



Great Public Schools for Every Student

Understanding and Applying Communication Styles for Team Success

Paraeducators and teachers understand and apply the four basic communication styles to improve the effectiveness of their team.

Key Method

Paraeducators and teachers analyze four communication styles to gain deeper understanding, assess the styles used within their team and their impact on team effectiveness, apply/practice the styles, develop an action plan, and reflect on the process.

Method Components

Guiding Principles

To enhance student outcomes, it is critical that paraeducators and teachers see themselves as partners in the educational process and continuously work to ensure they have effective working relationships. Teaming and collaboration are dependent on effective communication and interaction. It is also critical that paraeducators and teachers have the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively with each other, students, families/guardians, and other members of the educational team.

Effective communication occurs when individuals clearly express beliefs, ideas, needs, or feelings between one another. Communication is both verbal and nonverbal. Every person has their own communication style. It is important to understand your personal style, the style of other team members, and why individuals use them.

The four basic communication styles are:

- Passive Communication
- Aggressive Communication
- Passive-Aggressive Communication
- Assertive Communication

See the **Resource section** to learn more about communication styles and other effective communication strategies.

Note: Paraeducators support certified/licensed educators, including teachers and other related service providers. Teams participating in the micro-credential process can also include related service providers, although the design of some of the micro-credentials and related artifacts are specific to the partnership between paraeducators and teachers. Related service providers might include speech-language pathologists, school nurses, transition specialists, school psychologists, school social workers, creative arts therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and school counselors. Most of these professions are currently defined as “providers of related services” in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) and “specialized instructional support personnel” (SISP) in the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). NEA and the National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (NASISP) both

recognize and use the term SISP. See the **Resource Section** to learn more about SISP.

Method Components

Through analysis, assessment, application, action plan development, and reflection, paraeducator-teacher teams will understand and demonstrate the four basic communication styles to improve the effectiveness of their team.

Step 1 - Analysis & Assessment (Individual Analysis/Assessment)

In this step, paraeducators and teachers will demonstrate an understanding of the four communication styles by analyzing two common teaming scenarios. They will also assess the communication style(s) used within their team, their impact on team effectiveness, and areas in need of improvement.

Step 2 – Application/Practice (Team Process)

In this step, paraeducator-teacher teams will apply/practice the communication styles identified in Step 1.

Step 3 – Team Action Plan Development (Team Process)

In this step, paraeducator-teacher teams will discuss areas in need of improvement, work together to identify a SMART goal (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) related to communication styles, and develop an action plan to improve team effectiveness in this area.

The action plan provides a framework so that team members are clear on the goal, purpose, outcomes for success, strategies, implementation steps, timeline, and supports needed.

Before establishing a SMART goal, teams should consider the following questions:

- What is working in our current teaming situation as it relates to communication? What is not working?
- What do we want to accomplish? What do we want to happen?
- Why do we want to accomplish this? What issues will the goal help to resolve?
- What is the overall desired outcome? How will we know if we were successful? How will we measure success?
- How will we meet our goal? What strategies will we implement to achieve success?
- When can we expect the goal to be completed? What is our timeline (e.g., start and end dates, key milestones, check-ins on progress)?

Step 4 – Reflection (Team Process)

Lastly, paraeducator-teacher teams will reflect on the process. Reflecting on what you have learned about yourself, your partner, your team, and the four basic communication styles will cement learning, further improve team effectiveness, and encourage continued professional growth.

Supporting Research

Communication

Pânișoară, G., Sandua, C., Pânișoară, I., Duțăa, N. Comparative Study Regarding Communication Styles of The Students. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 186 (2015) 202 – 208.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/82510456.pdf>

Effective Paraeducator-Teacher Teams

Flowers, Nancy & Mertens, Steven & Mulhall, Peter. (2000). How Teaming Influences Classroom Practices. Middle School Journal. 32. 52-59.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254164177_How_Teaming_Influences_Classroom_Practices

Sharon Mickan and Sylvia Rodger. (2000). Characteristics of Effective Teams: A Literature Review. Australian Health Review. Vol 23. No 3.

<http://tlmerrill.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/85213915/Mickan%2520and%2520Rodger%2520-%2520Characteristics%2520of%2520Effective%2520Teams.pdf>

Berdi Safford, MD, and Cynthia A. Manning, MA. (2012). Six Characteristics of Effective Practice Teams. Family Practice Management. 2012 May-June; 19(3):26-30.

