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ABSTRACT

This final report discusses the activities and outcomes of a project that provided training on the Paraeducator Supervision Academy (PSA) Model (curriculum, instructional materials, and supervision of paraprofessionals) to faculty who will prepare future school professionals. Training was provided to faculty and preservice students in schools and colleges of education, faculty in related services programs, staff developers and in-service school professionals, and parents in 32 replication sites in 21 states and in the Department of Defense schools. Each demonstration consisted of two full days of training of potential trainers, as well as teachers and related services personnel. It addressed coordination among service providers by demonstrating the use of the package to multi-disciplinary teams. A total of 1,137 people participated in the training. Pre- and post-test self-perceived skills change data show significant differences in skill level. Interviews with 22 participants found that 77% of participants were using the concepts, activities, or materials presented in the demonstrations in some way. A 20-minute videotape was also developed during the course of the study discussing building better working relationships with paraprofessional school personnel and focusing on the work of three teachers at different grade levels and the students and paraeducators associated with them. (CR)

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ED 481 023

# Final Performance Report

## PSA –Outreach Project

H324R980083

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Paraeducator Supervision Academy (PSA)
## An Outreach Project Proposal (CFDA 84.324R)

The PSA Outreach project provided training to faculty and preservice students in schools and colleges of education, faculty in related services programs, staff developers and inservice school professionals, and parents in 32 replication sites. The primary goal of the training was to provide the PSA Model, curriculum, instructional materials, and background knowledge regarding the supervision of paraprofessionals to faculty who will prepare future school professionals. The delivery model relied on the assembly of a multi-disciplinary audience, including parents of children with disabilities, at the replication site.

The 1997 amendments to IDEA permit paraeducators to assist in the delivery of services to children with disabilities provided the paraeducator is trained and appropriately supervised. Unfortunately, school professionals tend to have little preparation to direct the work of paraeducators and most currently employed paraeducators perform their work with little accountability. There is great concern that poorly supervised and inadequately trained paraeducators may undermine the intended outcomes of students' IEPs.

Part of the problem is that few faculty members in Schools or Departments of Education in Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) have first-hand knowledge of paraeducator responsibilities, and fewer have texts or materials to provide appropriate information to future teachers and related service providers. So, new teachers are no better prepared than seasoned teachers. Moreover, few staff developers in LEAs are prepared to provide inservice training to teachers who arrive unprepared at the district's doorstep. This project provided a training model, a set of materials, and technical assistance to implement training at multiple levels.

*Project Goals:*

1. To demonstrate the Paraeducator Supervision Academy model at 32 replication sites.
2. To provide ongoing technical assistance to IHE faculty and LEA staff developers.

*Importance:*

This project disseminated the PSA Model for preparation of school professionals who supervise paraeducators. It addresses the coordination among service providers by demonstrating the use of the package to multi-disciplinary teams including teacher preparation and related services faculty in IHEs as well as LEA staff developers, school professionals and parents.

Table of Contents

PROJECT BRIEF DESCRIPTION ..... 4
REPORT OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES ..... 5
The Participants ..... 9
*Position Titles* ..... 9
*Ethnicity of Participants* ..... 9
*Selected Presentations Regarding PSA Outreach at Conferences* ..... 11
*Edited publications* ..... 12
*Book and Chapter citations* ..... 13
REPORT OF PROJECT EVALUATION GOALS AND OUTCOMES ..... 13
Data Collection / Instruments ..... 13
*Pre-Post Self-Assessment of Skills* ..... 14
*Levels of Use Interview Protocol* ..... 15
*Researcher Roles* ..... 17
*Data Analysis* ..... 21
FINDINGS ..... 22
Effectiveness of Demonstrations ..... 23
*Pre and post perceived skills self-analysis regarding content learned* ..... 23
*Unsolicited email and phone message data* ..... 37
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION ..... 41
FUTURE PLANS ..... 42
SUMMARY ..... 43
REFERENCES ..... 44
APPENDIX ..... 44

## PROJECT BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The PSA Outreach project was developed to promote preparation of preservice and inservice teachers in the skills necessary for them to work effectively with paraeducators. The primary audience was faculty in schools and colleges of education and district-based staff developers and administrators. The secondary audience included inservice school professionals (teachers, administrators, and related services professionals) in 32 replication sites.

The primary goal of the training was to provide the Paraeducator Supervision Academy (PSA) Model, curriculum, instructional materials, and background knowledge to faculty who will prepare future and current professionals in the supervision of paraeducators. The delivery model relies on the assembly of a multi-disciplinary audience at the replication site.

The background and rationale for the project built on the 1997 amendments to IDEA that specifically permitted paraeducators to assist in the delivery of services to children with disabilities provided the paraeducator was trained and appropriately supervised. Unfortunately, school professionals have had no preparation in directing the work of paraeducators and most currently employed paraeducators perform their work with little direction and little accountability. There is great concern that poorly supervised and inadequately trained paraeducators may undermine the intended outcomes of students' IEPs.

Moreover, few school of education faculty members in Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) have first-hand knowledge of paraeducator responsibilities, and fewer have texts or materials to provide appropriate information to future teachers and related service providers. While generally it is true that staff developers in LEAs are better prepared to provide state-of-the-art training to inservice professionals, in this case they lack materials, resources and knowledge to fill the gap.

This project provided a training model as well as technical assistance in the implementation of the model. It addressed coordination among service providers by demonstrating the use of the package to multi-disciplinary teams including teacher preparation and related services faculty in IHEs as well as LEA staff developers, school professionals and parents.

## REPORT OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

The original PSA Outreach action plan consisted of two major goals, and numerous objectives and activities were associated with each goal. This section of the report is organized in outline form with narrative information within each section.

**Goal 1. Demonstrate the PSA Model at 32 replication sites in 3 years.**

***Objective 1.1. Put finishing touches on the PSA Model Package***

**Activity 1.1.1.** Research and develop reading materials packet

The readings we initially assembled for the audiences consisted of the following citations. We determined the selections based on the background knowledge we believed that potential trainers would need to provide teachers with preparation on paraeducator supervision. At that point, there were few articles appropriate for these purposes.

Council for Exceptional Children. (1998). The knowledge and skill standards for beginning paraeducators of children with exceptionalities. In CEC (Ed.). What every special educator must know: The international standards for the preparation and licensure of special educators, 3rd edition.

French, N.K. & Pickett, A.L. (1997). Paraprofessionals in Special Education: Issues for Teacher Educators. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 20*(1) 61-73.

French, N. K. (1996). A case study of a speech-language pathologist's supervision of assistants in a school setting: Tracy's story. *Journal for Children's Communication Development, 18*(1), 103-110.

French, N. K. (1998). Working together: Resource teachers and paraeducators. *Remedial and Special Education, 19*(6) 357-368.

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (1999). Learning disabilities: Use of paraprofessionals. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 22*, 23-30.

Rueda, R., & DeNeve, C. (1999). How Paraeducators Build Cultural Bridges in Diverse Classrooms. *Community Circle of Caring Journal, 3*(2), 53-55 [Online]. Retrieved from: http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/paraed/Rueda_DeNeve_article.html

Over the project period we added articles written by the principle investigator. These articles were included as examples of handouts trainers could use with their students.

French, N. K. (2000). Taking time to save time: Delegating to paraeducators, *Teaching Exceptional Children, 32*(3), 79-83.

French, N. K. (1999). Paraeducators: Who are they and what do they do? *Teaching Exceptional Children, 32*(1), 65-69.

French, N. K. (1999). Paraeducators and teachers: Shifting roles. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 32*(2), 69-73.

Up to 10 copies of the textbook, entitled *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach,* edited by Pickett and Gerlach, was also supplied to key participants at each demonstration site. It included important information about roles and responsibilities, ethical standards, teamwork, and the managerial aspects of paraeducator supervision. Although French, the principle investigator, authored the longest chapter in the text, she received no royalties or other financial benefits from the purchase of the text.

