
10. Student classification	Disability Categories: Mild Disabilities, Moderate Disabilities, and Severe Disabilities	Teachers whose students were from all three disability categories	38%	13
		Teachers whose students were from two disability categories	38%	13
		Teachers whose students were from one disability category	24%	8
11. Student Placement	General education classes at least 80% of time		64%	33
	General education classes 25%-79% of time		18%	9
	General education classes less than 25% of time		18%	9
12.	Professional development pertaining to paraprofessional supervision offered to me over the last (number of years):	5 years	24%	8
		10 years	0%	0
		longer than 10 years	0%	0
		never	76%	26
13.	I consider myself proficient in supervision of paraprofessionals	Strongly disagree	6%	2
		Disagree	18%	6
		Not sure	29%	10
		Agree	41%	14
		Strongly Agree	6%	2
14.	Number of years I have been supervising paraprofessionals	Less than 3	38%	13
		4-7 years	35%	12
		8-13 years	18%	6
		more than 13 years	9%	3
15.	Number of paraprofessionals I supervise	None	0%	0
		1	29%	10
		2	26%	9
		3	12%	4
		4	6%	2
		5	6%	2
		6	21%	7

There were 38 surveys distributed to all the special educators, 34 of which were returned indicating 89% response rate. Analysis of responses showed that 97% (n=33) of the participants were female, and 3% (n=1) were male. Frequency distributions were computed for all the demographic data and percentages and figures were rounded to the nearest whole number. All returned surveys were completed with no items missing.

Licensure. Teacher participants were asked to provide information about their current licensure and 88% (n=30) responded that they held a Level II Vermont Professional License, while 6% (n=2) held a Level I Vermont Teacher's License, 3% (n=1) held a Provisional License, and 3% (n=1) were working under a waiver provided that he/she would furnish the district with documentation necessary for provisional license.

School setting. In order to determine participants' school setting, four options were provided. Respondents had to select High, Middle, Elementary School, or Preschool (also known in the district as Early Elementary Education). Of those who responded, 38% (n=13) indicated that they worked in the elementary school, 32% (n= 11) worked in the high school, 21% (n=7) worked in middle school, while only 9% (n= 3) worked in preschool.

Years of teaching experience. For the 34 special educator respondents, 38% (n=13) of the them indicated four to seven years of teaching experience, 23% (n=8) indicated that they had between eight and 13 years of teaching experience, 18% (n=6) indicated they had 2-3 years of teaching experience and another 18% (n=6) indicated over 13 years of teaching experience. Only 3% (n=1) reported that it was their first year of teaching.

Educational background. Data regarding the highest degree held in addition to coursework for supervision was gathered as part of the educational demographics. Sixty five percent (n=22) of teacher respondents indicated that they had obtained a Master's degree while 32% (n=11) indicated that they had earned a Bachelor degree.

Only 3% (n=1) reported that they obtained a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS). Responses to preparation in supervision and coursework relating to the topic of supervision were obtained through survey items 5 and 6 (see Appendix A). Respondents indicated that in general, 71% (n=24) of them did not take any courses pertaining to supervision while 26% (n=9) reported that they took one course and only 3% (n=1) took more than one course. Additionally, 79% (n= 27) indicated that they did not take any courses in which specific class sessions were dedicated to paraprofessional supervision, while 18% (n=6) indicated that one or two sessions in their courses during graduate and undergraduate studies were dedicated to paraprofessional supervision. Three percent (n=1) also responded that in those courses, there were more than two sessions of specific graduate or undergraduate courses dedicated to paraprofessional supervision.

Student caseload demographics. Several survey items were developed in an effort to obtain information about special educator's caseloads. These variables included numbers of students, classification of disabilities and student placement. Forty one percent (n=14) indicated that they had between 15-21 students on their caseloads, while 29% (n=10) had between 9-14 students on their caseload, 21% (n=7) had less than 8 students, and 9% (n=3) had more than 22 students on their caseload. Additionally, item 9 was designed to obtain whether special educators were working with students other than those with current IEPs. About 53% (n=18) worked with fewer than 3 non-IEP students,

17% (n=6) with 4-6 students, 9% (n=3) with 7-12 students, and 21% (n=7) worked with 13 or more non-IEP students (i.e., students on EST, 504, and other plans).

Item 10 in the teacher survey was designed to obtain responses indicating the classification of the students with whom they worked. Respondents could select all that apply from three different categories. In SPSS, the first variable was *students with mild disabilities*. The second variable was *students with moderate disabilities* and lastly, the third variable was *students with severe disabilities*. Since respondents could select any of those that apply, responses were mixed. About 38% (n=13) of special educators indicated that they worked with pupils who were labeled with all three disability categories (mild, moderate, and severe disabilities). Approximately 38% (n=13) of special educators indicated that the students they worked with students who were identified with two of the three disability categories, and about 24% (n=8) of special educators indicated that they worked with students who were identified with one of the three disability categories.

Special educators work with students in a variety of placements. In order to obtain information regarding the specific placement of students, item 11 of the demographics section provided three options for a response. Seventy one percent (n=24) of respondents indicated that their students spent at least 80% of the time in general education classes. Twenty six percent (n=9) of the respondents indicated that their students were in general education classes at least 25%-79% of the time. Lastly, 3% (n=1) of the respondents indicated that their students were in general education classes less than 25% of the time.

Professional development and supervision. In order to obtain information about special educators' professional development, survey item 12 of the demographics section asked when teachers had any training pertaining to paraprofessional supervision. Of the

34 respondents, 76% (n=26) indicated that they had never received professional development in paraprofessional supervision while 24% (n=8) indicated that they had some training within the last five years. Special educators were also asked how proficient they considered themselves in supervision. This question was a Likert scale item; possible answers were: strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree. About 6% (n=2) responded strongly disagree, 18% (n=6) disagree, 29% (n=10) not sure, 41% (n=14) agree (=4), and 6% (n=2) strongly agree.

Number of years supervising paraprofessionals. Item 14 of the same section was designed to obtain how long special educators have been supervising paraprofessionals. Thirty eight percent of teachers (n=13) indicated that they supervised paraprofessionals for less than three years, 35% (n=12) had supervised paraprofessionals between four and seven years, 18% (n=6) had supervised paraprofessionals between eight to 13 years, and only 9% (n= 3) had supervised paraprofessionals for more than 13 years.

Number of paraprofessionals supervised. The last demographic set of data was obtained in order to gather information about the number of paraprofessionals special educators supervised. Of the 34 teacher respondents, 29% (n=10) indicated that they supervised one paraprofessional, 26% (n=9) indicated that they supervised 2 paraprofessionals, 12% (n=4) indicated that they supervised 3 paraprofessionals, 6% (n=2) indicated that they supervised 4 paraprofessionals, 6% (n=2) indicated that they supervised 5 paraprofessionals, and 21% (n=7) indicated that they supervised six or more paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessional Respondents

Parallel to the teacher instrument, the first section of the paraprofessional survey was designed to collect information regarding basic demographics as shown in Table 8 (pp. 84-85).

In addition, the survey was designed to obtain the following: (a) school setting and work experience, (b) highest degree attained, (c) student caseloads including disability classification, number of students, number of classrooms worked in, and student placement (d) number of supervisors and who is the primary supervisor, and (e) required standards for employment (see Table 8, pp. 84-85). Seventy one surveys were distributed to paraprofessionals in the school district and 51 participants responded in full, yielding 72% response rate. Of those who responded, 94% (n=48) were female, and 6% (n=3) were male.

School setting and work experience. In obtaining information about the setting in which paraprofessionals worked, data indicated that 61% (n=31) of the respondents were in an elementary school, 23% (n=12) worked in the high school, and 16% (n=8) worked in the middle school. Regarding work experience, 27% (n=14) indicated between eight to 13 years, 22% (n=11) indicated between five to seven years of work experience, 20% (n=10) indicated between two to four years work experience, 14% (n=7) indicated that this was their first year working as paraprofessionals, and 18% (n=9) indicated over 13 years of work experience.

Highest degree attained. In order to gather data about the highest degree attained by paraprofessionals, survey item 3 of the demographics section of the paraprofessional survey was designed with six possible answers. Forty one percent (n=21) of the

paraprofessional respondents selected a high school diploma as the highest degree obtained, 28% (n=14) had an associate's degree, 23% (n=12) held a bachelor's degree, and only 8% (n=4) indicated a master's degree.

Table 8 – Paraprofessional Demographics

Item Number	Demographics		Percent	F
1. Gender	Female		94%	48
	Male		6%	3
2. School Setting	High School		23%	12
	Middle School		16%	8
	Elementary		61%	31
	Preschool (EEE)		0%	0
3. Work Experience	My First Year		14%	7
	2-4 Years		20%	10
	5-7 Years		22%	11
	8-13 Years		27%	14
	Over 13 Years		18%	9
4. Highest Degree Obtained	GED		0%	0
	High School Diploma		41%	21
	Associate Degree		28%	14
	Bachelor Degree		23%	12
	Master Degree		8%	4
	Other		0%	0
5. Student Classification	Disability Categories: a) Mild Disabilities, b) Moderate Disabilities, and c) Severe Disabilities	Paraprofessionals whose students were from all three disability categories	10%	5
		Paraprofessionals whose students were from two disability categories	39%	20
		Paraprofessionals whose students were from one of the disability categories	51%	26

Table 8 – Paraprofessional Demographics (Continued)

Item Number	Demographics		Percent	n
6. Formal Job Title	Paraprofessional		28%	14
	Instructional Assistant		40%	20
	Paraeducator		12%	6
	Other		20%	11
7. Number of Supervisors	One Supervisor		72%	37
	Two Supervisors		18%	9
	Three Supervisors		10%	5
8. Number of Students	Less than 4		39%	20
	5-9 Students		22%	11
	10-15 Students		27%	14
	16 or More Students		12%	6
9. Supervisor Title	Special Education Teacher		100%	51
	General Education Teacher		0%	0
	Principal		0%	0
	Special Education Coordinator		0%	0
	Both General and Special Education Teachers		0%	0
	Other		0%	0
10. Standards Met	Completed two years of study at a higher education institution		8%	4
	Obtained associate or higher degree		43%	22
	Met standards as defined by school district		39%	20
	Other		10%	5
11. Student Placement	General Education Classes at least 80% of time		64%	33
	General Education Classes 25%-79% of time		18%	9
	General Education Classes less than 25% of time		18%	9
12.	Number of Classrooms I Work In	1 Classroom	19%	10
		2 Classrooms	19%	10
		3 Classrooms	22%	11
		4 Classrooms	19%	10
		More Than Four Classrooms	18%	10

Student caseload demographics. In regards to the classification of the students paraprofessionals worked with, 61% indicated that they worked with students with mild disabilities while all indicated that they had some students with moderate and/or severe disabilities. As with the teacher survey, this item was designed similarly. Thus

paraprofessionals had to choose any answer that applied indicating whether students they worked with were classified as individuals with mild, moderate or severe disabilities.

About 10% (n=5) of paraprofessionals indicated that they worked with students from all three disability (mild, moderate, and severe) categories. Approximately 39% (n=20) of paraprofessionals worked with students labeled with two of the three disability categories, and 51% (n=26) of paraprofessionals worked with students identified with one of the three disability categories.

When asked about student placement, 64% (n=33) of the respondents indicated that they worked with students placed in general education classes at least 80% of the time. Eighteen percent (n=9) indicated that they worked with students who were in general education classes at least 25%-79% of the time, and 18% (n=9) indicated that they worked with students who were placed in general education classes less than 25% of the time. In reference to the number of students worked with, 39% (n=20) of paraprofessional respondents indicated that they worked with less than 4 students, 22% (n=11) worked with five or more but less than nine students, 27% (n=14) worked with 10 to 15 students, and about 12% (n=6) worked with more than 16 students.

Finally, data about the number of classrooms in which paraprofessionals worked were collected. About 22% (n=11) of the respondents indicated that they worked in three different classrooms each day. Nineteen percent (n=10) worked in one classroom throughout the day, 19% (n=10) worked in two classrooms during the day, about 20% (n=10) worked in four classrooms during the day, 9% (n=4) worked in five classrooms, another 9% (n=4) worked in six classrooms, 2% (n=1) worked in seven classrooms, while 2% (n=1) worked in eight classrooms throughout the day.