<https://www.aafp.org/fpm/2012/0500/p26.html>

Ruedel, K., Diamond, M., Zaidi, A., Aboud, A. (2002) The Inclusive Environment: Paraeducators and Teachers Working Together. Wed. May 11, 2018

http://www.academia.edu/922366/The_Inclusive_Environment_Paraeducators_and_Teachers_Working_Together
(scroll down to read paper or provide email to download)

Keefe, E.B., Moore, V., Duff, F. The Four "Knows" of Collaborative Teaching. Council For Exceptional Children, May/June 2004.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/371822820/the-fours-knows-of-collaborative-teaching-keefe-et-al>

Resources

NEA Building Winning Teams: Effective Paraeducator-Teacher Teams Training Resources

Teaming and Characteristics of Effective Paraeducator-Teacher Teams https://drive.google.com/open?id=1n_X1x1DzC0qVa9eMmUtlZ4h2-oil6C6_

Roles and Responsibilities of Paraeducators, Teachers and Administrators

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1sThOxYiYAdR1BTziWFWzUvj-vsf64MMa>

The Five "Knows" of Collaborative Teaming

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=169LxOaBy0oiFmt1RxA6t7eQmjPNjrfWA>

Effective Communication

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1RyzvYt_ESKan52iT3tFvfsDF2atRzag_

Generational Differences: Impact on Teaming and Communication

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1qCPGNqFny6jTY85pts3efTBAGH0vxgoS>

Conflict Management and Resolution Strategies

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hdjgyeDRKmBJzu15JM4niopoogeQ0luG/view?usp=sharing>

Problem Solving and Action Planning

https://drive.google.com/open?id=1mZ9t1Psio9jv_SqC5wkjbz6gC8_-4pBg

Communication

The Four Basic Styles of Communication

https://www.uky.edu/hr/sites/www.uky.edu.hr/files/wellness/images/Conf14_FourCommStyles.pdf

The Importance of an Effective Communication Style

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/so-happy-together/201809/the-importance-effective-communication-style>

Good Communication Is The Key For Teamwork

<http://teamworkdefinition.com/examplesofteamwork/communication/>

Effective Paraeducator-Teacher Teams

Let's Team Up: What Every Paraprofessional Needs for Student Success and Effective Teamwork

<https://www.nprinc.com/content/free-resources/Lets-Team-Up-Gerlach-Nov-2016.pdf>

Teacher and Paraeducator Team Perfects the Art of Collaboration

<http://neatoday.org/2017/08/02/teacher-and-paraeducator-team-perfects-art-of-collaboration/>

To Teachers – What Paraeducators Want You to Know

<https://dsagsl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/what-paras-want-teachers-to-know.pdf>

SMART Goals

SMART Goals

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm>

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel – NEA webpage

<http://www.nea.org/sisp>

National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (NASISP)

<http://nasisp.org/aboutus2/>

Artifact Templates

Communication Styles Analysis and Assessment (Artifact 1)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1L01ttEIYDHoCe0Vf-NNxyZOeohm1bXpe8QNNcPMIG1M/edit?>

Team Action Plan (Artifact 3)
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UQPkVJNqVNpMn8rib-4CuIDClrJL6QefNWw6Lvon364/edit?usp=sharing>

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and receive a proficient for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions

250 - 350 words

Please answer the following contextual questions to help our assessor understand your current situation. Please do not include any information that will make you, your partner, or your students identifiable to your reviewers.

1. Describe the context of the classroom or setting in which you work (e.g., general ed classroom, resource room, community-based setting). Include grade level, subject area, any relevant cultural/demographic information, and special considerations regarding student characteristics.
2. Describe the makeup of your team (whom you work with regularly to directly support students). Include who is on your team (i.e., teachers, paraeducators, related service providers/SISP), each team member’s roles/responsibilities, and how long you have worked together.
3. What did you know about the four communication styles before any information or resources were made available to you?
4. Describe your strengths and weaknesses related to communication.
5. What current process or strategies does your team use to identify communication styles?
6. Explain why you chose to complete this micro-credential.