**Activity 1.1.2.** Locate standards, legislation, guidelines for paraeducator employment

This activity involved reviewing state websites, contacting state education agency personnel, and assembling relevant legislation, policies, practices, handbooks or other relevant information for each state. Using the resulting database, we provided customized training materials to the participants in each state in which we held a demonstration.

**Activity 1.1.3.** Negotiate video production work

We sought bids from various companies regarding the production of the video. In the end, we returned to the university media center and determined that the facilities on campus were more affordable, and just as professional as those found elsewhere. We negotiated price, filming quality, editing styles, and various other production details. Our total costs for the video remained within the budgeted amount.

**Activity 1.1.4.** Create story board for video

In the first continuation report, we noted that this aspect was behind schedule because of the release of an unsatisfactory employee. We managed to bring the project up to schedule within six months. We wrote the script, created the story board, and established a filming schedule.

**Activity 1.1.5.** Identify school professionals to participate in filming

At each site, we collected permission forms from the parents of every child included in the video, as well as the teachers and paraeducators. None of the featured "talent" was paid for their time.

**Activity 1.1.6.** Film video segments and on-site activities

We filmed in three different schools, using two TV quality video cameras, shooting about 24 hours worth of both "A" and "B" footage. We focused on the work of three teachers at different grade levels and the students and paraeducators associated with them.

**Activity 1.1.7.** Final editing of video segments

We hired a professional voice actor to read the script which we then edited into the footage and the audio sequences recorded in the schools. The final editing required numerous steps and many reviews of draft products. In the end, we had a 19 minutes video that summarized all aspects of the PSA demonstration. We provided multiple copies of the video to each demonstration site, as they requested. This ranged from as many 60 copies in Alabama, to 28 in Iowa, and as few as one or two in the remaining sites.

**Activity 1.1.8.** Create forms to evaluate the demonstration of PSA

We used pre and post tests that had been developed for our use in Colorado to assess participants' perceptions of their own knowledge and skills before and after training during the first 2 years of the project, but switched to a new single instrument that we developed after monitoring the results of these pre and post assessments for 18 months. The results of this aspect of evaluation will be discussed further in the evaluation section of this report.

***Objective 1.2. Select 10-11 sites per year (32 sites in three years).***

**Activity 1.2.1.** Advertise through national journals, newsletters, the web page

Although first year sites had already been selected and key contacts had written letters of support prior to the start of the project, the actual negotiations for demonstrations began in earnest only after the award letter was received by the university and that award

letter was dated September 18, 1998 – well after the school-year schedule had been established. Thus the first demonstration was delayed until the following summer.

**Activity 1.2.2.** Submit proposals to present at conferences

While waiting to present the first demonstration, the PI began in earnest to solicit agreement from other host sites. During the first project year, the PI submitted 8 proposals to present at national and regional conferences, made numerous phone calls to colleagues (e.g. IHE faculty members in schools of education or related services programs, CSPD coordinators in SEAs, Part C coordinators in lead agencies) across the country to generate interest.

**Activity 1.2.3.** Develop and disseminate memos, flyers

We developed and disseminated memos to every SEA, and made follow up phone calls to those that responded. We developed a flyer and a tri-fold brochure that explained the benefits of hosting a demonstration. The PI created a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the content of the PSA demonstration, the rationale and research behind the content, and explained the benefits and costs of hosting a demonstration. The PowerPoint presentation was used at 8 subsequent conferences.

**Activity 1.2.4.** Advertise in pre-conference materials.

We were only able to add flyers to folders and pre-conference materials for three of the conferences.

**Objective 1.3.** ***Demonstrate the PSA Model.***

**Activity 1.3.1.** Meet with stakeholders to discuss implementation of the PSA Model.

This activity was the most time consuming of all. Because the concept was new to many people, the telephone and face-to-face conversations took much longer than anticipated. The PI spent anywhere from 12 – 18 hours of phone and face to face conversations and sent numerous lengthy email messages to establish each of the initial site demonstrations. Some site demonstrations never materialized in spite of long hours of conversations, email conversations, letters and transfer of materials. In each of those cases, the contact person failed to follow through on arranging for the session. In some cases, the lack of follow-through was related to a lack of support from other key stakeholders in the state. However, those who heard about the demonstrations via conferences and heard the PowerPoint

presentation required much less time, many of their questions having been answered via PowerPoint presentation and face to face conversations at conferences.

**Activity 1.3.2.** Demonstrate the PSA Model to the assembled audience

We provided 32 demonstrations at sites in 21 states and in the Department of Defense schools (at their expense rather than the expense of the project). Each demonstration consisted of two full days of training of potential trainers (including university faculty, staff developers from schools districts, community college personnel, SEA representatives, and school administrators) as well as teachers and related services providers. We deliberately established audiences that consisted of participants with various roles in education. We wanted the potential trainers to see and hear for themselves the types of concerns and issues that teachers face every day and the lack of supports and supportive policies that they confront in their daily work with paraeducators. We also wanted them to hear, first hand, the answers available to teachers and related services providers and how the materials could be used to respond to the real problems of practice.

## The Participants

### *Position Titles*

A total of 1137 people participated in the 32 PSA trainings. Participant titles included 'professor' (29), 'administrator' including directors of special education, principals, assistant principals (189), 'consultant' (9), 'staff development coordinator', 'related services' (47) 'teacher' (526), 'counselor' (3) 'paraeducator' (88), 'state department of education' (30), 'parent' (2), and 'paraeducator' (88). Many participants failed to list their job title and those are unknown.

### *Ethnicity of Participants*

Table 1 shows the known participant ethnicities. The majority of participants were Caucasian, however a large number (425) of participants chose not to disclose their ethnicity. The recollection of trainers is that the number of African-American and Asian participants would be significantly higher if all participants had provided ethnicity information.

Table 1

Participant Ethnicity

| African-Am | Asian | Hispanic | Native American | Caucasian | Multi | Blank or Missing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 60 | 6 | 34 | 7 | 603 | 2 | 425 |

**Activity 1.3.3.** Discuss incorporating PSA into existing IHE curriculum and programs

We held evening and lunch-time conversations with potential trainers at each demonstration site to consider ways to incorporate the materials into existing curriculum at IHEs and into staff development programs in LEAs. Potential trainers were given the email addresses and other contact information for project staff.

**Activity 1.3.4.** Make mini-grants available to defray demonstration hosting costs

Mini-grants were available to all demonstration sites. These were advertised in the PowerPoint presentation at conferences and were mentioned during numerous conversations with possible hosts. However, only 7 host sites requested mini-grant funds, leaving unused funds in that budget line to be moved into salary so that we could complete the remaining project activities during a fourth-year, no-cost time extension. During the fourth year, we completed the remaining demonstrations and provided significant amounts of consultations and ongoing support to site hosts in promoting the incorporation of the content into teacher preparation efforts in the state.

**Goal 2. Provide ongoing technical assistance to IHE faculty and LEA staff developers.**

**Objective 2.1.** Provide consultation and technical assistance via email and phone

We provided extensive follow up via email and telephone. A thematic analysis of email and phone conversation notes is included in the section on Evaluation Goal 2.

**Activity 2.1.1.** Provide timely feedback based on pre and post test data to participants

Although we have now analyzed all of the pre and post self-assessment data, we did not share it with participants. As we prepared to do so, we realized that this was not of significant interest to participants who were more concerned about how to use the materials and incorporate the concepts into practice.

**Activity 2.1.2.** Provide participants with revisions and material updates.

We used email to provide participants with revisions and updates. Even now, four and a half years after the start of the project, we get requests from participants to update them on new

events and materials for training purposes. For example, the following message arrived on 5/22/03.

*Dear Dr. French:*

*I attended a workshop you led for the Kaiserslautern School District back in SY1999-2000 regarding working with paraprofessionals. I have since moved to the Virginia Beach City Public Schools division, and will be co-leading 2 division staff development workshops about issues involving paras (sic) in special education classrooms. Would it be possible for you to send me some of the information from the workshop? Or, if you have anything more current, or different, that you think might be helpful, that would be fine, too. Thanks so much for your time and attention.*
*Sincerely, Anne S...*

**Activity 2.1.3.** Update all participants via the PSA Web Page

The PSA webpage contained all of the worksheets and copies of the other materials that participants received, so that they could access additional copies and have them in electronic format as well. When the project ended, we removed the separate project webpage and added the materials to the PAR$^2$A Center website, so the worksheets and other materials are there for the use of people who need them.