Supervisors. When paraprofessionals were asked about how many teachers were considered to be their supervisors, 73% (n=37) of them responded that they were supervised by one special educator, 18% (n=9) of paraprofessionals indicated that they were supervised by 2 special educators, and 10% (n=5) were supervised by three or more supervisors.

Standards for employment. Item 10 of this section was designed to obtain what were the required standards of qualifications met by paraprofessionals. Of those who responded, 43% (n=22) indicated that they had obtained an associate or higher degree, 39% (n=20) indicated that they had "met a rigorous standard of quality and have demonstrated through a formal assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics (or when appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness)," 10% (n=5) indicated that they had met the standards through district supported programs of necessary coursework, and 9% (n=4) indicated that they had completed two years of study at an institution of higher education.

Analysis of Research Questions

The research questions addressed by this study were as follows:

1. What methods do special educators use in supervision of paraprofessionals in inclusive settings?
2. What are the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding teacher supervision of their work?
3. Do the perceptions of special education teachers and paraprofessionals regarding paraprofessional supervision differ significantly?
4. What are the perceived barriers in providing effective paraprofessional

supervision?

5. What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?

As previously described, the two surveys were based on a parallel design. The first question of this research explored special educators' methods of supervision of paraprofessionals, based on their own perceptions. Pickett's (1999) model lent the framework for the designed set of five supervisory skills each containing a number of questions intended to obtain data about the following supervisory practices: a) orienting and clarifying roles, b) planning, c) task delegating, d) training and mentoring, and e) evaluation and performance monitoring. The same sets of questions were also used in the paraprofessional instrument in order to obtain paraprofessionals' perceptions of their supervision by special educators.

The third research question explored the differences and similarities between the teacher and paraprofessional responses in the first two questions. In order to compare paraprofessional to teacher responses, Independent Sample t-Test was used to analyze and compare the means between groups. Each of the task categories (Orienting and Clarifying Roles, Planning, Task Delegating, Training and Mentoring, and Evaluation and Performance Monitoring) were clustered to create five groups. Independent t-Test results yielded no significant differences in the responses between the two groups; these results will further be discussed in this chapter. The fourth research question identified perceived barriers to effective paraprofessional supervision as it was observed by both paraprofessionals and special educators. The last research question elicited paraprofessionals' and special educators' opinions about factors or strategies that could

facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision. Analysis of frequent words and common themes was used to quantify the responses to the above qualitative questions.

Research Question 1:

What methods do special educators use in supervision of paraprofessionals in inclusive settings?

In an effort to obtain descriptive data about supervisory methods special educators used, a Likert Scale in the second section of the teacher survey was designed with five sets of questions. The six possible answers to all the questions were, *never, once, at least quarterly, at least monthly, at least weekly,* and *daily.*

Likert Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Once	At least quarterly	At least monthly	Weekly	Daily

The first set of questions was designed to obtain specific information about one aspect of supervision. Orienting and clarifying roles to paraprofessionals were addressed by those questions (see Appendix A, items 16-23). All results, including percentages and sample *n* figures were rounded to the nearest whole number. Analysis of frequencies obtained using descriptive statistics are shown in Table 9. On average, responses showed that about 8% (n=3) of special educators never provided orientation or any role clarification information to paraprofessionals over the course of school year 2004-05. About 26% (n=9) provided orientation and role clarification once over the course of the year. Approximately 18% (n=6) provided orientation and role clarification at least quarterly over the course of the year. About 18% (n=6) provided orientation and role clarification at least monthly during the year. Approximately 23% (n=8) provided

orientation and role clarification at least weekly, and lastly, about 7% (n=2) provided orientation and role clarification daily.

Table 9 – Averages from questions based on the five categories of supervisory skills (Teacher Survey): Research Question 1

Teacher Responses	Supervisory Tasks				
Possible Answers	Orientation and Role Clarification	Planning	Task Delegating	Training and Mentoring	Evaluation and Performance Monitoring
	Percent / N	Percent / N	Percent / N	Percent/N	Percent / N
Never=1	8% / n=3	18% / n=6	13% / n=4	27%/n=10	17% / n=6
Once=2	26%/n=9	14% / n=5	16% / n=5	20% / n=7	47% / n=14
At Least Quarterly=3	18% / n=6	20% / n=7	10% / n=4	12% / n=4	13% / n=5
At Least Monthly=4	18% / n=6	9% / n=3	9% / n=3	16% / n=5	10% / n=4
Weekly=5	23% / n=8	32% / n=11	31% / n=11	16% / n=5	10% / n=4
Daily=6	7% / n=2	7% / n=2	21% / n=7	9%/ n=3	3% / n=1
Total	100%/n=34	100%/n=34	100%/n=34	100%/n=34	100%/n=34

Teachers' responses regarding the planning aspect of supervision (see Appendix A, Items 24-32) indicated that approximately 18% (n=6) never planned with their paraprofessionals. About 14% (n=5) did planning once during the course of the year. Approximately, 20% (n=7) indicated that they did planning with their paraprofessionals at least quarterly while about 9% (n=3) spend time in planning at least monthly. Additionally, 32% (n=11) indicated that they spend time in planning at least weekly, and lastly, about 7% (n=2) did planning with their paraprofessionals daily.

In order to obtain information about task delegating to paraprofessionals (see Appendix A, Items 33-38), teachers responded to six items. Approximately, 13% (n=4) indicated that they never delegated tasks to their paraprofessionals, 16% (n=5) delegated once, 10% (n=4) delegated at least quarterly, 9% (n=3) at least monthly, 31% (n=11) at least weekly, and 21% (n=7) delegated tasks to their paraprofessionals daily.

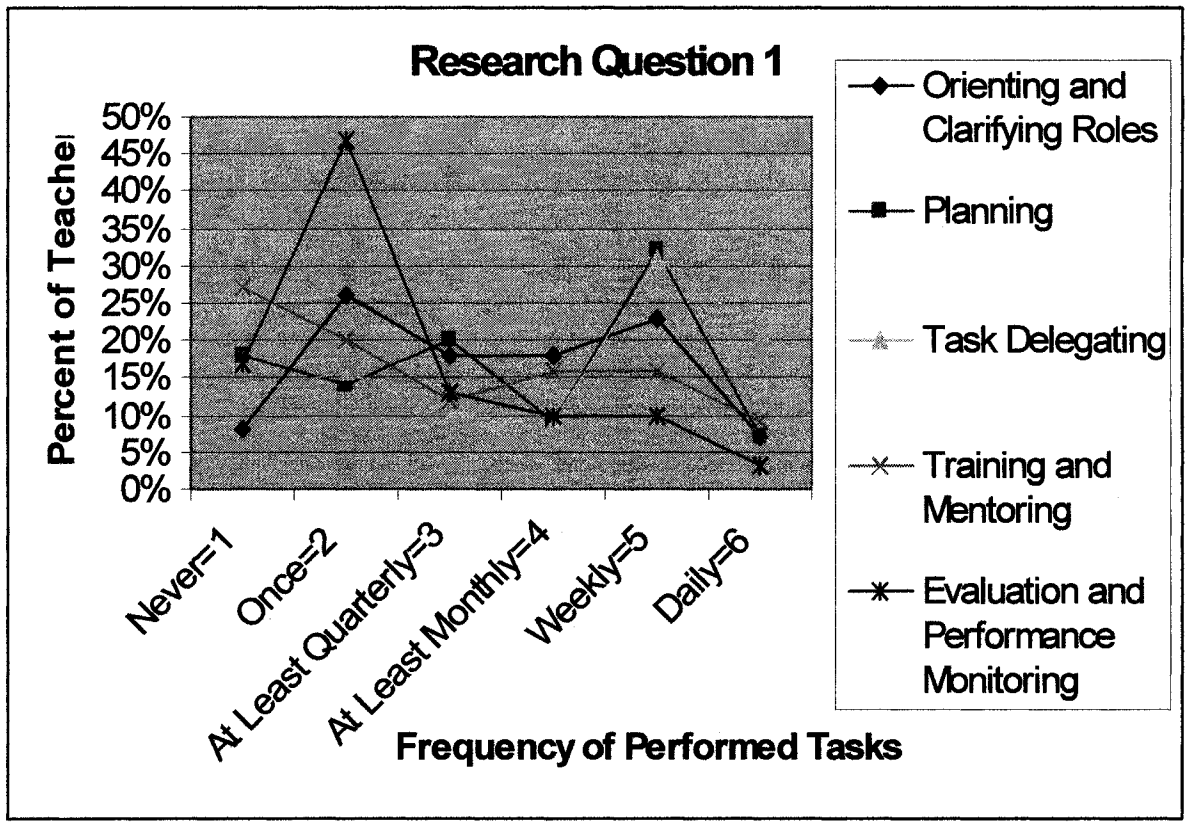
Mentoring and training were addressed through a set of eight questions (see Appendix A, Items 39-46). Approximately, 27% (n=10) indicated they never provided training and mentoring to their paraprofessionals. About, 20% (n=7) provided training and mentoring only once throughout the school year. Also, 12% (n=4) provided training and mentoring at least quarterly. Roughly 16% (n=5) provided training and mentoring at least monthly, while another 16% (n=5) provide training and mentoring at least weekly, and 9% (n=3) provided some sort of mentoring and training daily.

Evaluation and performance monitoring was the last set of questions in the second section of the survey (see Appendix A, Items 47-59). Approximately, 17% (n=6) respondents indicated that they never evaluated or monitored paraprofessional performance. About 46% (n=14) indicated that they evaluated paraprofessionals once. Roughly 13% (n=5) evaluated and monitored paraprofessional performance at least quarterly. Additionally, 10% (n=4) evaluated and monitored paraprofessional performance at least monthly, just about 10% (n=4) evaluated and monitored paraprofessional performance at least weekly, and roughly 3% (n=1) at least daily.

Even though 21% (n=7) of the special educators performed on a daily basis one of the five major supervisory skills (task delegating), on average, as indicated on Chart 1 (p. 92), fewer than 10% did so for any of the other supervisory skills (i.e., orienting and

clarifying roles, planning, training and mentoring, and evaluating and monitoring performance). Upon examination of the most frequently appearing response, more respondents, on average, engaged in all five skills on a weekly basis. When responding to scaled items, participants had to select from six possible answers. Those were, *never*, *once*, *at least quarterly*, *at least monthly*, *at least weekly*, and *daily*. On average, when answering scaled items, respondents selected *weekly (5)* more frequently than any other option.

Chart 1 – Percent of Teachers Engaging in Supervisory Tasks on Given Frequencies



Special educators' own perceptions of their supervisory skills were somewhat consistent across the five major skills. Based on responses to Likert scale items, several supervisory themes emerged. Overall, more special educators perceived themselves as leaders in terms of providing orientation and role clarification and planning. The majority

of respondents indicated that they engaged in the above supervisory skills at least weekly, while they admitted that training and mentoring, as well as evaluating and monitoring paraprofessional performance were not tasks of the highest priority. About 20% (n=7) of special educators indicated that they provided training and mentoring to their paraprofessionals only once a year. In addition, the majority of special educators, 47% (n=14), indicated that they evaluated and monitored paraprofessional performance once a year.

Another theme that emerged from the above responses was that special educators had a tendency to delegate tasks, as evidenced by the 31% (n=11) of the respondents who delegated tasks on a weekly basis, while 21% (n=7) of them delegated tasks on a daily basis. The overwhelming majority of special educators responded either never or once a year to all but one item from the last set of questions under supervisory task labeled "Evaluation and Performance Monitoring." About 53% (n=18) of special educators indicated that they scheduled meetings at least weekly.

As indicated, the five supervisory skills were not performed daily by special educators. However, as indicated by 21% (n=7) of the special educators and 30% (n=16) of the paraprofessionals, task delegation to paraprofessionals was one of the tasks performed on a daily basis. While most planning took place weekly, evaluation and ongoing performance monitoring was at best done once a year as indicated by 47% (n=14) of the special educators and 37% (n=20) of the paraprofessionals. Even though mentoring and ongoing training is very important (French, 2001; French & Gerlach, 1999; Giangreco et al., 2001; Morgan & Ashbaker, 2001) this study revealed that the majority of special educators surveyed, about 47% (n=14), engaged in evaluation and

ongoing performance monitoring only once during the school year, while only 10% (n=5) performed some sort of training and mentoring on a weekly basis.

