



AUTISM CLASSROOM RESOURCES PODCAST EPISODE 33 PARAS IN DISTANCE ED.

URL: <http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode33>

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development. I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve for more than 20 years. I've worn lots of hats in special education, but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research-based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.


Welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm Chris Reeve and I am your host. And I'm glad that you've joined us today. We are in the middle of the coronavirus school shutdown. Today I want to talk some about paraprofessionals and some things that they can do as part of the distance education effort to help our students if they are still working.

Paraprofessionals and Covid 19 School Closures

To give you some context, we are in the middle of the coronavirus school shutdown. Today I want to talk some about paraprofessionals and some things that they can do as part of the distance education effort to help our students if they are still working. To give you some context, everybody in the country is doing something different. It's just amazing the variety that we're seeing. And so we are seeing some districts that are not paying paras, and paras are not expected to work. We have others where they are being paid but districts according to some teachers are not putting any expectations on them. And we have some in which the district is taking charge and saying this is what the parents will do.

What Can Paras Do During the Shutdown?

There are still others where the teacher is told that they are still responsible for supervising and delegating to their paraprofessionals. And that's the group I want to talk about today because one of the questions that I'm getting a lot on Facebook and in the Academy involves what can we do with paras? What can paras do during this school shutdown?



At this point, I know many of you have districts that have closed for the rest of the school year. And so, we're really kind of settling into this for another month to two months depending on when you were supposed to get out of school. So, I wanted to give you, I think I have seven ideas of things that paraprofessionals can do depending on their situation. Now, not every one of these will relate to you. Because it will depend on whether or not your para has access to computers and internet. But I have ideas that don't require that. I have ideas that do require that and I'll share all different ones with you. So, let's get started.

How Do We Get Paraprofessionals Involved with Distance Education


Okay, so how do we get our paraprofessionals involved with our distance education is our topic. And as I said, these are going to vary because everybody in the country is varying what they're doing. I'm trying to give you a number of different options of things to do.

Check-In With Paras

One thing that Tammy from the Special Educator Academy shared today that I think is a really good point is that if you are asking your paraprofessionals to do things for you, check in with them regularly. It's going to be really easy for the days to run together the longer that we stay home. And I think having a regular scheduled meeting helps to give some structure to your week. I know that's true of me when I work at home in regular circumstances. Consider doing a weekly call check in.

Ways to Check In

If they have computers you could use a video check in. They can also do that from their phone. You can use Google Hangouts or what's called, I think Google Meet. You could also use Zoom. They could also call into that. So if they don't have internet or computer, they could still participate. And that's a good way just to find out how they're doing. Check in, share what you're thinking, those kinds of things.



Some of these ideas originated with me, some of them came from discussions during Facebook Lives in our free Facebook group at [specialeducatorsconnection.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatorsconnection). And some of them came from our office hours and discussions in the [Special Educator Academy](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatoracademy). So if you're interested in our free trial for the Academy, you can find more information at [specialeducatoracademy.com](https://www.facebook.com/specialeducatoracademy). I'll put all those links below.

1. Paras Can Check-in Regularly With Students


So the first thing that you can do is if your paras have phones that they can use that don't involve, you know, cost to them, or video, then have them check in regularly with your students. Some of them have very close relationships with some of your students or all of your students. And because of that, it can be really comforting, I think, to the students to hear their voice, to see their face. If they have a computer, they could use Zoom or Google Meets to do a video chat with them. They could also just make a phone call to them on a weekly basis and check in with them and see how they're doing. Even if they're really making contact with a family member and that family member has them on speaker so the student can hear them, if the student isn't able to use the phone, that may mean a lot to that student to continue that relationship. I think that that is a really nice idea.

2. Paras Can Join You for Live Sessions with Students

If you are doing live video sessions with your students and your paras have the ability or the capability at home to check in with those, having them join you in those live sessions I think would be a really great way to do this. Someone in the Academy actually did this with her general ed teachers. She's invited all the general ed teachers to her classroom meetings. And the PE teacher comes, which I think is phenomenal. And the kids love it. It just makes it that much more interesting than just, it's just us. It's just the teacher and the student or the students.

You could have the paraprofessional participate in a game. Or you could have them participate in morning meeting. Also, the para could participate in a lesson. They could kind of model how to be a student in, in Zoom or on a web conference. So that you're giving questions to the student, and then you give

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a question to the para, and you give a question to the student. It may just make it feel more like a classroom. So I thought that's a really good idea.

3. Paras Could Make Videos for Students

One of the things that I was thinking of is if they have the capability on their phones to make videos, have them make videos of activities that you could use for video modeling for your students.

Life Skills Videos

So they could make videos of simple tasks like washing your hands, washing your face. They could do simple tasks like logging onto the computer. Or they could do videos where they are reading books to students. (Just be careful about reading books. Don't read books out loud, unless the author has given permission, and post them on YouTube because that's a copyright violation.) You could also have them video steps of common household tasks, or science experiments, or art projects.