**Activity 2.1.4.** Collect implementation ideas to include in an on-line "handbook"

We didn't do this. Again, when we reached the point where we had enough information to publish on the website, we found that each situation was so unique that solutions were rarely transferable from one context to the next. Therefore, we elected to provide individual assistance rather than trying to write a handbook.

**Objective 2.2. Provide Annual Networking Meetings**

**Activity 2.2.1.** Establish dates and location for annual networking meeting

**Activity 2.2.2.** Arrange and hold a networking meeting

We have not held networking meetings as originally planned. However, we have caused networking to occur by connecting people who had similar problems of practice and assisting them in collaboratively seeking solutions.

**Activity 2.2.3.** Disseminate information about PSA at conferences

We have disseminated information about PSA at a multitude of conferences.

*Selected Presentations Regarding PSA Outreach at Conferences*

*Principles for Establishing High Quality Training Programs for Paraeducators: Beyond The One-Shot Workshop!* Paper presented at the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, May 1-3, 2003, Los Angeles, CA.

*The PAR²A Center Models.* Paraprofessional Special Interest Group Meeting, National Association of Bilingual Education Conference, January 29 – February 1, 2003. New Orleans.

*The Best Kept Secret: What Teachers Should Know (but don't) About Paraeducators: Are we preparing teachers for the real world?* February 24, 2002, AACTE Conference, New York

*Preparing school professionals to supervise paraprofessionals: One district's journey.* November 16, 2001. 24th Annual Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children Teacher Education Division, St. Petersburg. FL.

*Preparing school professionals to supervise paraprofessionals: One district's journey.* July 22, 2001, IASA Conference, Warsaw, Poland

*Training Special Education and ESL/Bilingual Paraprofessional,* paper presented at the NRC Annual Convention, May 12, 2001, Madison, WI

*Training Special Education and ESL/Bilingual Paraprofessionals,* paper presented at the CEC Annual Convention, April 20, 2001, Kansas City, MO

*Preparation and Roles of Paraprofessional Personnel and the Professionals Who Supervise Them.* An Invited presentation at the Office of Special Education Programs Project Director's Meeting, February, 22, 2001Washington, DC.

*Preparing Teachers to Supervise Paraprofessionals in Special Education: Implications for TED.* Panel presentation with Anna Lou Pickett, Teacher Education Division Conference, Las Vegas, NV, November, 2000.

*Title I Paraprofessionals: The Controversy.* 31st Annual Title I Parent Involvement Conference. October, 2000, Denver, CO

*Preparing School Professionals to Supervise Paraprofessionals.* Eighth Annual CSPD Conference on Leadership and Change, May, 2000, Alexandria, VA

Moreover, the findings of the PSA have been published in a variety of forms. This project made a major contribution to the content of several chapters and a book written by the PI also listed below.

*Edited publications*

French, N. K. (2000). Preparing school professional to supervise paraprofessionals. In K. Murray (Ed.), 8th Annual CSPD Conference on Leadership and Change Monograph. (pp. 145-150). Arlington,

VA: Office of Special Education Programs and National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

French, N. K. (1999). Paraeducator Supervision Academy: An Outreach Project to Prepare School Professionals to Supervise Paraeducators. In K. Murray (Ed.), 7th Annual CSPD Conference on Leadership and Change Monograph. (pp. 60-63). Arlington, VA: Office of Special Education Programs and National Association of State Directors of Special Educati

*Book and Chapter citations*

*French, N. K. (2003). Managing paraeducators in your school: How to hire, train, and supervise classified staff. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.*

*French, N. K. (2003). Maximizing the Services of Paraeducators. In J. Burnette (Ed.). Thriving as a Special Educator. (pp. 31-40). Arlington, VA: CEC Publications.*

*French, N. K. (2003). Management of paraeducators. In A.L. Pickett and K. Gerlach (Eds.) Working with paraeducators in special education: A team approach, 2nd Edition. (pp. 97-171). Austin, TX: Pro-ed, Inc.*

## REPORT OF PROJECT EVALUATION GOALS AND OUTCOMES

We collected data using three different collection methods from multiple sources to address evaluation goals 1 -3 and to answer the corollary questions assumed in the three evaluation goals. The three goals and corollary questions were:

Evaluation Goal 1: Determine the effectiveness of demonstrations as a dissemination device.

Question 1: How effective were the demonstrations?

Question 2: Did the participants perceive that they had gained knowledge and skills as the result of the demonstration?

Evaluation Goal 2: Determine the quality of the follow up support provided by the project

Question 1: To what extent were the participants satisfied with the quality and amount of support provided by the project?

Evaluation Goal 3: Evaluate the satisfaction of the participants regarding the quality of the Trainers Package.

Question 1: To what extent were participants satisfied with the quality of the demonstrations and materials?

### Data Collection / Instruments

We collected data in three different ways, using two different instruments. Each data collection method addressed multiple questions.

*Pre-Post Self-Assessment of Skills*

First, we used questionnaires with 47 items that addressed the self-perceived skills of participants regarding each of the topics presented during training. Initially we administered the questionnaire prior to and then subsequent to the demonstration / training. Thus we asked about participants' perceptions of their knowledge and skills prior to and subsequent to training only after they had completed the training.

However, we changed the form we used to collect information only at the end of the 2-day session. We did so for numerous reasons. First, the presenter traveled alone to the demonstrate sites without a clerical person or assistant to help with managing material distribution, data collection, and other logistics. Although the host sometimes helped with these functions, we could not rely on this source of assistance. It was difficult for the presenter to remember to distribute forms at two different times.

Second, some participants came late or left early, making it difficult for the presenter to remember to collect forms from those stragglers. Third, because of the various entry and exit times of participants, pre-test and post-test forms could not always be matched one-to-one. Thus, we quickly realized that our intent of comparing the pre-test score to the post-test score of every individual was not realistic under these circumstances.

Third, we noted some problems in the first sets of data. When we ran initial descriptive statistics (including 'crosstabs') on the first sets of data we had many empty cells because of missing data and there were some cases where the participant actually reported a lower self-rating on a topic after instruction had occurred. Moreover, discrepancies existed between the verbal feedback to the trainer at the end of the demonstration, email conversations subsequent to the demonstrations, the evaluation forms completed by participants, all of which tended to be very complimentary and positive, and these pre and post self-assessments that showed their skills to be slightly lower subsequent to the training. It seemed difficult to believe that participants' knowledge and skills had actually diminished in the course of two days of study on the topic.

As we began to explore the reasons for these findings, we found that others who were trying to evaluate outcomes of professional development activities had encountered a similar phenomenon and had named it "Response-shift bias." Response-shift bias named the human tendency to revise the internal standard for judging their knowledge and skills or to overestimate their knowledge and skills on the pretest and then to change their frame of reference during training because of the knowledge they gained about the subject during training.

Retrospective pretests are one way to control for response-shift bias (change in perception of functioning after participation in group) and they are more in agreement with observed behaviors and other means of behavioral measurement (Howard, 1980; Pohl, 1982; Pratt, McGuigan & Katzev, 2000). Thus we began collecting all information about participants' perceptions of their own skills subsequent to the training.

*Levels of Use Interview Protocol*

We also conducted Levels of Use interviews with selected participants to identify their use of the concepts and materials, their satisfaction with the quality of the materials, and their understanding of the concepts and the materials after participating in a demonstration. The Levels of Use interview protocol was developed as part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), a model developed in the 1970's to assess, facilitate, and evaluate the change process. This model was integral to the design of the project, so the use of the instruments was appropriate.