Lastly, the significance of planning was evident in that 24% (n=12) of special educators found it important enough to engage in that supervisory task on a weekly basis. However, analysis of the next research questions revealed a common theme among paraprofessionals' perspectives of special educators' supervisory practices. A more detailed discussion of those themes follows in the next research question.

Research Question 2:

What are the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding teacher supervision of their work?

Responses to the second research question were collected and analyzed in order to obtain paraprofessionals' perceptions of their supervision by special educators, when working in inclusive settings. For this, the same Likert Scale containing the same five sets of supervisory skills (orienting and clarifying roles, planning, task delegating, training and mentoring, and evaluation and performance monitoring) also found in the teacher survey, were used. The questions were the same as in the teacher instrument although they were worded so to match the language to reflect paraprofessional responses. Respondents had to select from the same set of possible answers found in the teacher instrument. Those were, *never (1)*, *once (2)*, *at least quarterly (3)*, *at least monthly (4)*, *weekly (5)*, and *daily (6)*.

The first set of questions addressed orienting and clarifying roles (See Appendix B, Items 13-20). About 17% (n=9) of the respondents indicated that their supervising teachers never provided orientation or clarified paraprofessional roles. Approximately

32% (n=17) were oriented at least once and had roles clarified to them by their supervisors. Roughly 16% (n=8) were oriented and roles were clarified to them at least quarterly. About 13% (n=6) were given some orientation and role clarification at least monthly. Additionally, about 16% (n=8) were given orientation and role clarification at least weekly, and approximately 6% (n=3) daily.

The second set of questions (See Appendix B, Items 21-29) addressed the supervisory task of planning. Approximately 18% (n=9) paraprofessionals indicated that their supervisor never planned with them. About 12% (n=6) responded that planning took place only once throughout the year, 20% (n=10) responded at least quarterly, 13% (n=7) at least monthly, 24% (n=12) weekly, and 13% (n=7) daily.

The third supervisory task (See Appendix B, Items 30-35) addressed task delegating. About 20% (n=10) respondents indicated that they were never delegated any tasks by their supervisors, 9% (n=5) were once, 13% (n=7) at least quarterly, 7% (n=3) at least monthly, 21% (n=10) weekly, and 30% (n=16) daily.

In response to the next supervisory task, training and mentoring (See Appendix B, Items 36-43), about 28% (n=14) of the paraprofessional respondents indicated that they never received any training or mentoring by their supervisor, 14% (n=7) received once, 19% (n=10) at least quarterly, 10% (n=5) at least monthly, 19% (n=10) weekly, and 10% (n=5) received some sort of training and mentoring daily.

The last supervisory task, evaluation and performance monitoring (See Appendix B, Items 44-56), was addressed by a set of 13 questions. About 28% (n=15) of the respondents indicated that they were never evaluated and their performance was never monitored. Approximately 37% (n=20) of the respondents were evaluated and their

performance was monitored once throughout the school year, for 13% (n=5) of the respondents at least quarterly, 6% (n=4) at least monthly, 14% (n=6) weekly, and 2% (n=1) daily. A synopsis of the above analyzed results is found in Table 10. On average, paraprofessionals' perceptions regarding leadership-related supervisory skills, such as training and mentoring, and evaluation and monitoring performance, indicated that special educators engaged in those tasks only once a year or never.

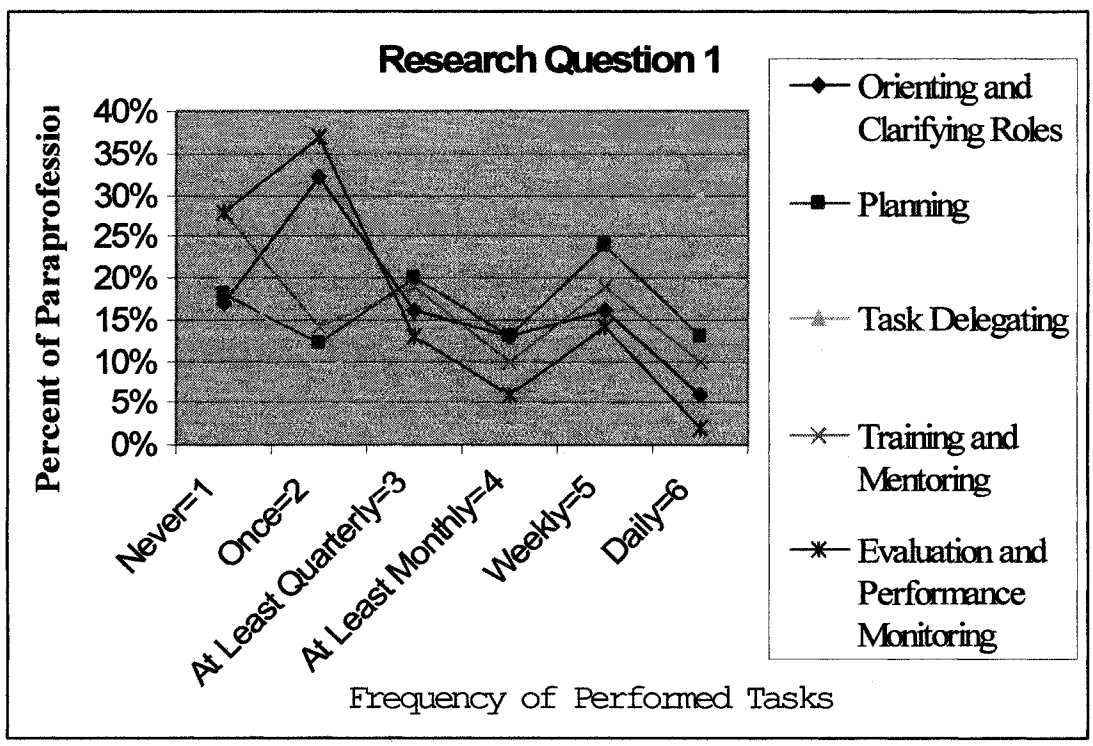
Table 10 – Averages from questions based on the five categories of supervisory skills (Paraprofessional Survey): Research Question 2

Paraprofes-sional Responses	Supervisory Tasks				
Possible Answers	Orientation and Role Clarification	Planning	Task Delegating	Training and Mentoring	Evaluation and Performance Monitoring
	Percent / N	Percent / N	Percent / N	Percent/N	Percent / N
Never=1	17% / n=9	18% / n=9	20% / n=10	28%/n=14	28% / n=15
Once=2	32%/n=17	12% / n=6	9% / n=5	14% / n=7	37% / n=20
At Least Quarterly=3	16% / n=8	20% / n=10	13% / n=7	19% / n=10	13% / n=5
At Least Monthly=4	13% / n=6	13% / n=7	7% / n=3	10% / n=5	6% / n=4
Weekly=5	16% / n=8	24% / n=12	21% / n=10	19% / n=10	14% / n=6
Daily=6	6% / n=3	13% / n=7	30% / n=16	10%/ n=5	2% / n=1
Total	100%/n=51	100%/n=51	100%/n=51	100%/n=51	100%/n=51

A further examination of the results to the second research question revealed that paraprofessional responses were somewhat consistent among the six possible choices throughout all five supervisory skill areas as indicated in Chart 2 (p. 97). Notable

exceptions were the two outliers of the data set under possible answer *daily* (i.e., coded response #6). Daily task delegating was selected by 30% (n=16), while daily evaluation and monitoring performance, as one might have expected, was selected by 2% (n=1) of the respondents. Once a year was the predominant answer for orientation and role clarification as indicated by 32% (n=17) of the respondents. The highest value for planning was reflected by the selection of possible answer 5 (*weekly*) which 24% (n=12) of respondents selected as their first choice. The highest rate of response for task delegating was daily with 30% (n=16) of respondents selecting it. For training and mentoring the most popular response was never as selected by 28% (n=14) of the respondents. Lastly, evaluation and performance monitoring predominantly took place once a year as indicated by 37% (n=20) of the participants.

Chart 2 – Percent of Paraprofessionals Who Perceive Special Educators Engaging in Supervisory Tasks on Given Frequencies



Based on the data analysis, an overarching theme was that paraprofessionals perceived that special educators had limited engagement in supervisory tasks such as orientation and role clarification, training and mentoring, and evaluation and monitoring performance. Overall, paraprofessionals indicated that they were mostly delegated tasks on a daily or weekly basis, while their roles were clarified to them only once a year.

Research Question 3:

Do the perceptions of special education teachers and paraprofessionals regarding paraprofessional supervision differ significantly?

This question intended to examine whether any significant differences between teacher and paraprofessional perceptions regarding supervision exist. An independent samples t-Test was used in order to compare means between the two groups' responses. Each of the supervisory tasks (Orienting and Clarifying Roles, Planning, Task Delegating, Training and Mentoring, and Evaluation and Performance Monitoring) were grouped and then analyzed. As mentioned earlier, respondents could select one of six possible answers (Never=1, Once=2, At Least Quarterly=3, At Least Monthly=4, Weekly=5, and Daily=6). The minimum and maximum range of possible scores varied based on the total number of items in each supervisory task. The first supervisory task, "Orienting and Clarifying Roles," contained eight questions and given the possible answers (lowest, Never = 1, highest, Daily = 6) the range of scores was between 8 and 48. The second supervisory task, "Planning," contained six questions and possible scores in this task could range from 6 to 36. Similarly, the third supervisory task, "Task Delegating," contained nine questions and possible scores in this task could range from 9 to 54. The fourth supervisory task, "Training and Mentoring," contained eight questions

and possible scores could range from 8 to 48. The last supervisory task, "Evaluation and Performance Monitoring," contained 13 questions and possible scores could range from 13 to 96. The analysis yielded t-test descriptive statistics for the five supervisory tasks, and results of independent samples t-test. Tables 11 and 12 (p. 100) reflect the results of this analysis.

Table 11 – Descriptive Statistics of Categories of Supervisory Tasks; t-Test

Supervisory Task or Category	Respondent	*N*	*Mean*	*Range of Means***		*SD*	*Std. Error Mean*
				Low	High		
Orienting and Clarifying Roles (8 Items)	Para*	51	23.84	8	48	10.09	1.41
	Teacher	34	27.03			8.30	1.42
Planning (9 Items)	Para*	51	31.65	9	54	10.35	1.45
	Teacher	34	31.76			9.68	1.66
Task Delegating (6 Items)	Para*	51	23.43	6	36	8.50	1.19
	Teacher	34	23.62			8.19	1.40
Training and Mentoring (8 Items)	Para*	51	24.33	8	48	9.49	1.33
	Teacher	34	23.85			7.97	1.37
Evaluation and Performance Monitoring (13 Items)	Para*	51	31.29	13	96	9.86	1.38
	Teacher	34	33.62			7.56	1.30

* Para – Indicates Paraprofessional
**Range of Means refers to possible points. When answering all items in each supervisory task, the lowest possible score is indicated by the column labeled "Low," and the highest possible score is indicated by the column labeled "High."

Analysis of descriptive statistics of the t-test results indicated that paraprofessionals' responses to the first supervisory category task, "Orienting and Clarifying Roles," had a mean of 23.84 while teacher responses revealed a mean of 27.03

(Range = 8-48). In response to the next supervisory task of "Planning," paraprofessional responses had a mean of 31.65, while for teachers the mean was 31.76 (Range = 9-54). In addition, the paraprofessionals' responses to the "Task Delegating" supervisory task showed a mean of 23.43 while teachers' responses indicated a mean of 23.62 (Range = 6-36). In response to the "Training and Mentoring" supervisory task, paraprofessionals' answers showed a mean of 24.33 while teachers' mean response was 23.85 (Range = 8-48). Lastly, in response to the "Evaluation and Performance Monitoring" supervisory task, paraprofessionals' responses had a mean of 31.29 while teachers' responses had a mean of 33.62 (Range = 13-96).