- **Passing:** Responses should completely answer each question, cite specific examples from personal experience, and justify the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address the specific needs of both the paraeducator-teacher team and students. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **four artifacts** as evidence of your learning. Please do not include any information that will make you, your partner, or your students identifiable to your reviewers. **Templates can be found in the Resource section.**

Artifact 1: Analysis & Assessment

Using the template provided, complete the communication style analysis (Part 1) and assessment (Part 2).

Part 1 – Analysis

Analyze the scenarios and then respond to the following questions to demonstrate your understanding of the four communication styles.

Scenario 1: At your monthly faculty meeting, your partner makes it a point to take credit for things that your team has planned or accomplished. This has happened numerous times and you feel like you need to address this issue.

Scenario 2: Your partner is in charge of collecting data on a student that is turned in monthly. Your partner typically comes to you three days before it is due and complains that they do not have enough time to complete the task. You always end up finishing the task for your partner, even though you must finish the task at home on your own time.

- Using a passive communication style, how you would respond to your partner?
- Using an aggressive communication style, how you would respond to your partner?
- Using a passive-aggressive communication style, how you would respond to your partner?

- Using an assertive communication style, how you would respond to your partner?
- Based on the four different styles, which response do you feel would be most effective in this situation and why? Which would be least effective in this situation and why?

Part 2 – Assessment

Complete the assessment to assess the communication styles that you and your partner most closely identify with, how they impact communication within the team, and areas in need of improvement.

Note: Paraeducators and teachers must complete this artifact independently.

Artifact 2: Application/Practice Video

Submit a video of your paraeducator-teacher team responding to each of the scenarios using the communications styles that each of you identified as most and least effective and/or areas identified as needing improvement in Artifact 1. Each team member must practice at least two different communication styles and each scenario at least once. The video should be 10 minutes maximum.

At the beginning of your video, indicate your role on your team (i.e., paraeducator, teacher, related service provider/SISP).

Note: Paraeducators and teachers should complete this artifact together. They can submit the same video.

Artifact 3: Team Action Plan

Using the findings from Steps 1 and 2, come to a consensus on an area upon which to focus your team’s action plan. Using the template provided, submit a team action plan around at least one SMART goal related to the four basic communication styles and their impact on team effectiveness.

Note: Paraeducators and teachers should complete this artifact together. They can submit the same action plan.

Artifact 4: Reflection Video

Submit a video of your paraeducator-teacher team reflecting on the process. In the video, the paraeducator-teacher team must answer the following questions. The video should be 10 minutes maximum.

- Describe the individual communication styles used within your team and how they impact the ability of your team to communicate effectively. When used together do they complement each other? Why or why not?
- Which communication styles did you practice and why did you choose them?
- What did you find most challenging about the communication styles that you practiced?
- For styles that you identified as being the most effective or least effective response, do you still agree with your choice? If yes, please explain why. If no, how has your thinking changed and why?
- For styles that you identified as areas in need of improvement, do you still agree with your choice? If yes, please explain why. If no, did you identify other areas in need of improvement?
- What goal did you choose for your action plan and why? How does your team plan to continue to practice and improve in this area?

At the beginning of your video, indicate your role on your team (i.e., paraeducator, teacher, related service provider/SISP). Both team members must actively participate in the reflection.

Note: Paraeducators and teachers should complete this artifact together. They can submit the same video.