The CBAM model includes three diagnostic dimensions: (a) Stages of Concern (SoC), (b) Levels of Use (LoU), and (c) Innovation Configuration Map (ICM). The Levels of Use (LoU) interview and Innovation Configuration Map (ICM) were the CBAM instruments used in this evaluation. The Levels of Use interview assesses where participants are in their current use of concepts and materials and the integration of these concepts and tools into their programs. The ICM specifies the change agent's intended use of the materials, concepts, and activities. The LoU interview data have been shown to have a .98 correlation with observational data in other studies of innovation adoption (Hall & Hord, 1987).

There are eight, non-sequential, levels of use:

*Level 0 – Non-Use*

The participant has little or no knowledge of the innovation, has no involvement with the innovation, and is doing nothing to become involved.

*Level I – Orientation*

The participant is acquiring information about the innovation, exploring its value, and exploring its demands.

*Level II – Preparation*

A date for implementation has been set, and the participant is preparing for use.

*Level III – Mechanical Use*

The participant focuses on the short-term, day-to-day use of the innovation. Changes in use are made to meet the participant's own needs rather than the needs of students. The focus is on a step-by-step implementation and often results in a disjointed and superficial use.

*Level IVA – Routine*

The participant's use of the innovation is stabilized, few if any changes are being made, and little preparation is given to improving use of the innovation or its impact.

*Level IVB – Refinement*

The participant varies the use of the innovation to increase impact on students. Variations are based on knowledge of both short and long-term consequences for the student. The focus is on the student.

*Level V – Integration*

The participant combines own efforts in using the innovation with that of colleagues. In teaming with other colleagues the participant is working to achieve a collective impact on the student. The focus is on the student.

*Level VI – Renewal*

The participant is reevaluating the quality of the innovation and is seeking major modifications or alternatives to the present innovation. The participant is examining new developments in the field and exploring new goals for self and the system. The focus is on the student.

The appropriate or desired LoU level is dependent on the innovation, the goals of the project, and the amount of time that has passed since the introduction of the innovation. In this project, the goal is to have as many of the IHE, administrative, and staff developer participants as possible routinely engaged in training teachers to effectively direct the work of paraeducators. The interviews were conducted well after the demonstrations. For some participants, it was as little as one year. For others, it was as much as two years. In the meanwhile, many email and phone conversations took place between project staff and participants. It was reasonable to expect that at least some of the participants would be able to reach the level of routine use in the intervening time period.

Because of time and logistical constraint (sites throughout the United States), face-to-face interviews, typical for Levels of Use interviews (Hall & Hord, 1987) were not possible. We first tried to gain response via email questionnaires, but received so few responses that we gave up on that approach. We decided that phone interviews were the most effective way to gather the information. We conducted the phone interviews using the questions from the Levels of Use protocol.

Third, we kept all unsolicited email and phone messages from PSA demonstration participants. This type of data collection was passive rather than active, in that we merely waited until an unsolicited message arrived and then added it to the collection.

*Researcher Roles*

*Pre-Post Perceived Skills Self-Analyses*

The presenter informed participants that we were collecting information regarding their perceived skill acquisition and requested their assistance in completing pre and post self-assessment forms. We explained that the information would be used to report perceived skills change to the funding agency as part of the project evaluation. The presenter generally remained in the room while the forms were being completed, but studiously avoided looking at the forms as participants completed them or as participants added their completed forms to the stack of forms on the table. Thus the presenter was unable to identify the participant that completed a particular form and thus was unable to associated particular answers with particular participants.

*Email and Phone Conversations*

*LoU Interviews*

Three interviewers conducted Levels of Use interviews. Each had been previously trained to conduct and evaluate Levels of Use interviews. One interviewer is the Project Director and is responsible for creating and implementing the project. She was the presenter for most of the Paraeducator Supervision Academy demonstrations and arranged most of the demonstration logistics with the host. Therefore, she knew the host and some of the participants well by the time each demonstration was complete. This introduced some possible bias into the interviews. We attempted to limit the influence of bias in the cases

where the project director knew the interviewee well by having one of the other two interviewers conduct those interviews.

The second interviewer worked with this project as training coordinator for the final three years of the total project period (with the time extension). She arranged some of the demonstrations, collected the state information for the customizing of materials to state laws and regulations and presented two of the demonstrations. The potential bias certainly diminished, but in some ways was similar to that of the project director. To limit the effects of bias, we assigned interviews from the demonstrations she conducted to another interviewer.

The third interviewer, although hired at the PAR$^2$A Center after the completion of the project, was trained to conduct LoU interviews at the same as the first two interviewers, however. She knew none of the demonstration hosts or participants. Therefore, whenever we wanted to limit the introduction of potential bias by the first two interviewers, we would assign an interview to her.

The three interviewers conducted the phone interviews with selected participants to determine how they had implemented the materials, concepts and activities from the PSA training. During the interview each participant was asked if they agreed to participate in the interview and upon receiving a positive response, asked if they agreed to have the interview taped. Once they had agreed to both of these conditions, the tape was turned on and they were asked to identify themselves, their position and place of employment, and then to agree again to being taped. The interviewers then preceded asking questions from the protocol. Upon completion of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and participation. No other rewards for interview participation were offered.

*LoU Interview Participant Selection.* LoU Interviewees were selected from master lists of participants subsequent to the completion of all demonstrations. We first visually scanned the master lists by position or job title selecting all those who were likely to have a position in which it was possible that they could use the materials to train others. The position titles we selected included 'professor,' 'college faculty,' 'staff developer, staff development specialist, or supervisor of staff development,' 'trainer,' 'program coordinator,' 'grant or project coordinator,' 'administrator,' 'program director,' 'training coordinator or

director,' 'consultant,' and 'program specialist.' We did not select teachers or related services providers who may be using materials in their daily work, unless they indicated in some way that their position included some training responsibilities. This process resulted in 94 individuals. We then eliminated 18 of those who did not provide an email address. We then sent email messages requesting an appointment during identified time blocks in which we could conduct an LoU interview over the phone. The content of the message is listed below:

> *Hello,*
> *You participated in a workshop regarding paraeducator supervision some time ago. When we provided the workshop, we left copies of our training materials with you and expressively gave our permission to use them to carry out more training with teachers. We're now finishing up the federally-funded project that sponsored that workshop and writing our final report. We need to speak with people who have used our materials* ***and with those who have not****. We've selected you as a possible interview participant, and would like to interview you over the phone about the usefulness of the program and materials. The interview is brief and to the point - it will only take about 15 minutes. We would like to conduct all the interviews between Friday, August 16 and Friday, September 13, if possible. If you will name a convenient date and time within that timeframe, and provide the phone number you want us to use to call you at that time, I will arrange to have an interviewer call you.*
> *Thank You,*
> *Nancy French*

We immediately received 30 messages that bounced back and were undeliverable as addressed and one auto-reply indicating that the individual had retired, but gave no other contact information. We did a little detective work trying to determine whether the undeliverable messages were due to typos or other simple mistakes. After several attempts, if we could not successfully deliver the message, we gave up.

In return, we received five messages saying 'I have not used the materials yet,' and indicating unwillingness to participate in interviews. However, the majority simply failed to reply. We resent the message again five days later, hoping a second reminder would encourage more people to reply.

*Interviewees.* We scheduled interviews with the 22 volunteers, assuming that their knowledge, and insights and their willingness to talk about it, would yield the data needed for

our purposes as suggested by Krathwohl (1998). Each interview lasted about twenty minutes. Table 2 indicates the numbers and position titles of the LoU interview participants.