Table 12 – Independent Sample t-Test Analysis

Categories of Supervisory Tasks	*N*		*Mean*		*Standard Deviation*		*t*	*Sig.*
	Teacher	Para*	Teacher	Para*	Teacher	Para*		
Orienting and Role Clarifying (8 Items)	34	51	27.03	23.84	8.30	10.09	-1.53	.30
Planning (9 Items)	34	51	31.76	31.65	9.68	10.35	-.053	.98
Task Delegating (6 Items)	34	51	23.62	23.43	8.19	8.50	-.10	.64
Training and Mentoring (8 Items)	34	51	23.85	24.33	7.97	9.49	.24	.11
Evaluation and Performance Monitoring (13 Items)	34	51	33.62	31.29	7.56	9.86	-1.16	.18

Note. - $p < .05$; - df=83.
- Negative *t* value indicates that teacher means were higher than paraprofessional means;
N=sample size;
* Para – Indicates Paraprofessional

Analysis of independent samples t-test results revealed no significant differences between the paraprofessionals and teachers responses to the items collectively in each of the five supervisory task categories. More specifically, when responses to all the questions from each of the five supervisory tasks or categories were compared, teachers and paraprofessionals indicated similar perceptions of special educators' supervisory practices. All values were obtained with a 95% ($p < .05$) confidence interval of the difference.

The results of this analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between teacher and paraprofessionals' responses to the questions on each supervisory category. When examining the significance values for each group of supervisory tasks it appears that the most significant value was .11. In order to consider any statistically significant differences between the responses of teachers and paraprofessionals with a confidence interval of 95% ($p < .05$) the "Sig." value would have to be .05 or less. There were however, some differences between paraprofessionals and teachers' perceptions of supervisory practices as analysis of responses to the first and second research questions showed. More specifically, as indicated earlier in the presentation of the answers to the first and second questions, when examining the frequency analysis of specific responses (i.e., never, once, at least quarterly, at least monthly, weekly, or daily) teachers had a tendency to select the response 'never' across all five supervisory tasks less frequently than paraprofessionals. Lastly, paraprofessionals had a tendency to select the answer "Weekly" more frequently than special educators did across all five supervisory tasks.

Research Question 4:

What are the perceived barriers in providing effective paraprofessional supervision?

In an effort to obtain special educators and paraprofessionals' perceptions of barriers to effective supervision, an open-ended question was asked and respondents were provided about one-half of a page to respond. Several of the respondents used similar words and phrases to describe their perceptions. More specifically, answers to the fourth question, were color coded based on most frequently appearing words and themes. These words or themes were categorized by theme. For example, the concept of time appeared to be one of the most commonly used words to indicate barriers to effective supervision. A yellow highlight was used to color-code the word *time* each time it appeared in the responses (similarly other colored highlighters, such as red, green, or orange were used to color-code the rest of the most frequently appearing words). Another commonly appearing word was *communication* as it pertained to actual discussions between special educators and paraprofessionals. These commonly appearing words or themes were then aggregated to collectively reflect specific responses to the question.

The most frequent words used by special educators and paraprofessionals in response to the question which addressed perceived barriers to effective supervision, were: a) time (or lack of time), b) communication, c) trust, d) listening, e) planning, f) training, g) large caseloads, h) feeling uncomfortable, i) unclear roles, j) space, and k) inexperience. The most frequently appearing words used by paraprofessionals in response to the question that addressed perceived barriers to effective supervision, were as follow: a) communication, b) trust, c) listening, d) planning, e) training, f) lack of time, and g)

inexperience. Again, paraprofessionals' responses to the fourth question included several of the above mentioned words. These words and phrases were categorized by theme. Among the most commonly appearing themes were the concept of communication, trust, and time.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the responses to the question that addressed possible barriers to effective supervision. The words or themes were counted and tallied by category. The total number of each of the words or phrases used by teacher and paraprofessional respondents were analyzed yielding percent and frequency by which they appeared. Results of this analysis are reflected in Table 13.

Table 13 – Frequency of Words or Phrases Appearing in Special Educator and Paraprofessional Responses to Perceived Barriers to Effective Supervision (Percentages reflect the number of respondents that selected the specific words in their responses)

Most Frequently Appearing Words or Phrases	Responses Indicating Perceived Barriers to Effective Supervision			
	Teacher		Paraprofessional	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Time or lack of time	56%	19	49%	25
Communication	24%	8	59%	30
Trust	68%	23	41%	21
Listening	59%	20	41%	21
Planning	50%	17	33%	17
Training	50%	17	39%	20
Large Caseloads	62%	21	24%	12
Feeling Uncomfortable	56%	19	10%	5
Unclear Roles	56%	19	24%	12
Space	56%	19	22%	11
Inexperience	79%	27	31%	16

Emerging themes from responses to the fourth question revealed that overall, special educators' and paraprofessionals' responses indicated that the two groups used

same or similar terms to describe barriers to effective supervision. However, the degree to which special educators considered these barriers differed from that of the paraprofessionals. About 56% of special educators indicated that time or lack thereof was a barrier to effective supervision whereas 49% of paraprofessionals shared the same perception. Approximately 24% of special educators indicated that communication or lack thereof, was a barrier to effective supervision, while 59% of the paraprofessionals shared the same perception. In addition, 68% of special educators indicated trust as a barrier while 41% of the paraprofessionals indicated the same. Also, 59% of special educators thought that listening was a barrier to effective supervision, whereas 41% of the paraprofessionals shared that response. Additionally, 50% of special educators, in contrast to 33% of the paraprofessionals, indicated that lack of planning was a barrier to effective supervision. Likewise, 50% of special educators indicated lack of training as a barrier to effective supervision while 39% of the paraprofessionals selected the same factor as a barrier to effective supervision.

More stark differences were found in a number of the selected words or themes. While both special educators and paraprofessionals selected "communication" as a barrier to effective supervision, only 24% (n=8) of special educators did so whereas more paraprofessionals, 59% (n=30) indicated "communication" as a barrier to effective supervision. Furthermore, 62% (n=21) of special educators indicated that large caseloads were a barrier to effective supervision, while only 24% (n=12) of the paraprofessionals shared the same perception. In addition, 56% (n=19) of special educators indicated that they felt uncomfortable about supervising paraprofessionals, whereas only 10% (n=5) of the paraprofessionals perceived the above as a barrier to effective supervision. Moreover,

56% (n=19) of the special educators perceived that unclear roles were perceived barriers to effective supervision, whereas only 22% (n=11) of paraprofessionals shared the same perception. Additionally, 56% (n=19) of the special educators perceived space, or the lack thereof, as a barrier to effective supervision, whereas only 22% (n=11) of the paraprofessionals perceived space as a barrier to effective supervision. Lastly, the word "inexperience" was selected by 79% (n=27) of the special educators as a barrier to effective supervision, while 31% (n=16) of the paraprofessionals perceived the lack of experience as a barrier to effective supervision.

Research Question 5:

What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?

Responses to the last research question addressing factors or strategies that could facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision were explored by analyzing data from the last survey item. Again, as in the previous research question, common words and themes were identified, and analyzed in order to obtain descriptive statistics of the frequency by which they were selected by the participants. In response to this question, both special educators and paraprofessionals seemed to use similar words or phrases to describe possible factors or strategies in facilitating effective supervision. The most frequent words or phrases used by special educators and paraprofessionals in response to the question which addressed perceived factors or strategies that facilitate effective supervision were: a) guidance, b) more time to meet, c) communicating expectations, d) mentoring, e) trust, f) respect, g) improved communication, h) recognition (of paraprofessional's work), i) more paraprofessional involvement, j) smaller caseloads for special educators, and k) less paperwork for special educators.

Descriptive statistics of the above words or phrases are found in Table 14 which reflects percentages and frequencies of these words or emerging themes from participants' responses.

Table 14 – Frequency of Words or Phrases Appearing in Special Educator and Paraprofessional Responses to Factors or Strategies that Facilitate Effective Supervision (Percentages reflect the number of respondents that selected the specific words in their responses)

Most Frequently Appearing Words of Phrases	Responses Indicating Perceived Factors or Strategies that Facilitate Effective Supervision			
	Teacher		Paraprofessional	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Guidance	53%	16	80%	41
More Time to Meet	32%	11	31%	16
Communicating Expectations	32%	11	45%	23
Mentoring	21%	7	41%	21
Trust	50%	17	41%	21
Respect	35%	12	55%	28
Improved Communication	47%	16	37%	19
Recognition (of paraprofessionals' work)	47%	16	35%	18
More Involvement of Paraprofessionals	35%	12	55%	28
Smaller Caseloads for Special Educators	47%	16	16%	8
Less Paperwork for Special Educators	35%	12	16%	8

Special education teachers' and paraprofessionals' responses revealed the use of similar words and phrases when describing factors or strategies to facilitating effective paraprofessionals' supervision. When answering this question, approximately 53% of the special educators and 80% of paraprofessionals used the words better guidance as a

facilitating factor or strategy to effective supervision. Furthermore, 32% of special educators and 31% of paraprofessionals indicated the need for more time as another factor. Additionally, 32% of special educators and 45% of paraprofessionals indicated the need for communicating expectations as a factor to facilitating effective supervision.

Also, more mentoring programs were selected by 21% of the special educators and 41% of paraprofessionals. In addition to that, 50% of paraprofessionals and 41% of the teachers indicated that building more trust among the two groups would be another facilitating factor. Similarly, respect of paraprofessionals by supervising teachers was selected by 35% of the special educators and 55% of the paraprofessionals. Improved communication was another factor to facilitating effective supervision as indicated by 47% of the special educators and 37% of paraprofessional respondents.

Recognition of paraprofessionals' work by special educators was another factor that appeared in responses by 47% of special educators and 35% of paraprofessionals. Involvement of paraprofessionals in the process was another factor as indicated by 35% of the teacher respondents and 55% of paraprofessionals. Also, about 47% of special educators indicated smaller caseloads as a factor that could facilitate effective supervision, while only 16% of the paraprofessionals shared the same perception. Lastly, 35% of special educators and 16% of paraprofessionals indicated that less paperwork could be a facilitating factor or strategy to effective paraprofessional supervision.

A number of themes emerged from the responses to the question that addressed possible factors or strategies facilitating effective supervision. Both special educators and paraprofessionals shared somewhat the same words to a varied degree. However, there were some stark differences between the teachers' and paraprofessionals' frequency of

selecting specific words of phrases. Specifically 53% (n=16) of special educators indicated guidance as a possible strategy to facilitate effective supervision whereas more, about 80% (n=41), of paraprofessionals selected guidance as a possible factor in facilitating effective supervision. In addition, 21% (n=7) of special educators perceived mentoring as a factor that facilitates effective supervision while 41% (n=21) of the paraprofessionals shared the same perception. Also, 35% (n=12) of special educator respondents indicated that respect was a factor that facilitates effective supervision whereas 55% (n=28) of the paraprofessionals perceived respect as an important strategy in facilitating effective supervision.

Furthermore, 35% (n=12) of special educators perceived increased involvement of paraprofessionals as a factor that facilitates effective supervision while 55% (n=28) of the paraprofessionals perceived their involvement as factor that facilitates effective supervision. Moreover, 47% (n=16) of special educators, and 16% (n=8) indicated that smaller caseloads are perceived factors that facilitate effective supervision. Lastly, 35% (n=12) of special educators indicated that less paperwork for special educators could be a factor that facilitates effective supervision, while only 16% (n=8) of the paraprofessional respondents shared the same perception.

Responses to this question yielded a number of common emerging themes. Overall, both special educators and paraprofessionals selected similar words and phrases to indicate perceived factors or strategies that could facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision. There were however striking differences between the two groups' frequency of selection of specific words or phrases.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the methods special educators used in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings, paraprofessionals' perceptions of those methods, differences between the two groups' opinions, and perceived barriers and possible factors or strategies that could facilitate effective supervision. Although there is a wide range of literature covering a variety of topics regarding paraprofessional employment, roles and responsibilities, qualifications, and training, there has been limited research exploring paraprofessional supervision by special educators in inclusive settings. The limited research base, along with the fact that this study intended to explore differences between paraprofessionals and special educators' perceptions, was the rationale for this study. Pickett's (1999) model of the major supervisory skills was used in order to investigate what methods special educators used in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings.