Proficient	Basic	Developing

Artifact 1: Analysis & Assessment	<p>All elements of the analysis questions are completed.</p> <p>Analysis explicitly demonstrates an understanding of the four communication styles.</p> <p>All elements of the assessment questions are completed.</p> <p>Responses clearly assess each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-the preferred styles of each team member-specific situations where the styles were evident-how they impact communication within the team-areas in need of improvement <p>Specific examples are cited.</p>	<p>Some elements of the analysis questions are completed.</p> <p>Analysis partially demonstrates an understanding of the four communication styles.</p> <p>Some elements of the assessment questions are completed.</p> <p>Clear assessments are missing for one or two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-the preferred styles of each team member-specific situations where the styles were evident-how they impact communication within the team-areas in need of improvement <p>Specific examples are cited.</p>	<p>Some elements of the analysis questions are completed.</p> <p>Analysis does not demonstrate an understanding of the four communication styles.</p> <p>Some elements of the assessment questions are completed.</p> <p>Clear assessments are missing for more than two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-the preferred styles of each team member-specific situations where the styles were evident-how they impact communication within the team-areas in need of improvement <p>Specific examples are not cited.</p>
	<p>Team members demonstrate accurate application of each communication style practiced.</p> <p>Team members practiced at least two different communication styles and each scenario at least once.</p>	<p>Team members demonstrate a somewhat accurate application of each communication style practiced.</p> <p>Team members practiced at least two different communication styles or each scenario at least once, but not both.</p>	<p>Team members demonstrate inaccurate application of each communication style practiced.</p> <p>Team members practiced only one communication style and only one scenario.</p>
	<p>The action plan contains all of the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-at least one goal-purpose/rationale-desired outcome(s)-1-3 strategies for achieving goal-steps to implement strategies-timeline-supports needed <p>The goal is SMART and aligns to each element of</p>	<p>The action plan is missing one or two of the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-at least one goal-purpose/rationale-desired outcome(s)-1-3 strategies for achieving goal-steps to implement strategies-timeline-supports needed <p>The goal is missing one or two elements of the</p>	<p>The action plan is missing more than two of the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-at least one goal-purpose/rationale-desired outcome(s)-1-3 strategies for achieving goal-steps to implement strategies-timeline-supports needed <p>The goal is missing more than two elements of the</p>

Artifact 4: Reflection Video

<p>the SMART framework (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to communication styles, and time-bound).</p> <p>Strategies are relevant to the goal and are achievable.</p> <p>The plan has clearly defined action steps.</p>	<p>SMART framework (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to communication styles, and time-bound).</p> <p>Strategies are relevant to the goal or are achievable, but not both.</p> <p>Action steps are broad.</p>	<p>SMART framework (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to communication styles, and time-bound).</p> <p>Strategies aren't relevant to the goal and they aren't achievable.</p> <p>Action steps are not evident.</p>
<p>Reflection clearly describes each of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The preferred styles of each team member and how they impact team communication-The styles practiced and a rationale as to why each were chosen-What was most challenging about the styles practiced-If thinking around the styles identified as being most or least effective has changed and why-If thinking around the styles identified as areas in need of improvement has changed and why-The goal selected for the action plan and a rationale for why it was chosen-How the team plans to continue to practice/improve in this area <p>Both the paraeducator and teacher actively participated in the reflection</p>	<p>Reflection is missing a clear description of one or two of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The preferred styles of each team member and how they impact team communication-The styles practiced and a rationale as to why each were chosen-What was most challenging about the styles practiced-If thinking around the styles identified as being most or least effective has changed and why-If thinking around the styles identified as areas in need of improvement has changed and why-The goal selected for the action plan and a rationale for why it was chosen-How the team plans to continue to practice/improve in this area <p>Both the paraeducator and teacher actively participated in the reflection.</p>	<p>Reflection is missing a clear description of more than two of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The preferred styles of each team member and how they impact team communication-The styles practiced and a rationale as to why each were chosen-What was most challenging about the styles practiced-If thinking around the styles identified as being most or least effective has changed and why-If thinking around the styles identified as areas in need of improvement has changed and why-The goal selected for the action plan and a rationale for why it was chosen-How the team plans to continue to practice/improve in this area <p>The paraeducator or teacher actively participated in the reflection, but not both.</p>

Part 3. Reflection

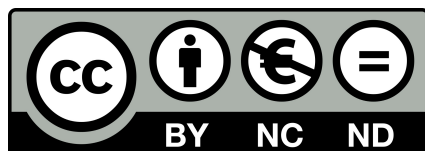
250 - 350 words

Please answer the following reflective questions Please do not include any information that will make you, your partner, or your students identifiable to your reviewers.

1. How does being aware of your and your partner's preferred communication styles help to build a more effective team?

2. How did the process of understanding and applying the four communication styles impact team effectiveness? How did it impact students?
3. How has this experience affected you in your role as a paraeducator or teacher?
4. How do you envision using your new learnings with existing or new team members in the future?

- **Passing:** Responses should completely answer each question, cite specific examples from personal experience and describe how the process and learnings have impacted the paraeducator-teacher team as well as students. Specific actionable steps that demonstrate how the new learnings will be integrated into future practices are also cited. Writing is organized and easy to understand.



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