Table 2

Numbers and Titles of LoU Interviewees

| Number | Title |
|---|---|
| 1 | Title I Director |
| 1 | Special Education Director |
| 1 | Special Education Coordinator |
| 8 | Professor / Assistant Professor |
| 1 | State Coordinator of Special Education and CSPD (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development) |
| 1 | English as a Second Language Coordinator |
| 1 | Staff Developer |
| 2 | Director of Pupil Services |
| 1 | Service Coordinator |
| 1 | IHE grant Coordinator |
| 1 | Birth – 3 Program Director |
| 2 | Consultants |
| 1 | Special Education Teacher |

*Assurances, Confidentiality*

All participants were appraised that one of the purposes of the demonstrations was to determine whether they were able to use the materials, concepts, and activities in their daily work. We explained that we would be collecting information that would help us document their use. We assured participants verbally that their responses to pre and post self-analyses of skills and to subsequent interviews would be held confidential in the sense that their real identities would not be revealed in any publication or transmission of the data. We also informed them that email messages and our notes from phone conversations would also be used as data to determine the answers to evaluation questions. We indicated that their identities would also be protected through the use of pseudonyms. We jokingly offered to use whatever pseudonym they might choose if we reported their responses directly. No one offered a pseudonym for our use.

For the LoU telephone interviews, the interviewers introduced themselves, explained the reason for the interview, and asked interviewees for permission to record the interview on tape. The interviewers explained that only aggregated data would be used for the grant report. The interviewers assured all of the interviewees that we would not use their names or any identifying information in the grant report or in any subsequent publications. All interviewees agreed to participate in the process and we then recorded that agreement as part of the taped interview.

*Data Analysis*

We conducted three types of data analysis, each consistent with the type of data collected and with the questions we wanted to answer in this project evaluation.

To determine whether participants learned the content, we examined the perceived changes in participants' perceptions of their own knowledge and skills as reported on the pre and post self-analyses. Because we changed the forms we used in the middle of the project, we conducted two separate examinations of data, separating the cases by type of data collection form.

For each data set, we first conducted both pre and post confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses to examine patterns among the responses to individual items and to determine whether the response patterns were consistent with the major topical headings and constructs shown on the syllabus and discussed during the PSA Demonstrations.

The confirmatory factor analysis used Principal Components Analysis requesting nine factors because questions on the pre and post test forms were organized into nine categories based on the organization of demonstration content. Although maximum likelihood factoring is considered especially useful for confirmatory factor analysis by some (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989), because it provides a statistical test of significance for goodness-of-fit, it has drawbacks when samples are large (Kim & Mueller, 1982). A major problem is the tendency to derive more or less factors than may be desirable.

Findings from the confirmatory analysis were followed with exploratory factoring and reliability testing to compare the patterns of participant responses to the underlying constructs of the demonstration material. Pre and post exploratory factor analyses were then

conducted for each data set and reliability analyses were conducted to test the cohesiveness of each of the identified factors.

We then used the items that loaded on the factors derived from the post exploratory analysis to conduct factor by factor t-tests to compare the mean pre and post test scores on items that showed a strong relationship to one another.

Second, to determine whether the concepts, materials and activities were being used, we used the LoU rubric (Hall, Loucks, Rutehrford, & Newlove, 1975) in conjunction with an Innovation Configuration Map to identify the levels of use and to categorize the reported behaviors of participants. We developed an Innovation Configuration Map (ICM) for the purposes of data analysis. The ICM describes in rubric form, the observable behaviors that define use, acceptable modifications, and non-use of the particular innovation – in this case the concepts and materials of the PSA Model. For example, if an interviewee indicated that they had offered a class or workshop on paraeducator supervision or had embedded the content or materials from PSA into an existing or new course, or if they had given specific examples of concepts they have taught, we would consider them a user. An interviewee may only have used part of the materials and still be considered a user. An acceptable modification of PSA might include modifying the handouts or using similar handouts based on the same information, modifying the slides by changing the order, or appearance, or using supplemental or more recent articles about paraeducator supervision and training. Examples of non-use include not using the handouts, slides, text or articles, providing little or no training, giving handouts, materials and articles to teachers in lieu of training.

Third, we saved all email messages and notes made by project staff during phone conversations into a word processing format. Project staff members then reviewed the printed data to gain an initial impression of themes or big ideas. We then rechecked the themes by listing them and comparing them to the data. We coded the data by linking a single theme to each phrase, sentence, or paragraph. As we coded the data, we refined and revised the themes until we were certain that the themes satisfactorily reduced the data into meaningful sections.

## FINDINGS

The findings are organized in three sections based on the corollary questions:

1. Effectiveness of the demonstrations.
2. Participant satisfaction with the quality and amount of follow up and support.
3. Participant satisfaction with the quality of demonstrations and materials

Effectiveness of Demonstrations

There are two ways of judging the effectiveness of demonstrations. The first is to determine whether or not participants perceived that they learned the content. The second is to determine whether they are using or sharing the concepts, materials and activities. Three types of data contribute to the answer to the effectiveness question: 1) pre and post test data; 2) LoU interview data; and 3) unsolicited email and phone messages regarding the quality of their experience.

*Pre and post perceived skills self-analysis regarding content learned*

The exploratory factor analysis of the data from the separate pre and post self-assessments (Study 1) each yielded six factors. While the specific items from the pre and post tests loaded somewhat differently the factors yielded the same factor names. The post-test exploratory factors are shown in Table 3 with their reliability coefficients.

Table 3

Study 1 Factors and Reliability Coefficients

| Factor Number | Factor Name | # of Items Loading on each Factor | Reliability Coefficient |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | Training & Skill Performance | 10 | .95 |
| **2.** | Teamwork & Interpersonal Skills | 8 | .94 |
| **3.** | Time Management & Scheduling | 10 | .94 |
| **4.** | Roles & Responsibilities | 6 | .91 |
| **5.** | Orientation | 7 | .91 |
| **6.** | Legislation & Regulations | 4 | .85 |

We then tested the differences between factor means for each of the six factors pre and post by determining the means of the scores on the items loading on each factor, the subjecting those means to a t-test comparison.

Table 4 shows the overall mean, standard deviation, and t-value for study 1 as well as the number of paired pre and post test items by factor, the factor means, standard deviations and t-values. The differences between the means of the ratings on items on the pre and post tests overall and for every factor were significantly different at the .999 level.

Table 4

Overall and Factor Means, Standard Deviations, and T-values for Study 1

| Factor | | # of pairs | Mean | SD | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | pre | 526 | 3.5801 | .973 | -35.31* |
| | post | | 4.9554 | .600 | |
| 1 | pre | 526 | 2.9296 | 1.100 | -39.36* |
| | post | | 4.7062 | .726 | |
| 2 | pre | 525 | 3.9157 | 1.046 | -26.15* |
| | post | | 5.0465 | .635 | |
| 3 | pre | 455 | 3.9522 | 1.155 | -20.63* |
| | post | | .97314 | .695 | |
| 4 | pre | 523 | 3.4304 | 1.210 | -31.02* |
| | post | | 4.9779 | .706 | |
| 5 | pre | 523 | 3.1328 | 1.130 | -37.19* |
| | post | | 5.0322 | .671 | |
| 6 | pre | 523 | 4.4226 | 1.031 | -19.35* |
| | post | | 5.2416 | .634 | |

* > .999

The exploratory factor analysis of the data from the separate pre and post self-assessments (Study 2) each yielded five factors. While the specific items from the pre and post tests loaded somewhat differently the factors yielded the same factor names. The post-test exploratory factors are shown in Table 5 with their reliability coefficients.

Table 5

Study 2 Factors & Reliability Coefficients

| Factor Number | Factor Name | # of Items Loading on each Factor | Reliability Coefficient |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Training & Skill Performance | 10 | .95 |
| 2 | Teamwork & Interpersonal Skills | 8 | .94 |
| 3 | Time Management & Scheduling | 10 | .94 |
| 4 | Roles & Responsibilities | 6 | .91 |
| 5 | Orientation | 7 | .91 |
| 6 | Legislation & Regulations | 4 | ,85 |

We then tested the differences between factor means for each of the five factors pre and post by determining the means of the scores on the items loading on each factor, the subjecting those means to a t-test comparison.

Table 6 shows the overall mean, standard deviation, and t-value for Study 2 as well as the number of paired pre and post test items by factor, the factor means, standard deviations and t-values. The differences between the means of the ratings on items on the pre and post tests overall and for every factor were significantly different at the .999 level.