Demographic data analysis revealed that the majority of the participants were females. Approximately, 97% of the special educators were female, whereas 3% were male. About 88% of the respondents indicated that they held Level II Vermont Professional License, while 6% held Level I Vermont Teacher's License, 3% held a Provisional License, and 3% were working under a waiver provided that he/she would furnish the district with documentation necessary for provisional license. Around 65% indicated that they obtained a Master degree, 32% Bachelor degree, and 3% had obtained a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS).

Teaching experience was another demographic statistic sought and about 38% of special educators indicated that they had between 4-7 years of teaching experience, 23%

indicated 8-13 years of teaching experience, 18% indicated between 2-3 years of teaching experience, another 18% indicated that they had over 13 years of teaching experience, and 3% reported that it was their first year of teaching.

About 76% of special educators indicated that they never received professional development in paraprofessional supervision, while 24% indicated that they had some training within the last five years. Special educators were also asked how proficient they considered themselves in supervision. This question was one of the Likert scale items, thus possible answers were either, strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree. About 6% responded strongly disagree, 18% disagree, 29% not sure, 41% agree, and 6% strongly agree.

Likewise, 38% of special educators indicated that they supervised paraprofessionals for less than three years, 35% had supervised paraprofessionals between 4-7 years, 18% had supervised paraprofessionals between 8-13 years, and 9% supervised paraprofessionals for more than 13 years. More importantly, about 71% of special educators indicated that they never took any courses pertaining to supervision in general, while 26% reported that they took one course, and 3% took more than one courses. Additionally, about 79% indicated that they did not take any courses in which specific class sessions were dedicated to supervision, while only 18%) indicated that one or two sessions in their courses during graduate and undergraduate studies were dedicated to paraprofessional supervision.

Special educators indicated average caseloads of students and about 41% case-managed 15-21 students, 29% between 9-14 students, 21% less than 8 students, and 9% had more than 22 students.

Demographic analysis of the data obtained from paraprofessional participants revealed that 94% were female and 6% were male. In order to gather data about the highest degree attained by paraprofessionals, item 3 of the demographics section of the paraprofessional survey was designed with six possible answers. From those responded, 41% indicated as their highest degree a high school diploma, 28% associate degree, 23% bachelor degree, and 8% (n=4) indicated as a master's as their highest degree.

When paraprofessionals were asked about how many teachers were considered to be their supervisors, 73% responded that they were supervised by one special educator, 18% were supervised by 2 special educators, and 10% were supervised by three or more supervisors. In obtaining information about the setting in which paraprofessionals work, data indicated that 61% of the respondents indicated that they work in the elementary school, 23% work in the high school, and 16% work in the middle school. With regard to experience, 27% indicated between 8-13 years of working experience, 22% indicated between 5-7 years of working experience, 20% indicated between 2-4 years of working experience, 14% indicated that this was their first year of working as paraprofessionals, and 18% indicated over 13 years of working experience.

Approximately 43% of the paraprofessional respondents indicated that they had obtained an associate or higher degree, 39% indicated that they had "met a rigorous standard of quality and have demonstrated through a formal assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics (or when appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness)," 10% indicated that they had met the standards through district supported programs of

necessary coursework, and 9% indicated that they had completed two years of study at an institution of higher education.

Responses to the third research question revealed that there were no significant differences between the special educators and paraprofessionals' perceptions about paraprofessional supervision. Overall, special educators indicated that they engaged in the five supervisory tasks somewhat consistently however teachers had a tendency to select the response 'never' across all five supervisory tasks less frequently than paraprofessionals. Also, paraprofessionals had a tendency to select the answer "Weekly" more frequently than special educators did across all five supervisory tasks.

Several emerging themes were recorded from responses to open-ended questions. Special educators and paraprofessionals selected a lot of the same words in describing perceived barriers to effective supervision as well as factors and strategies that could facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision. More specifically, both groups of respondents indicated that more guidance, trust, respect, improved communication, recognition of each others' work, and more paraprofessional involvement were critical to supervision. Respondents' agreement was overall evident in that many of the same words were used to describe barriers or facilitating factors to effective supervision. Based on their responses, participants seemed to agree that communication, experience, and training were factors affecting supervision. At the same time, both groups indicated that improved communication, more guidance, and training could be factors that facilitate effective supervision.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Review of current literature indicated that the supervision of paraprofessionals by special educators is a topic that has drawn limited attention. Although several studies, articles, and various publications addressed a number of issues pertaining to paraprofessionals, just a few of those explored supervision. Even though the significance of paraprofessionals' roles has been well documented (Blalock, 1991; Daniels & McBride, 2001; French, 1998; French & Chopra, 1999; Gartner & Riessman, 1974; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001; Hofmeister, Ashbaker, & Morgan, 1996; Jones & Bender, 1993; May & Marozas, 1981; Mueller, 2002; Pickett 2001; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003; Pickett & NEA, 1994; Villegas, & Clewell, 1998; Wallace, Shin, Bartholomay, & Stahl, 2001), review of limited research indicated that their supervision by teachers is minimal and inadequate (French, 1998; Pickett 1997).

The numbers of paraprofessionals have notably increased, and it is estimated that approximately 300,000 paraprofessionals are employed in supporting students with disabilities while the total number of paraeducators working in schools is estimated to be between 500,000 and 700,000 (The National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 2000). In response to calls for an overall improvement in education, new and reauthorized federal laws were enacted. The reauthorization of IDEIA 2004 and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Amendments 2001, also known as *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001, addressed paraprofessional employment, preparation and supervision. Both IDEIA and Title I of NCLB require that paraeducators provide instructional support under the direct guidance and supervision of qualified

personnel. Despite the requirements, Title I of NCLB however, does not clearly define what supervision is. This may have implications for teachers and paraprofessionals who work in programs funded by Title I of NCLB. Given the significance of the above federal laws, the increasing numbers of paraprofessionals employed in public schools, and the limited research of paraprofessional supervision, it was important to carry out this study. In addition, a number of factors contributed to the necessity for undertaking this study.

There has been limited or no formal training of teachers in paraprofessional supervision (French, 2001). While most authors agree that paraprofessionals are an integral part of education, and their supervision is equally important, limited existing literature offers a comprehensive understanding of what special educators are doing with regard to supervision. Furthermore, there is also evidence that reflects special educators' reluctance to supervise paraprofessionals (French, 2001; French & Pickett, 1997; Pickett & Gerlach, 2003). Therefore, additional research to explore paraprofessional supervision and special educators' supervisory practices is needed.

This study explored the methods special educators used in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings. Second, this study solicited paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision. Third, a comparison of special educator and paraprofessional perceptions of supervision was drawn. Fourth, it explored perceived barriers to effective supervision. Finally, this study intended to identify any factors or strategies that facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision. Analysis of the results of this study depicted current supervisory practices in a Vermont school district.

Surveys were distributed to all 71 paraprofessionals and 38 special educators in the school district. Fifty one paraprofessionals and 34 special educators responded and in total 85 surveys were returned and analyzed to answer the following questions:

1. What methods do special educators use in supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings?
2. What are the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding teacher supervision of their work?
3. Do the perceptions of special education teachers and paraprofessionals regarding paraprofessional supervision differ significantly?
4. What are the perceived barriers in providing effective paraprofessional supervision?
5. What factors or strategies facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision?

This chapter summarizes the results and discusses the findings of this study. It also offers recommendations based on the findings and suggestions for further study the topic.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of the data collected yielded several findings. Special educators' experience, training, and preparation for supervision were major themes in the responses. In addition, paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision were also obtained by this study. Finally, the perceptions of both groups regarding barriers to effective supervision, and their suggestions for possible factors or strategies that could facilitate effective supervision were also documented.

Special Educator Experience and Preparation in Supervision

Teaching experience of special educator participants varied widely. Although teaching experience widely-ranged from one to 13 years, the plurality of participants, about 38% had experience between four-seven years. Though special educators have been working alongside paraprofessionals for a long time, it was only recently when special educators' roles as supervisors became evident. At the same time, as the reauthorized IDEIA 2004 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Amendments 2001, also known as *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 require that paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of teachers, special educators are at best minimally trained and equipped to assume the role of supervisor.

Even though most of the teacher respondents indicated that they held Master's degrees, 65% (n=22), the overwhelming majority did not have any formal preparation or training in supervision of paraprofessionals. In fact, 71% (n=24) of special educators indicated that they had never taken any courses addressing supervision in general, while only 29% (n=10) took up to three courses that dedicated some time on supervision in general. Furthermore, about 79% (n=27) of the respondents indicated that they never took any courses that dedicated at least some class sessions in to paraprofessional supervision specifically, while 21% (n=6) indicated that they took courses which dedicated at least one class session specifically to paraprofessional supervision.

Clearly, federal regulations require that paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of special educators. It can be inferred that special educator respondents in this study indicated that they were not adequately prepared through formal coursework. Although special educators lacked that formal preparation, they nevertheless worked with

paraprofessionals providing, among other tasks, supervision. Results from this study indicated that special educators, as pointed out also by French (2001), may have been supervising paraprofessionals using their personal intuition and experience.

Special Educator Professional Development, Proficiency, and Experience

Even though federal mandates require that paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of special educators, it can be inferred that participants of this study did so without any inservice or preservice training. About 76% (n=26) of special educators indicated that they never received any professional development (inservice or otherwise) in supervision of paraprofessionals. However, about 24% (n=8) indicated that they received some sort of relevant professional development within the last five years. Further, more than 70% of special educators indicated that they have been supervising paraprofessionals for a length of time ranging from one to seven years. Respondents admitted that they did so while recognizing their limited proficiency in supervision. About more than half of special educators indicated limited or no proficiency in supervision, while 41% (n=14) suggested that they were somewhat proficient.

Approximately 29% (n=10) of special educator respondents indicated that they supervised one paraprofessional whereas about 26% (n=9) supervised two. In addition, 12% (n=4) of special educators supervised 3 paraprofessionals, 6% (n=2) supervised four paraprofessionals, 6% (n=2) supervised five paraprofessionals, and more than 20% (n=7) of the teacher respondents supervised about seven paraprofessionals. The above statistics could be interpreted as somewhat alarming because the supervision of one paraprofessional by special educators may be considered as difficult given lack of preparation and formal training. However, even more troubling is the fact that a great

number of special educators supervised more than three paraprofessionals and about a quarter of these teachers had under their supervision seven paraprofessionals.

Supervisory Skills

Special educators used a variety of methods in supervising paraprofessionals. Most of those methods were categorized based on Pickett's (1999) model of key supervisory functions. In order to obtain special educators' perceptions of the methods used to supervise paraprofessionals, a set of five supervisory skills were developed. These included orientation and role clarification, planning, task delegation, training and mentoring, and evaluation and performance monitoring. In order to obtain accurate information and assign significance in specific responses, each item within the five supervisory skills was offered with six possible answers. A Likert scale was used that contained the following six answers: *never, once, at least quarterly, at least monthly, at least weekly,* and *daily.*

Likert Scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	Once	At least quarterly	At least monthly	Weekly	Daily

Orientation and role clarification, along with evaluation and performance monitoring may be considered tasks that rarely happen or are part of an annual activity. However, existing literature suggested that (Giangreco et al., 2001; Jones & Bender, 1993; Wallace et al., 2001) role clarification is very important and paraprofessionals receive limited guidance in clarifying their roles. This was also reflected in the results from this study. More specifically, about 26% (n=9) of special educators provided some orientation and role clarification only once a year, while 8% (n=3) never did so. In

contrast, only 7% (n=2) of the respondents provided some orientation and role clarification on a daily basis. The significance of the above results is also indicated by the responses paraprofessionals provided regarding orientation and role clarification in the question that asked whether supervisors informed paraprofessionals about individual student needs (i.e., IEP). More specifically, while about 38% (n=13) of special educators, indicated that they informed their paraprofessionals of individual student needs at least weekly, only 19% (n=10) of paraprofessionals shared the same perception. Additionally, 33% (n=17) of paraprofessionals indicated that only once a year did their supervising teachers inform them about individual student needs, while only 3% (n=1) of special educators shared the same response. Responses to this specific item reflected the varied perceptions between the two groups.