Peer Modeling Videos

Another idea that someone had in the Academy was to have them, if they have children who they want to keep active, have them do some peer modeling types of activities, particularly if their children are similar ages to your students. They could model playing a game. Model any of those life skills. OR model common household activities. So there's lots of things that they could do to get video models for your students to follow at home.

Now if you do these things, save these videos. Don't just, at the end of all this say, "Well now I'm done with Google classroom and take everything down and get rid of it." Because those video models can be really helpful in your classroom too. So, you know, try to make sure that that would be okay with the para if you're using their students or themselves. And, and then you can keep them as part of your teaching repertoire.

4. Search for Videos for Students' Lessons

You could have them search for videos for you to use in your classroom or for their families to use in their home instruction. So that's something that might just take, they would have to have the ability to get online but could do



it on a phone fairly easily to search YouTube and then send you a list of links or send links to you in some way.

If you're using an iPhone, if you both have iPhone, you could just set up a shared note in the Notes app and copy the links to that. And it would show up on both of your phones. So I think that that's something that would be a really good use of their time. And it would save you time because you wouldn't be doing all of that web searching.

5. Post Materials and Check Assignments


Some folks have said that they are having the paraprofessionals track materials in the online class. So putting assignments up that the teacher has created and put in the shared folder. Putting those and assigning them to specific students. Commenting on the student's assignments or completion. Checking in with them and commenting back and forth in that classroom setting, whether it's Seesaw or Google Classroom or whatever mode that you are using. Giving comments on their assignments and things like that, I think again, is a really good way for them to keep that interaction going between them and the student.

6. Paras Could Make Materials to Send Home

Now some of you are working with paraprofessionals that don't have access to online. Some of you have students who are not able to use anything online. And so for those students in many places, people are sending materials home. And you know, it's so different everywhere. Some people can send things home; some people aren't allowed to send things home. If you're working in a situation where you're able to drop things off at the student's house. You know, put it in the mailbox, drop it in the driveway, or things like that.

Kinds of Tasks

One of the things that you might do is make packets of material for paras to make and then have them make them. And then you could drop them off with the students. And those could be simple shoe box tasks that could be simple, [put in tasks](#). Those could be things that you're making out of common household objects.



So if you have [clothespins and coffee cans](#), but it could also be things that you've ordered from Amazon or the dollar store or something like that. But having them be able to pick up a box of materials, put it together into simple tasks, and then drop those tasks off. That gives families something to get some of our students who are most needy of instruction, something structured to get them to do.

So I'll make sure that I put in the post for this podcast episode, I'll put my [Pinterest boards for put-in tasks](#) and [independent work tasks](#). Because you don't have to laminate and use Velcro for everything. Certainly Velcro is useful. If they have a personal laminator and they want to laminate, more power to them! But I'm thinking more of things that you might put together in boxes and bins and things like that that you could then drop off for students to practice at home.


I think that's a really good thing to do to again provide the parents with something that can help to structure their time. So, I will also put a link to my tutorial on my blog of [setting up independent work systems](#) so that you can share that with families if that would be useful.

7. Professional Development

And finally, many districts are having their teachers or their paraprofessionals do professional development. Some are actually going so far as to having them go through some of the free RBT courses, which is a lower level certification for behavior analysis. Others have to do professional hours and get certificates. So in today's blog post that goes with this podcast episode, I will also include some links for some resources for doing that.

Resources

I know that I have [three free resources that the, that many paras have been taking](#) and getting a certificate. They have to watch to the end of the video. It's set up you can't fast forward or rewind the way you can on the Academy. But it will give them a certificate that they can provide to their district. So I'll put that link in the show notes as well as there are the [AFFIRM modules](#), there are the [Iris modules from Vanderbilt](#) and there are the [Autism Internet Modules](#). I will include some other links in the website for



this. In order to get all of those links and in order to be able to access the free three webinars, just go to [autismclassroomresources.com/episode 33](https://autismclassroomresources.com/episode33) and there you will find access [to the resource library](#), which is where the training sites are and all of the links that go with this

Share Your Ideas

So I would love to hear your ideas about what you are having paras do in your district. So please, definitely come share those in our [free Facebook group at specialeducatorsconnection.com](#) and if you are a member of the Academy or you want to join the Academy at specialeducatoracademy.com, definitely come share them in the community as well. We've got a thread going, talking specifically about what paras can do. We're brainstorming, things they could video and things like that.

Thanks so much for joining me. I hope that you are home, that you are healthy, that your family is healthy and safe. If you have family members who are healthcare workers, grocery workers, anybody, first responders, anybody, thank you so much for all that you do. I will be back hopefully next week with another podcast where I hope to focus on some strategies you can share with families to use in their homework with their students, their homeschooling, not their homework with their students. Thanks for spending this time and hopefully I'll see you again next week.