Table 6

Overall and Factor Means, Standard Deviations, and T-values for Study 2

| Factor | | # of pairs | Mean | SD | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | pre | 409 | 2.9498 | .775 | -41.05* |
| | post | | 4.1651 | .523 | |
| 1 | pre | 399 | 3.0712 | .939 | -30.18* |
| | post | | 4.1072 | .682 | |
| 2 | pre | 407 | 3.0681 | .863 | -33.13* |
| | post | | 4.1722 | .573 | |
| 3 | pre | 400 | 4.1873 | . 809 | -33.70* |
| | post | | .97314 | . 522 | |
| 4 | pre | 403 | 2.5256 | .998 | -35.39* |
| | post | | 4.0273 | .746 | |
| 5 | pre | 405 | 2.6161 | .923 | -38.56* |
| | post | | 4.3035 | .591 | |
| | post | | 5.2416 | .634 | |

* > .999

*LoU data regarding effectiveness of demonstration*

The LoU findings are organized in two sections. The first section contains findings related to the seven categories that characterize behaviors at each of the Levels of Use. These reported behaviors contribute to the determination of the levels using the scale point definitions provided by the LoU rubric. The second section contains data summaries based on the scale point definitions of the Levels of Use rubric.

LoU Seven Categories Findings.

*Knowledge.* The Knowledge category (Hall & Hord, 1987) describes the participants knowledge about PSA concepts, materials and articles covered in the training. Comments in the Knowledge category indicate what the informant knows about the characteristics of PSA Outreach, how to use it, and the consequences of its use.

A special education director commented that this training was "a good outline for getting started." She had incorporated the ideas from this training into the evaluation of paraeducators in her district and had used much of the information about roles and responsibilities of professionals and paraeducators. A school consultant had used the materials and information in an inservice for teachers and paraprofessionals so that they could complete work-style analysis, build job descriptions and employ team building skills. Using the PSA material, she developed a training manual for newly hired employees with an emphasis on responsibilities and delegation, one of the most difficult areas. She also developed a list of competencies to use as a checklist in evaluating demonstration of skills. She believed that this training gave a structure for continuing training and follow through.

Five professors and two associate professors have incorporated some of the information, concepts and materials delivered in PSA into their courses. One of the professors stated that he "focused on activities in the book" used in PSA and used the information "to teach preservice teachers how to better supervise paraeducators with an emphasis on roles, responsibilities, and ethics." Another professor included the materials in performance based standards tasks for teacher candidates. She incorporated information from PSA into her course where teacher candidates participate in hands-on learning, such as attending IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings, to determine how students apply the

information in a knowledge – application – action – reflection process of learning. A Director of Pupil Services stated that although he was not using the materials personally, "two staff members who came with him (to PSA) have incorporated the materials into training for supervising teachers and aides." He stated that "materials were useable and easily adapted - a springboard for discussion." He appreciated the expertise and the format.

Some weaknesses noted in the interviews were that some teachers are not ready for all of the information, there was not always time to implement the concepts from the training, the supervision concepts were not as detailed as one person would have liked, and one person reported that some people did not see paraeducator supervision as their responsibility.

*Acquiring Information.* Eight of the informants were looking for more information about paraeducator supervision and training. In this category of the LoU rubric (Hall & Hord, 1987), data describe how participants solicit information about paraeducator supervision and training in a variety of ways, including seeking resource persons, corresponding with resource agencies, reviewing books and articles, and making visits.

One participant had recently attended a seminar on software for paraeducator training. Another was looking for more research articles and websites to incorporate in his course for preservice teachers. Others were looking for information related to No Child Left Behind (2002) and how to meet the new requirements that paraeducators have an associate degree, two years of college, or pass a rigorous test might impact supervision and training. Fourteen respondents indicated that they had sufficient information for their purposes and were not currently looking for more information.

*Sharing.* The Sharing category of the Levels of Use rubric (Hall & Hord, 1987) contains information about how participants in the PSA Outreach project discuss the innovation with others, sharing ideas, plans, resources, outcomes and problems related to the use of PSA materials and information. Thirteen of the participants were sharing information from PSA Outreach with others. A professor was consulting with special education teachers and colleagues from other universities. Another professor had met with the national Council for Exceptional Children and worked with the IDEA Partnership regarding the roles of the teacher in supervision of and delegating to paraprofessionals. Others indicated that they had shared materials within their agency, district or building, with principals, school psychologists, speech pathologists, etc. A staff development specialist from a state department of education had shared the information through a state coalition of trainer of trainers. The program coordinator for a college of initial teacher preparation collaboratively worked with community and state colleges to articulate a four-year degree that included some of the concepts and materials from PSA.

*Assessing.* The Levels of Use category of Assessing (Hall & Hord, 1987) contains participant statements about how they evaluate the use of the innovation or some aspect of it informally, by making mental assessments, or formally by collecting and analyzing data. Three of the participants reported that they were doing formal assessment of their use of the PSA materials. One stated that she "wanted people to have meaningful outcomes from her training." She wanted to make sure that teachers went through the manual she developed using PSA information, and that they create written job descriptions for paraprofessionals. Another interviewee reported that she always did formal evaluations after training, including

training about PSA, and she met individually with participants to discuss how the concepts, methods and materials worked. She had sent out a questionnaire at the end of the year to see what was helpful and most comments were positive.

Three participants reported that they conducted informal evaluations. One participant asked her colleagues what they liked and did not like about the training she had conducted using the materials. The colleagues reported that they liked the paraeducator supervision materials the most. The director of a birth-to-three program used the information in a training for paraprofessionals and reported that they loved and appreciated it, "Prior to this (training), they (paraprofessionals) felt like they were going 'blind'." A project coordinator at a university reported that "Teachers saw it as a way to open up." Teachers said they could take the worksheets to many places and were able to "transfer what kids need to what you (teachers) do."

*Planning.* The Planning category of the Levels of Use Rubric (Hall & Hord, 1987) contains statements and information about the short term and long term plans that an individual makes during the process of adopting the innovation. One participant reported that she was struggling day by day to implement PSA, however, the majority of respondents (14) had specific plans for using PSA materials, concepts, or activities.

A special education coordinator reported that she would conduct additional trainings in her district because of staff turnover. Eight of the professors interviewed for this study were continuing to use the PSA materials, concepts, and activities, or were expanding their use. One professor was going to teach an Internet course, one would have a survey course;

another reported that she planned to go back through the materials and use some that she had not incorporated yet.

Two of the eight professors had extensive plans, one to work on a national level to develop stronger policies around supervision of paraeducators, and the other had incorporated performance tasks that included PSA information, for students in her teacher preparation program and she was collecting "feedback on the performance tasks to evaluate the proficiency level of teachers." She stated that she would add information about paraeducator supervision and training in the next semester course based on the evaluations. She also planned to evaluate how well she taught the information and how well her students generalized it to practice as teachers.

Two participants, a director of pupil services and a staff developer were planning to include paraeducators in future trainings. One stated that the materials from PSA Outreach would be a beginning point of that training and that she was working with a representative from the paraeducator union to get a full class up and running for paraeducators. The director of the birth to three program wan planning to make a model using PSA information for respite providers, and a special education teacher who was planning to use PSA information with administrators stated "training and working with paraeducators is my passion."

*Status Reporting and Performing.* Because of the similarity in data collected in each of these categories, we combined the information into one section. In describing personal stands in relation to the use of PSA materials, concepts and activities and how they carry

those out in their own situations, informants ranged from "struggling" and "planning to use" to assisting in policy development at a national level.

A Title I director had used the PSA information when she had been a special education director and was planning to use it in the future in her new position. The state coordinator of special education and CSPD was not personally using the information, but reported that he was in a position to support others in using it. The service coordinator stated that she was not quite ready to use PSA information at this time and she did not have a system set up to deliver the PSA information. The director of the birth-to-three program reported that she was "using concepts of PSA to supervise 'paras'" however she was not training teachers to do so. She added that these materials helped paraeducators to "have a clearer idea of what is expected" and gave them more confidence.