Similarly, evaluation and performance monitoring, although very significant in the supervision of paraprofessionals, took place only once a year. More specifically, the overwhelming majority of special educators, 47% (n=14), indicated that they engaged in the task of evaluating and performance monitoring of their paraprofessionals only once a year. In particular, while 17% (n=6) of special educators never evaluated or monitored their paraprofessionals' performance, and 13% (n=5) did this quarterly, only 3% (n=1) indicated that they evaluated and monitored paraprofessional performance on a daily basis.

The significance of this supervisory task is also reflected in the responses to specific items and the agreement, or lack thereof, between participants' responses. More specifically, when special educators were asked whether they offered feedback regarding overall paraprofessional performance, about 15% (n=5) indicated that they engaged in

that task on a weekly basis. On the other hand, only 7% (n=4) of the paraprofessionals shared the same perception. Similarly, when asked whether supervising teachers monitored classroom activities, about 21% (n=7) indicated that they did it at least monthly, whereas only 7% (n=4) of the paraprofessionals shared the same answer. Probably not surprisingly, only 6% (n=2) of teachers selected the answer 'never' in response to the same question whereas about 27% (n=14) of the paraprofessionals indicated that supervising teachers never monitored classroom activities throughout the school year.

The above data revealed that although teachers engaged in many of the supervisory responsibilities, and although paraprofessionals' perceptions reflected similar views, there was a significant difference of opinion regarding respondents' perceptions on three items. First, respondents' perceptions as to whether special educators informed paraprofessionals of individual student needs differed significantly (Sig. = .005). Actually, about 3% (n=1) of special educators indicated that they informed paraprofessionals about individual student needs only once a year, while the same option, once a year, was selected by 33% (n=17) of the paraprofessional participants. Furthermore, 38% (n=13) of special educators indicated that they informed paraprofessionals about individual student needs at least weekly, while only about 19% (n=10) of the paraprofessionals shared the same response. The next item where special educators and paraprofessionals' perceptions differed significantly (Sig. = .002) was the one that asked whether paraprofessionals initiated activities/tasks independently. About 35% (n=12) of special educators indicated that paraprofessionals initiated activities/tasks on a daily basis, whereas about 71% (n=36) of paraprofessional respondents shared the

same response. On the other hand, about 9% (n=3) of special educator respondents indicated that paraprofessionals initiated activities/tasks independently once year whereas none of the paraprofessionals selected 'once a year' as a response to the same question.

Lastly, there were significant differences in responses to the item that asked whether special educators monitored classroom activities. As mentioned earlier, responses to this Likert scale item were, Never, Once a Year, At Least Quarterly, At Least Monthly, Weekly, or Daily. Interestingly, about 6% (n=2) of special educators and 28% (n=14) of paraprofessionals indicated that supervisors never monitored classroom activities. Also, 24% (n=8) of special educators, and 8% (n=4) of paraprofessionals indicated that supervisors monitored classroom activities at least monthly. Finally, while 9% (n=3) of special educators indicated that they monitored classroom activities daily, none of the paraprofessionals selected this answer.

Specific teacher responses indicating the perceived methods used for supervising paraprofessionals in inclusive settings were somewhat different than those of paraprofessionals. Although other studies, including French (2001), suggested that evaluation and performance monitoring along with corrective feedback are the responsibilities of an administrator, in this study both teachers and paraprofessionals indicated that special educators are the primary supervisors who fulfill that role.

Planning and task delegating were the two supervisory skill areas that special educator and paraprofessional responses were somewhat similar across the board. Several of the items under the above supervisory skills received consistent responses from both groups indicating that there is an agreement between special educators and paraprofessionals' perceptions of planning and task delegating. Existing research

indicated that overall, teachers are neither prepared nor feel comfortable to delegate tasks to paraprofessionals (French, 1998; French & Pickett, 1997). One conclusion drawn from analysis of the data is that both special educators and paraprofessionals viewed the former as managers rather than leaders who ought to be providing more mentoring and training, along with role clarification, guidance, and performance monitoring. More specifically, 30% (n=16) of the paraprofessionals, and 21% (n=7) of special educators agreed that task delegation took place on a daily basis. Special educators acting as managers, assigned specific tasks to paraprofessionals as they deemed necessary. Similarly, 31% (n=11) and 21% (n=10) of teachers and paraprofessionals respectively agreed that task delegation took place on a weekly basis.

This study is unique in the fact that while it explored both special educators and paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision, it also identified differences between the two groups' responses. In addition, two open-ended questions were used in order to elicit paraprofessional and special educator opinions about perceived barriers to effective supervision and factors or strategies that facilitate effective supervision.

There were no significant differences between special educators' and paraprofessionals' responses to the five supervisory skills. Although special educators and paraprofessionals' selected a number of similar words or phrases in responding to the question that addressed barriers to effective supervision, the frequency by which some of those words or phrases were used varied significantly. In addition, there were differences between special educators' and paraprofessionals' responses to the last research question that addressed factors or strategies that facilitate effective paraprofessional supervision.

In order to obtain specific information about the perceived barriers and facilitating strategies to effective supervision, emerging words and themes were identified and coded as they appeared in the written responses. The most commonly appearing words included the following: communication, trust, listening, planning, training, lack of time or no time, large caseloads, feeling uncomfortable, unclear roles, space, inexperience, guidance, meeting time, communicating expectations, mentoring, respect, improved communication, recognition, involvement, smaller caseloads, and less paperwork.

In response to what are the perceived barriers to effective supervision special educators and paraprofessionals indicated lack of time, poor communication, lack of trust, limited listening, insufficient planning, lack of training, feeling uncomfortable about supervising, large caseloads, unclear roles, limited space, and inexperience.

The most frequent words used by special educators in response to the question that addressed perceived barriers to effective supervision, were: a) time (or lack of time), b) communication, c) trust, d) listening, e) planning, f) training, g) large caseloads, h) feeling uncomfortable, j) unclear roles, i) space, and k) inexperience. The most frequently appearing words used by paraprofessionals in response to the question that addressed perceived barriers to effective supervision, were as follow: a) communication, b) trust, c) listening, d) planning, e) training, f) lack of time, and g) inexperience. Again, paraprofessionals' responses to the fourth question included several of the above mentioned words. These words and phrases were categorized by theme. Among the most commonly appearing themes were the concept of communication, trust, and time.

Communication as a barrier appeared in the responses of about 71% of special educators and 37% of paraprofessionals. The word trust appeared to be a barrier in 56%

of the special educators' responses whereas no paraprofessionals seemed to find that a barrier. Listening was also another word used by 24% of special educators in describing barriers to effective supervision while no paraprofessionals shared the same opinion. Similarly, teachers perceived planning as very important as the word appeared in the responses of 68% of those participants.

Training was also a favorite word to special educators as 59% of them used it to describe another barrier to effective supervision while paraprofessionals did not seem to share that opinion. Lack of time or limited time was also favored as indicated in 50% of special educators' responses. Large caseload seemed to have been also a barrier according to 50% of special educators. In addition 41% of special educators indicated that feeling uncomfortable about supervision was another barrier. About 56% of special educators and 22% of paraprofessionals selected in their responses lack of experience as a barrier to effective supervision.

In responding to what factors or strategies could facilitate effective supervision, special educators and paraprofessionals seemed to have more in common. Similar words and themes emerged based on analysis of each response. The following words were used by both groups: guidance, time to meet, communicating expectations, providing mentoring, trusting, respecting, improving communication, recognizing and involving paraprofessionals more in the process.

About 56% of the special educators and 31% of paraprofessionals selected guidance as a strategy or factor to facilitate effective supervision. However, improved communication, finding common time, recognizing each other, along with providing opportunities for greater involvement were the themes upon which both special educators

and paraprofessionals agreed. Although special educators indicated that smaller caseloads and less paperwork are factors that could effect supervision, paraprofessionals did not seem to share the same opinion. Overall, paraprofessionals and special educators shared similar perceptions regarding the five supervisory skills. However, their opinions differed significantly in few specific items. Moreover, when answering research questions four and five, paraprofessionals did not fully agree with special educators even though similar words were used by both groups in their responses.

Both groups of respondents used more or less similar words and phrases to describe perceived barriers to supervision and possible factors that facilitate effective supervision. However, the degree to which their selection of some of these words or themes was used differed substantially. For example, although 35% (n=12) of special educators indicated that more paraprofessional involvement could be a factor facilitating effective supervision, more paraprofessionals selected that word; about 55% (n=28) of paraprofessionals indicated that their involvement may facilitate effective supervision. Furthermore, while 47% (n=16) of special educators considered the large caseloads a barrier to effective supervision, only 16% (n=8) of the paraprofessionals indicated that large caseloads were a barrier to effective supervision. Finally, 35% (n=12) of special educators indicated that less paperwork could be a factor facilitating effective supervision, while only 16% (n=8) of paraprofessionals shared the same opinion.

Recommendations

As numbers of working paraprofessionals in inclusive settings continue to increase across the country, special educators are called to assume more roles and responsibilities. Special educators are leaders in their field and now as such are called to

also to supervise paraprofessionals. Legal mandates such as IDEIA and ESEA, also known as No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, have been recently reauthorized and require that paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of special educators. Current research indicated that special educators are not amply trained and appropriately prepared to respond to the challenges of supervision (Chisom, 2002; Floyd, 2004; French, 2001). This study was conducted in order to investigate current supervisory practices, explore paraprofessional perceptions of supervision, compare the opinions of the two groups, and identify barriers to effective supervision as well as factors or strategies that facilitate effective supervision.

As indicated by existing literature (French, 2001; Giangreco et al., 2001; Pickett and Gerlach, 2003) supervision of paraprofessionals is an integral part of the educational process. However, many feel that special educators are not trained, or do not feel comfortable to supervise thus affecting the effectiveness of work, and the provision of proper services to students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

It is important that institutions of higher education, in collaboration with local school districts, provide the necessary venues and create well designed programs that give plenty of opportunities to special educators and other professionals to expand their knowledge and skills in supervision. Ongoing training and professional development should be implemented by local school districts for all professionals.

Over the past decade, several authors have made significant contributions in developing material, designing strategies, and other preparation and training initiatives (Doyle, 1997; French, 2001; Pickett and Gerlach, 2003). Pickett (1999) has worked extensively in identifying a wide array of responsibilities and specific tasks that special

educators may implement in order to facilitate supervision. Beyond individuals, only two states, Minnesota and Washington have included in their teacher educator programs curricula that encompass criteria, standards, and courses for licensure and certification of teachers in supervision (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

There is a need for a national movement towards creating an environment that fosters better and improved teacher preparation. This preparation should include an array of courses and practicum that address, among others, supervision in general, but more specifically, paraprofessional supervision. Institutions of higher education may incorporate in their curricula a number of courses that explicitly address supervision of paraprofessionals, and subsequently provide the opportunity for onsite training. Furthermore, prospective special educators may be able to shadow administrators or other professionals who directly supervise other school personnel. When shadowing other professional supervisors, prospective and veteran special educators may be exposed to a number of strategies, techniques, and other useful methods of supervision through coaching.

At the local school district level, teachers should be afforded the opportunity to collaborate amongst themselves and with other professionals and paraprofessionals in order to develop a sense of a working community that fosters healthy relationships. More allotted time, increased number of meaningful meetings, and ongoing and looping feedback may prove to be very useful to special educators as well as others in developing the skills that allow them to become more effective supervisors. Collaborative planning time is essential for both special educators and paraprofessionals. Because paraprofessionals work directly with students spending more and more time in both, the

resource and inclusive classrooms, special educators need to explore options in order to find the time, and allow for opportunities to interact with supervisees.

In response to another overarching issue, respect of paraprofessionals, school districts may seriously consider fair compensation for those individuals who already spend additional time in activities and working directly with special education students. Paraprofessionals are indeed integral members of the academic community. However, in order to help those paraprofessionals to become more efficient, special educators and other professionals should consistently provide mentoring, role clarification, allow for planning time, and provide constructive and meaningful feedback. Ongoing fair evaluation and performance monitoring should be part of an array of highly developed skills that special educators possess and apply in their day-to-day work with paraprofessionals. Since special educators increasingly assume more responsibilities, evaluation and supervision of paraprofessionals has shifted away from administrators.