A staff development specialist was implementing much of PSA in a school wide program including terminology, expectations, job responsibilities, and definitions of the critical role of paraeducators. A special education coordinator reported that she uses materials from many sources, including PSA, and has even built a planning period into the schedule of paraeducators. An ESL coordinator reported that the training had answered a lot of questions she had about paraeducator supervision and training. Both directors of pupil services reported that they had used the PSA information in summer workshops. A school consultant reported that paraeducator supervision and training issues were more clarified and systematic as a result of this training, and that she now had a "support system in place for information to be heard appropriately and followed through upon."

A professor reported that he was one of only six people in the country that taught a course on supervising paraeducators for preservice teachers. Another professor reported that PSA information "filled a real need for us on management, and dove-tailed with our work on site based inclusive programs." Still another professor was applying the information to teacher training in special education, from the general education perspective, and for teacher training in early childhood education.

*Levels of Use Findings*

The participants in this study ranged in their Levels of Use from Non-Use to Renewal, with at least one informant falling into each level. Additionally, two participants were Past Users – defined as people who had once used the materials, but because of changing circumstances were not using them at the time of the interview. Table 7 shows the levels of use by titles and positions.

Table 7

Levels of Use by Titles and Positions of Interviewee

| Level of Use | Title / Position |
|---|---|
| **0 – Non Use** | • ESL Coordinator<br>• Staff Development Specialist/Consultant<br>• State Coordinator of Special Education / CSPD<br>• Service Coordinator<br>• Professor |
| **I - Orientation** | • Director of Birth – 3 Program<br>• Professor |
| **II - Preparation** | • Director of Pupil Services |
| **III - Mechanical** | • Associate Professor |

| Level of Use | Title / Position |
|---|---|
| | • Staff Development Specialist<br>• Director of Pupil Services |
| **IVA – Routine** | • Professor |
| **IVB - Refinement** | • Professor<br>• Consultant<br>• Consultant<br>• Special Education Coordinator |
| **V - Integration** | • Teacher<br>• Professor<br>• Professor |
| **VI – Renewal** | • Professor |
| **Past User** | • Grant Project Coordinator<br>• Title I Director |

Two participants had used PSA materials and information in the past, but were not currently using them. Both thought that they might use them again as a result of this interview. One past user had changed positions from special education to Title I and looking for information about paraeducator supervision that would relate to the mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), and thought she might use the materials again in her new position with paraeducators working in Title I programs.

Although five interviewees scored in the Non-Use category, one of those, the CSPD service coordinator, indicated that although he was not personally using the materials or concepts, because of his position, he was supporting others in doing so. The staff development specialist was still in the planning stage, trying to integrate everyone's directions with the requirements of NCLB and IDEA. A professor had incorporated some of

the materials, but was not using them in a systematic way. Several of the Non-Users indicated that as a result of the Levels of Use interview, they would re-look at materials from PSA with the thought of incorporating them in the future.

At the Orientation Level of Use, users are acquiring information about the innovation and exploring its demands on the user and systems he works within. At the Preparation level, the user is preparing for their first use. The three interviewees who were at the Orientation and Preparation Levels of Use were using the materials and concepts, but on a somewhat limited basis. One had incorporated PSA information into summer workshops and was discussing PSA with others in the district. The other was using the information to supervise paraeducators, but had not trained other teachers. Both were concerned with the systems, or lack of systems, that were in place to support PSA.

At the Mechanical level, users were focusing their efforts on the day-to-day use of PSA. A professor stated that at this point she had made no changes in her use of the PSA materials and information, but was working day to day. She hoped to be more organized next year. Another person at the Mechanical level of use had worked with elementary schools and "was trying to get started in the secondary schools," but she too was struggling with organization.

The professor who was at the Routine level of use had stabilized the use of PSA materials and information with no changes. At this level a routine has been established with little thought given to improving the innovation or its consequences (Hall & Hord, 1987). This person stated that she had the "most current, up-to-date, and applicable information and would continue to use it in the following year.

At the Refinement level of use, the user varies the use of the innovation based on formal or informal evaluation to increase the impact on clients. A consultant had surveyed her constituents to determine the greatest needs around paraeducator supervision and had then provided training to meet those needs. She reported that she had a system in place to have the information "heard appropriately and followed through upon." She had developed a manual for teachers and newly hired paraeducators using the materials and information, and she had developed a system to be sure that teachers went through the manual and developed written job descriptions for paraeducators. A program coordinator at a college of initial teacher preparation had included the PSA materials and information in performance-based standards for her students. She was currently applying the information to teacher training for a special education and general education perspective, and was collecting data and consumer feedback to evaluate the proficiency level of teachers in her program in supervising paraeducators. Based on the evaluations and data she would incorporate additional pieces of PSA in the next semester course. Her concern was "how well we teach it and how well they generalize it to practice." Another participant was using the information from PSA but had combined it with other materials that she had received from others. She stated that PSA materials "weren't meeting the needs (of all of her teams) because teams continued to work together" and that is why she had added other materials.

At the Integration level of use, the user is coordinating his efforts with others to have a collective impact on clients. Two participants were team teaching a college level class about paraeducator supervision using materials and information from PSA. They are also using the materials and information in their own classroom. Another participant has been

using the materials in her classes at the university, and has also integrated the concepts and material into consultation with a local community college.

The Renewal level is the stage where the user explores alternatives or major modifications, examines new developments in the field, and explores new goals. This is true of one participant who had used the PSA materials and information in the past, but was currently focusing on the assessment of appropriate supervision of and planning for paraeducators. This professor had been instrumental in requiring a course in supervision for a special education endorsement for teachers in his state, and was currently working at a national level to implement a course on supervision of paraeducators for preservice teachers.

*Unsolicited email and phone message data*

Content analysis of the emails resulted in four major themes:

1. Participants in administrative and trainer roles will share the information with others.
2. Some professors in colleges of education are incorporating the content into their curriculum and courses
3. Teacher-participants have used the information and have shared it with other teachers
4. Many participants found the demonstrations of high quality.

The evidence that participants in administrative and trainer roles are sharing the information with others is typified in this statement by a speech language pathologist, who holds a training role.

> *We have used your materials and find them very valuable...I work with many paraeducators as our staff number in the excess of 100 personnel. I have also been contracted by the North Dakota DPI to provide inservice in several areas which include speech pathology and Autism...most recently three special education units have contacted me to provide their paraeducator staff with inservice and I would like to include some of your valuable information in my presentation... With my current and continued work within the schools for the past 24 years, providing personal experience and examples with some of the strategies in management, I hope to provide a valuable training. Thank you for our opportunity to hear your information and utilize the program within our state.*
>
> ➧ Jackie, Speech Language Pathologist MS/CCC (North Dakota)

The evidence that colleges and schools of education are incorporating the content into their curriculum was evident in numerous messages. The first is an excerpt from a message sent by the host who helped set up the demonstration in Iowa, and who took it upon herself to help disseminate the materials and the concepts to many teacher preparation programs in the state.

> *Nancy,*
> *One goal of mine was to write a letter to all the colleges and universities that have teacher prep programs in special education and invite them to include your materials into their curriculum. As of today, I have 12 out of 22 that have requested the materials and plan to use them this year. I told them that I would follow-up to learn how they were used and their impression of how beneficial they are to their future teachers. Two of the institutions have invited me to come to their class to do a presentation, one of the two will actually have me there for 6 hrs and that particular university will continue the curriculum with the students who will be doing internships the next semester. That's a great beginning, thought you'd like to know.*
> ➧ Betty, Consultant, Iowa Department of Education

In response to her message, numerous colleges in Iowa indicated interest and willingness to incorporate materials into their curricula.