Implications for Further Research

Additional research is needed in order to obtain more generalizable data about supervision of paraprofessionals by special educators in inclusive settings. This study explored five questions. First, it investigated the supervisory methods used by 34 special educators in inclusive settings in a local school district. In addition, this study solicited the perceptions of 51 paraprofessionals regarding supervision by special educators. Furthermore, this study explored the differences in opinions between special educators and paraprofessionals regarding supervision. Finally, it sought perceived barriers of effective supervision, and possible factors or strategies that facilitate effective supervision. Perhaps, perceptions of other school personnel regarding paraprofessional

supervision may be valuable for future training and preparation of professional supervisors through specific programs.

Policy and regulations are issues pertinent to paraprofessional supervision. Although it is well documented (Doyle, 2002; Giangreco et al., 2001; French 2001; Pickett and Gerlach, 2003) that federal laws require that paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of special educators, it is still unclear to local schools and individuals, as evidenced by this study, as to how one should proceed with specific supervisory responsibilities. Additional research is needed in order to explore paraprofessionals' overall educational background, working experience, and collaboration skills. Title I of NCLB mandates that all paraprofessionals, as well as all educators, are highly qualified, however, local school districts seem to struggle in identifying criteria that render paraprofessionals qualified enough to meet federal standards.

Although surveys are an effective tool in collecting objective data about a topic, it is recommended that observations be used in collecting more comprehensive data about special educator supervision of paraprofessionals. Since surveys portray respondents' perceptions, observations may potentially be more useful because they allow the researcher to see first hand whether what is reported by respondents is actually happening and to what extend. However, this may also be a drawback if researcher's presence through observation affects the participants' behavior.

Conclusions

Conventionally, supervision has been considered a professional task falling onto administrators' shoulders. However, as numbers of paraprofessionals working in inclusive settings have been on the rise, special educators' roles and responsibilities have

also expanded to encompass the difficult task of supervising paraprofessionals. This study also confirms that all paraprofessional participants identified special educators as their primary supervisors.

Even though some of the special educator participants did not consider themselves effective supervisors, they clearly indicated that to a great extent this role has fallen on their shoulders. Although special educators engaged more frequently in supervisory skills, such as task delegation and planning, the majority of respondents indicated that ongoing evaluation and performance monitoring took place only once a year. It is gathered that on average, special educators had 4-13 years of teaching experience while the majority held Master degrees. On the other hand, more than 60% of the paraprofessionals held an associate degree or higher, and had at least two to four years while many of them had more than 13 years of teaching experience. These statistics indicated paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of professionals who mostly lack the training, and preparation for supervision.

The findings of this study confirmed what other authors have concluded that supervision of paraprofessionals is a key responsibility for special educators. This study was unique in that it offered data comparing teachers and paraprofessionals' perceptions of teacher supervisory practices. The results have implications with regards to clarifying current legal standards that address paraprofessional supervision, academic requirements for special educators, and professional development curricula. Given the growing reliance on paraprofessionals in inclusive settings and the limited research regarding their supervision, this study provides additional information regarding supervisory practices of special educators.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY: PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS REGARDING SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS WHO WORK IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

The purpose of this survey is to examine the perceptions of special education teachers regarding their supervision of paraprofessionals. Your responses will provide valuable information about the training of future special educators and the type of support current teachers could use in order to work more effectively with paraprofessionals. Your responses will also help identify barriers to paraprofessional supervision, and provide insights in to what strategies could be used to facilitate paraprofessional supervision. For the purposes of this survey a supervising teacher is defined as an individual who holds a special education teacher license and is responsible for supervising paraprofessionals who work with pupils classified as special education students.

DIRECTIONS: Please read carefully the questions below and select and mark with an X or a √ the answer that best describes your opinion.

Special Education Teacher Survey

Section 1: Demographics

1. Gender: □ Female □ Male	9. Number of other students (e.g., on EST, 504 plans) I work with per week: □ Less than 3 □ 4-6 □ 7-12 □ 13 or more
2. Currently, my Vermont Special Education license is: □ Level I □ Level II □ Provisional □ Other (please specify):	10. The students I work with are classified as*: □ Students with mild disabilities □ Students with moderate disabilities □ Students with severe disabilities *Disability refers to emotional, learning, ADD, language, etc. Check all that apply.
3. School setting where I work: □ High School □ Middle □ Elementary □ Preschool (EEE)	11. The students I work with are placed in: □ General education classes at least 80% of time □ General education class 25%-79% of time □ General education classes less than 25% of time
4. My teaching experience in years is: □ This is my first year teaching □ 2-3 □ 4-7 □ 8-13 □ Over 13 years	12. I had professional development (in-service training) pertaining to paraprofessional supervision within the last: □ 5 years □ 10 years □ longer than 10 years □ never
5. Highest degree of education: □ Bachelor's □ Master □ CAS □ Doctorate	13. I consider myself proficient in supervision of paraprofessionals (please check one): □ Strongly disagree □ Disagree □ Not sure □ Agree □ Strongly agree
6. In my undergraduate or graduate training I took courses pertaining to supervision in general. □ No □ Yes (if yes, how many):	14. Number of years I have been supervising paraprofessionals: □ Less than 3 □ 4-7 □ 8-13 □ 13 or more
7. In my undergraduate or graduate training I took courses that included *class sessions* dedicated to paraprofessional supervision? □ Yes □ No If yes, how many:	15. Number of paraprofessionals I supervise: □ None □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4 □ 5 □ 6 or more
8. Number of special education students on my caseload (i.e. students on IEP): □ Less than 8 □ 9-14 □ 15-21 □ 22 or more	If your answer to Question 15 above is "None," you may stop here with the survey. Otherwise, please continue with the survey.

Section 2: Supervision

	INSTRUCTIONS TO COMPLETE THIS PART OF THE SURVEY: For each statement below, please choose and mark with an **X** or √ the answer that best describes your opinion of your supervision of paraprofessionals **DURING THE COURSE OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR (2004-2005)**	1. Never	2. Once	3. At least quarterly	4: At least monthly	5: At least weekly	6: Daily
	Orienting and Clarifying Roles						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
16	I informed my paraprofessional(s) about school policies and regulations.						
17	I have set clear expectations regarding paraprofessional(s) roles/responsibilities.						
18	I informed my paraprofessional(s) about teaching strategies.						
19	I informed my paraprofessional(s) about techniques for managing student behavior.						
20	I informed my paraprofessional(s) about individual student needs (e.g., IEP goals).						
21	I provided my paraprofessional(s) access to and familiarize them with resources in the building (e.g., copier, resource room materials, library material).						
22	I discussed with my paraprofessional(s) the value of team approach.						
23	I informed my paraprofessional(s) about various approaches to implementing lesson plans I developed.						
	Planning						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
24	I scheduled and held meetings with my paraprofessional(s).						
25	I provided materials (such as books, worksheets) to my paraprofessional(s).						
26	I requested input from my paraprofessional(s) about student assignments/work.						
27	I provided **verbal** lesson plans to my paraprofessional(s).						
28	I provided **written** lesson plans to my paraprofessional(s).						
29	I provided student information (e.g., IEP, Behavior Plans) to my paraprofessional(s).						
30	I shared information about the curriculum in general with my paraprofessional(s).						
31	I involved my paraprofessional(s) in parent-teacher meetings.						
32	I encouraged my paraprofessional(s) to assist me in planning student activities.						
	Task Delegating						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
33	I communicated my expectations of paraprofessional(s)' duties prior to starting the work day.						
34	I involved my paraprofessional(s) in developing student assignments.						
35	I involved my paraprofessional(s) in maintaining and documenting records of student performance.						
36	I involved my paraprofessional(s) in developing learning activities for the students.						
37	My paraprofessional(s) initiated activities/tasks independently.						
38	I encouraged my paraprofessional(s) to assist in modifying curriculum and instructional activities.						

	INSTRUCTIONS TO COMPLETE THIS PART OF THE SURVEY: For each statement below, please choose and mark with an **X** or √ the answer that best describes your opinion of your supervision by your supervising special education teacher **DURING THE COURSE OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR (2004-2005)**	1. Never	2. Once	3. At least quarterly	4: At least monthly	5: At least weekly	6: Daily
	Training and Mentoring						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
39	I demonstrated instructional techniques to my paraprofessional(s).						
40	I demonstrated specific behavior management strategies to my paraprofessional(s).						
41	I provided specific curricular training (e.g., workshops in Math, Science) to my paraprofessional(s).						
42	I encouraged my paraprofessional(s) to initiate activities independently.						
43	I provided feedback to my paraprofessional(s) during the implementation of lessons I planned.						
44	I provided feedback to my paraprofessional(s) during supported study activities (e.g., while assisting students during study hall).						
45	I discussed with my paraprofessional his/her needs, and then we jointly decided what those needs are.						
46	I developed and provided mentoring activities for my paraprofessional(s).						
	Evaluation and Performance Monitoring						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
47	I plan to, or have evaluated my paraprofessional(s) overall performance.						
48	I plan to, or have offered feedback to my paraprofessional(s) regarding their overall performance.						
49	I documented my paraprofessional(s)' job performance.						
50	I monitored paraprofessional(s)' classroom activities.						
51	I scheduled and held meetings with my paraprofessional(s).						
52	For evaluation purposes, I scheduled a pre-observation meeting with my paraprofessional(s) on a mutually agreed day and time.						
53	For evaluation purposes, I discussed observation goals and objectives with my paraprofessional(s).						
54	For evaluation purposes, I scheduled a post-observation meeting with my paraprofessional(s) on a mutually agreed day and time.						
55	I offered feedback, and provided constructive criticism to my paraprofessional(s) based on the observation.						
56	I corrected my paraprofessional(s) when he/she provided inaccurate information while working directly with students.						
57	I adjusted the level of assistance my paraprofessional(s) provided to students.						
58	I assisted my paraprofessional(s) in managing student behavior.						
59	I provided direct feedback and corrected my paraprofessional(s) during instruction.						

Section 3: Open-ended Questions

60. In your opinion, what are the barriers to providing effective supervision to paraprofessionals?

61. What factors or strategies could facilitate effective supervision of paraprofessionals?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY: PERCEPTIONS OF PARAPROFESSIONALS REGARDING THEIR SUPERVISION BY SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS WHEN WORKING IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS.

The purpose of this survey is to examine the perceptions of paraprofessionals regarding their supervision by special education teachers. Your responses will provide valuable information about the training of future special educators and the type of support current teachers could use in order to work more effectively with paraprofessionals. Your responses will also help identify barriers to paraprofessional supervision, and provide insights in to what strategies could be used to facilitate paraprofessional supervision. For the purposes of this survey a supervising teacher is defined as an individual who holds a special education teacher license and is responsible for supervising paraprofessionals who work with pupils classified as special education students.

DIRECTIONS: Please read carefully the questions below and select and mark with an X or a √ the answer that best describes your opinion.

Paraprofessional Survey

Section 1: Demographics

1. Gender: □ Female □ Male	7. Number of teachers considered as my supervisor(s)? □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 or more
2. School setting where I work: □ High School □ Middle □ Elementary □ Preschool (EEE)	8. The number of students I work with is: □ Less than 4 □ 5-9 □ 10-15 □ 16 or more
3. My work experience in years is: □ This is my first year □ 2-4 □ 5-7 □ 8-13 □ Over 13 years	9. My primary supervisor is: □ Special Education Teacher □ General Education Teacher □ Principal (Instructional Leader) □ Special Education Coordinator □ Both General and Special Education Teachers □ Other (please specify):
4. Highest degree of education: □ GED □ High School Diploma □ Associate's Degree □ Bachelor's Degree □ Master's Degree □ Other (please specify):	10. Currently, I am classified as meeting one of the following standards: □ Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education □ Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree □ Met a rigorous standard of quality and have demonstrated through a formal assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in the instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics (or when appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness)* □ Other (please specify):
5. The students I work with are classified as: □ Students with mild disabilities □ Students with moderate disabilities □ Students with profound disabilities Check all that apply.	11. The students I work with are placed in: □ General education classes at least 80% of the time □ General education classes 25%-79% of the time □ General education classes at least 25% of the time.
6. The formal title of my job is:	12. The number of classrooms I work in during the day: □ 1 □ 3 □ 2 □ 4 □ More (please specify):

* Note: The local school district in coordination with the University of Vermont has developed a formal academic training and assessment process in order to assist paraprofessionals in meeting the Vermont standards in accordance to federal, state, and local mandates.