> *Thanks for the ... Paraeducator supervision materials. I am very interested in these materials. We will work the concepts into our curriculum.*
> ➧ Bert, St. Ambrose College

> *Hello! J..R... here at Mount Mercy College received a letter from you concerning a new set of training materials developed for paraeducators. I would love to receive these materials as I am the professor in charge of the curriculum for endorsement in multi-categorical resource room and we do spend part of at least one class on this area. Thank you so much for the information.*
> ➧ Ernie, Mount Mercy College

At the State University of New York at Stony Brook, there were no full time faculty members who were prepared to teach a new course on supervising paraeducators. Therefore the faculty members who participated recruited two of the teacher participants in the New York demonstration (both master teachers) to develop and teach a course on paraeducator supervision as adjunct faculty. Those two teachers were so thrilled with the opportunity that they sent weekly messages to project staff as they were developing the

course and teaching it the first two times. Several themes emerge from their messages, but the most powerful was that the materials provided were a valuable basis on which to develop a course.

> *...The articles/readings Nancy passed out when she was in NY...have been very informative and helpful. The course is being reviewed by Curriculum Committee at Stony Brook this month---we should hear soon. Steve and I have been meeting and working on lesson plans and the final exam for "THE COURSE." I have been adding suggested readings into the lesson plans.*
>
> ☙ Kelly and Steve

> *Thanks Nancy for all the material, we are blending it with the Book* (Pickett & Gerlach, 1997 – a copy of which was given to each site).
>
> ☙ Kelly and Steve

And, on numerous occasions they spontaneously offered their thanks,

> *We want to thank you all for your support and assistance. This has truly been a team effort. We will keep you informed as we go along.*

Sometimes they spoke about their students – teachers to whom the information is being disseminated through this Outreach project.

> *The students in this class are from all different districts. They are a mixture of regular and special education teachers and teachers looking for jobs. ...A great group who love to talk and ask questions.*

Often, they were impressed with the learning they witnessed in their students.

> *One student stayed after class for 40 minutes just talking with Steve and myself about the material presented. She set up a meeting with her principal to go over a question sheet she gave her regarding her knowledge and views on paraeducators. She is going to used it in her final project. She is not aware how impressed Steve and I were with all she had to say. On our way out to the cars we looked at each other and said they really are learning! This is very exciting!!*

Often they described the materials they had used and how, specifically, they used them.

*Steve and I added how to work with the OT, PT and speech teacher along with incorporating them into the team, when presenting Chapter 3. Nancy, they enjoyed the article on Tracy's story. The feeling was that could have been any teacher...*

*Steve& I went over paraeducator orientation, Nancy's worksheets and to delegate or not to delegate. Some of the worksheets were too advanced for where we (New York) are in the process. ...But understandable and workable for the future as the process moves forward.*

*We ran the video on Together: Building Better Working Relationships from The Para Center.*

*Steve and I went over teamwork, communication, problem solving and conflict resolution. We followed it up with 2 articles from Nancy the CEC one & Parent Perspectives. What a way to tie it all together.*

*Steve did a great job with the seven executive functions!! I followed up with planning using forms and directing and delegating.*

*For the Snow Class we gave an assignment--read Nancy's article on Paraeducators in Inclusive Classrooms and write a reaction paper. Most of the student are regular ed teachers with push in TA's and some special ed teachers with and without paraeducators. The regular ed teachers are learning about special ed. Much discussion about inclusion!!!*

*At the end of class an Art teacher expressed that at the start of the Class he didn't feel that a paraeducator would be appropriate for his class, but after going over the material he felt different and can see how a paraeducator it would be beneficial. Another teacher asked if special education teachers received classes regarding paraeducators? We said no-- (except BOCES teachers in trainings) She responded with "Not even in college under grad?*

Some email messages spoke specifically about the quality of the demonstration and the expertise of the presenter. For example,

*I want to thank you again for bringing your expertise to Maryland. There Has been a lot of positive feedback regarding the Academy...*

- Arlis, Consultant, Maryland State Department of Education

There was also evidence that teacher participants used the information and shared it with others. One teacher wrote to say,

*Thank you so much. I have completed all assignments and I am adding them as attachments. Please keep in mind that I have the interesting situation of having the*

*CSC Chairperson's paraeducator as my co-teacher in my inclusion class. Our replies to duties reflect the ability of my co-teacher to complete almost all tasks in the classroom. We do choose to work together each year because of our particular 'flow'. We seem able to complete each other's thoughts in the classroom even though we are very different people.*

*I really enjoyed the class and it did give me some insight into my relationship with my co-teacher / paraeducator. Thanks again,*

- Maureen (DoDDS, Europe)

*Here is the work I put together for credit from your workshop while with us in Vogelweh! I really enjoyed the information and it has already proved valuable!*

- Pearle, Art Teacher, Kaiserslautern Germany

*Your training extended to other faculty here that did not have the opportunity to attend that training. Since my paraprofessional works in their classrooms in the inclusion model, I have helped those teachers (via your training) to understand to how to have a cooperative and productive relationship with the paraprofessional. So, all seems to be going well.*

- Scott (Yokota Air Force Base, Japan District, DoDDS)

*I attended the conference you presented in Minnesota regarding paraeducators. Our group felt that it was extremely informative...We are giving a one-day in-service to case managers and paraeducators early this fall, and are in the process of putting the presentation together. We would very much like to use the information from your presentation. Thank you so much for the wealth of well-organized and thought out material. Your work is much appreciated.*

- Barbara (Special Education Department Chair, St. Paul, MN)

*I still have the same paraprofessional that I had when I took your course but am losing her in December. I understand her so well now and her "other culture" ways. She has become an excellent assistant. Now I will have to learn to understand someone new and their new cultural perceptual and behavioral differences. It seems that all our paraprofessionals here are from a different culture. Thanks for opening my eyes. I have learned to have more patience and not see the duty performance through just my own training and personal perceptions.*

- Scott (Yokota Air Force Base, Japan District, DoDDS)

## CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Our primary conclusion is that project activities were successfully completed and they met the intended goals and objectives. The pre and post test self-perceived skills change data showed that there were significant differences between the self-perceived skills prior to

the PSA demonstration and subsequent to the PSA demonstration. In spite of our initial concern that some participants perceived diminished skills subsequent to the demonstration, this analysis does not confirm the veracity of that concern. In fact, these data clearly show that the perceived skills and knowledge after the demonstration were much greater and match both the experience of the presenter, the verbal comments made by participants to the presenter, the narrative evaluation comments, as well as the email and phone message content.

The LoU interview data of an imperfect representative sample of participants show that about 77% of participants are using the concepts, activities, or materials in some way. Although the sample was not satisfactory and the difficulty of reaching past participants significant, the question of whether they are using materials is particularly important. The emails and phone message data also give specific information about ways in which the materials are being used and demonstrate the satisfaction of participants with both the materials themselves and with the level of follow up support they received.

## FUTURE PLANS

We have similar pre-test and post-test data, as well as retrospective pre-then-post test data from a very large sample of participants (about 800) who differ substantially in makeup than the group of participants in this project. We plan to conduct similar analyses of those data and to examine in greater depth the differences in learning among those who hold various types positions and to conduct a follow up study with those participants as well.

We also intend to go back and conduct another series of LoU interviews with a larger group of participants from this project to further satisfy the question of whether or not participants of this type of staff development program are able to employ the concepts and ideas they have learned in whatever capacity they are employed. That question, of course, goes beyond the scope of the completed project but has important applicability in the field.

Finally, during the demonstrations the presenter conducted an activity at each site that asked participants to identify their experiences with paraeducators, then to systematically theme those issues in small groups. Each site identified certain issues that transcended geographical location. However, many identified issues that were unique to the location, the

policies and practices of the school district, college, state legislation or regulations, or just common wisdom in the region. The themes were recorded as part of the activity and we are currently conducting an analysis of these data. We believe that these data can be published and may have the effect of influencing policies and practices of paraeducator employment, training and supervision across the nation.

## SUMMARY

This project met all its intended goals and has served to disseminate materials to a broad audience across the country. It has collected data which may be published to help advance the knowledge base in this newly emerging field. It has established a basis upon which to continue in this line of research and poses many new questions that beg answers. Finally, it creates a foundation for future work in policy and practice in the field.

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## APPENDIX

Data collection instruments

**U.S. Department of Education**
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

ERIC
Educational Resources Information Center

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