Section 2: Supervision

	INSTRUCTIONS TO COMPLETE THIS PART OF THE SURVEY: For each statement below, please choose and mark with an **X** or √ the answer that best describes your opinion of your supervision by your supervising special education teacher **DURING THE COURSE OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR (2004-2005)**	1. Never	2. Once	3. At least quarterly	4. At least monthly	5. At least weekly	6. Daily
	Orienting and Clarifying Roles						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
13	My supervising teacher informed me about school policies and regulations						
14	My supervising teacher has set clear expectations regarding my roles/responsibilities.						
15	My supervising teacher informed me about teaching strategies.						
16	My supervising teacher informed me about techniques for managing student behavior.						
17	My supervising teacher informed me about individual student needs (e.g., IEP goals).						
18	My supervising teacher provided me access to, and familiarized me with resources in the building (e.g., copier, resource materials, library material).						
19	My supervising teacher discussed with me the value of team approach.						
20	My supervising teacher informed me about various approaches to implementing lesson plans he/she has developed.						
	Planning						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
21	My supervising teacher scheduled and held meetings with me.						
22	My supervising teacher provided to me materials (such as books, worksheets).						
23	My supervising teacher requested input from me about student assignments/work.						
24	My supervising teacher provided to me verbal lesson plans.						
25	My supervising teacher provided to me written lesson plans.						
26	My supervising teacher provided to me student information (e.g., IEP, Behavior plans).						
27	My supervising teacher shared information about the curriculum in general.						
28	My supervising teacher involved me in parent-teacher meetings.						
29	My supervising teacher encouraged me to assist in planning student activities.						
	Task Delegating						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
30	My supervising teacher communicated his/her expectations of my duties prior to starting the work day.						
31	My supervising teacher involved me in developing student assignments.						
32	My supervising teacher involved me in maintaining and documenting records of student performance.						
33	My supervising teacher involved me in developing learning activities for the students.						
34	I initiated activities/tasks independently.						
35	My supervising teacher encouraged me to assist in modifying curriculum and instructional activities.						

Section 2: Supervision (continued)

	INSTRUCTIONS TO COMPLETE THIS PART OF THE SURVEY: For each statement below, please choose and mark with an **X** or √ the answer that best describes your opinion of your supervision by your supervising special education teacher **DURING THE COURSE OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR (2004-2005)**	1. Never	2. Once	3. At least quarterly	4. At least monthly	5. At least weekly	6. Daily
	Training and Mentoring						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
36	My supervising teacher demonstrated instructional techniques to me.						
37	My supervising teacher demonstrated specific behavior management strategies to me.						
38	My supervising teacher provided specific curricular training (e.g., workshops in Math, Science) to me.						
39	My supervising teacher encouraged me to initiate activities independently.						
40	My supervising teacher provided feedback to me during implementation of lessons I planned.						
41	My supervising teacher provided feedback to me during supported study activities (e.g., assisting students during study hall).						
42	My supervising teacher discussed my needs with me and then we jointly decided what those needs are.						
43	My supervising teacher developed and provided to me mentoring activities.						
	Evaluation and Performance Monitoring						
	During the course of the current school year (2004-2005):						
44	My supervising teacher evaluated my overall performance.						
45	My supervising teacher offered me feedback regarding my overall performance.						
46	My supervising teacher documented my job performance.						
47	My supervising teacher monitored classroom activities.						
48	My supervising teacher scheduled and held meetings with me.						
49	For evaluation purposes, my supervising teacher scheduled a pre-observation meeting with me on a mutually agreed day and time.						
50	For evaluation purposes, my supervising teacher discussed observation goals and objectives with me.						
51	For evaluation purposes, my supervising teacher scheduled a post-observation meeting with me on a mutually agreed day and time.						
52	My supervising teacher offered me feedback, and provided constructive criticism based on the observation.						
53	My supervising teacher corrected me when I provided inaccurate information while working directly with students.						
54	My supervising teacher helped me adjust the level of assistance I provided to students.						
55	My supervising teacher assisted me in managing student behavior.						
56	My supervising teacher provided direct feedback and corrected me during instruction.						

Section 3: Open-ended Questions

57. In your opinion, what are the barriers to providing effective supervision to paraprofessionals?

58. What factors or strategies could facilitate effective supervision of paraprofessionals?

APPENDIX C

Expert Panel Feedback Form

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to formally thank you for agreeing to review the instrument "SURVEY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SUPERVISION OF PARAPROFESSIONALS WHO WORK IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS." Enclosed please find a copy of the research questions that guide this study, the cover letter, and the actual survey instrument. Please review the cover letter, respond to the survey instrument, and provide your comments on the questions below. Please use the survey instrument's margins to provide additional comments on specific items of the survey. When you complete the surveys and the questions below, please return all papers to the secretary in the main office.

1. Did you find any of the survey items unclear? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If yes, which items were unclear and how would you change them?

2. Were the directions to how to respond to the survey clear? ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If, what changes would you recommend to better directions?

3. After reading the cover letter, would you be persuaded to respond to the survey?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Do you find the format and layout of the survey easy to follow and pleasing?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Please feel free to write below any suggestions for improving the survey and/or the cover letter.

Thank you for taking the time to review these materials. Please return all materials to the secretary at the student services department.

APPENDIX D

Letter to Participants

April 14, 2005

Dear Colleague:

Working in the field of education as a special educator, and currently a doctoral candidate attempting to finish my dissertation, I am aware of the type of work you do. Although challenging, it is very rewarding to work with students with disabilities. I understand that you are very busy and I realize that your time is valuable. However, I would like to request a few minutes of your time to help me complete my dissertation.

Currently I am conducting research and would like to explore special educators' and paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision of paraprofessionals. I requested the support of the school district during a monthly meeting and I was excited to hear my colleagues' responses of cheers. The survey you will be given, will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will provide information about teachers' and paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision, perceived barriers to effective supervision of paraprofessionals, and your opinions about possible solutions to overcoming those barriers. Your participation is voluntary and confidential. No names will be revealed to anyone for any reason. Please sign the enclosed consent forms to participate in the study. The forms of consent will be saved separately from the surveys. Surveys will be collected and analyzed.

As a small token of appreciation please accept the enclosed bag with candies. In addition, a drawing for a $50.00 gift certificate to University Mall will be held. To enter to that drawing you will need to complete the survey, and fill out the information card attached (Note: all names in drawing will be kept confidential).

Please complete the survey, sign the consent form, and return them both to the secretary of student services. If you have any questions, please contact Yannis Mavropoulos at 893-3230 ext. 551 or email at: yxmavr@wm.edu. I appreciate your assistance in my efforts to complete this promising research. Thank you in advance for your time and attention. Please take a few minutes to respond.

Sincerely,

Yannis Mavropoulos
Doctoral Candidate
The College of William & Mary

APPENDIX E

Variable Name and Coding for Data Entry

Item Number	Item	Variable Name (code)
1	Gender	male
2	License	license
3	Setting	setting
4	Experience	exper
5	Education	educ
6	Supervision Courses	super
7	Class sessions addressing paraprofessional supervision	parasup
8	Number of students on IEP	IEP
9	Number of other students	estpweek
10	Student classification	disable1
		disable2
		disable3
11	Student placement	placed
12	Professional development	devpast
13	Proficient in supervision	prosuper
14	Number of years supervising	supervyr
15	Number of paraprofessionals supervised	nparsup

Appendix F

Numeric Codes and Variable Names for Data Entry

Id = Number of survey (1, 2, 3, etc)

Teacher = If teacher survey then = 1, if paraprofessional survey then = 0

Male = TEACHER and PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 1

License = TEACHER Question 2

Setting = TEACHER Question 3
Setting = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 2

Exper = TEACHER Question 4
Exper = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 3

Educ = TEACHER Question 5
Educ = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 4

Disable1 = TEACHER Question 10
Disable1 = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 5

Disable2 = TEACHER Question 10
Disable2 = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 5

Disable3 = TEACHER Question 10
Disable3 = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 5

Super = TEACHER Question 6

Parasup = TEACHER Question 7

IEP = TEACHER Question 8

Title = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 6

Estpweek = TEACHER Question 9

Teasuper = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 7

Nstudent = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 8

Placed = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 11

Mysuper = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 9

Standard = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 10

Devpast = TEACHER Question 12

Prosuper = TEACHER Question 13

Superyr = TEACHER Question 14

Nparsup = TEACHER Question 15

Classroom = PARAPROFESSIONAL Question 12

Appendix F (continued)

Variable Names and Coding for Data Entry

Coding of key words from short responses to section III questions

Prefix 'tb' correlates to the 'barriers' question of the surveys.

Denoting:
tbtime = time/no time
tbcommun = poor communication
tbtrust = lack of trust
tblisten = not listening
tbplanni = no planning time
tbtraini = lack of training/inadequate training
tbnotime = no common time
tbuncomf = feeling uncomfortable about supervision
tbunclro = unclear roles
tbinexpe = inexperienced

Prefix 'ts' correlates to the 'possible solutions' question of the surveys.

Denoting:
tsmeet = set meeting time
tscomexp = communicate expectations
tsmentor = provide mentoring
tsimpcom = improving communication
tsrecogn = recognize/acknowledge hard work
tsinvolv = involve paraprofessionals in all aspects of education and ask/allow for input
tssmacas = smaller caseloads for special educators.

APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM

The general nature of this study entitled "Paraprofessional Supervision: A survey of special education teachers and paraprofessionals" conducted by Yannis Mavropoulos has been explained to me. I understand that I will be asked to complete a survey that will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. I further understand that my responses will be confidential and anonymity will be preserved and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any time. I also understand that any payment for participation will not be affected by my responses or by my exercising any of my rights. I am aware that I may report dissatisfactions with any aspect of this experiment to the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, Dr. Michael Deschenes 757-221-2778 or mrdesc@wm.edu). I am aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. My signature below signifies my voluntary participation in this project, and that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

Date Signature

_____

Print Name

THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (PHONE: 757-221-3901) ON APRIL 29, 2005 AND EXPIRES ON APRIL 28, 2006.

APPENDIX H
Consent for Conducting Research

Date: _____

410 Colchester Avenue
Burlington, VT 05401
(802) 578-9456

Dr. Holden Waterman
Superintendent of Public Schools
Milton Town Public Schools
120 Herrick Avenue
Milton, VT 05468

Dr. Waterman:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Policy, Planning and Leadership program at The College of William & Mary. My proposed dissertation study focuses on special educators' and paraprofessionals' perceptions of supervision of paraprofessionals. I am interested in conducting research in your school district because this particular school system embraces the model of full inclusion of students with special needs to general education inclusive classrooms.

I have met with Tim Dunn, Coordinator of Student Services for Milton Town School District who, pending approval is willing to support this study and agrees that it will provide valuable and pertinent information to better inform our professional practice. The study will be descriptive in nature and involve the use of an anonymous, confidential survey instrument. The survey instrument will serve as the sole method of data collection. It is anticipated that findings and conclusions from this study will identify potential areas for future research, and provide information to assist with preparing preservice programs and inservice training.

Special education teachers and paraprofessionals will be sought to participate in this study. Those who agree to participate will be asked to sign consent forms, complete the survey, and return it to the secretary of student services. For their participation each teacher will receive a minimum incentive (candy bag) and have the opportunity to participate in a drawing to receive a gift certificate in the amount of $50.00 for the winning teacher participant, and one gift certificate in the amount of $50.00 to the University Mall. Participants will be assured that their right to confidentiality will be honored. Neither the school division nor participants in the study will be identified or associated in any way with the information provided. Upon completion of the study a copy of the dissertation will be provided for the Milton Town Coordinator of Student Services.

This letter is eliciting your support for this study, pending final approval of the Human Subjects Review Board at The College of William & Mary. Enclosed you will find a brief description of the study, the survey instrument, and additional information that will be sent to participants. After reviewing the enclosed information, I hope that you will grant permission for this research to be completed within your school division. I will contact you to answer any questions or provide additional information. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address and telephone number or by e-mail at The College of William & Mary at yxmavr@wm.edu. Thank you for you time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Yannis Mavropoulos
Doctoral Candidate
The College of William & Mary